2010

Student Workers: The Untapped Resource for Library Professions

Charlene Maxey-Harris
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Jeanne G. Cross
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, jcross@lib.siu.edu

Thomas McFarland
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Abstract

For years libraries have hired hundreds of student workers to maintain crucial functions in the library. Without student workers, libraries cannot provide essential services to the university community. Yet limited research exists on how libraries have developed professional career tracks for student workers and library staff. Investigators from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Southern Illinois University Carbondale developed a survey to determine what portion of library employees started as student workers and to what extent there is career mobility within academic libraries. Librarians and staff were surveyed and participated in focus groups to share stories about their start in libraries. The study also explored what behaviors, opportunities, and experiences encouraged them to stay in library work. Based on the comments from the survey and focus groups, libraries do not actively promote library careers for student workers and staff. This research showed the student worker experience is an untapped strategy to develop library professionals. It also provides insight into specific strategies libraries can use to encourage student workers and library staff to develop a career in libraries.

Introduction

Research has identified two main concerns for staffing within the library profession: attracting individuals to librarianship and increasing diversity within the library workforce. Recruitment is a growing concern because of demographic trends and warnings of the "graying" of the library profession. According to a September 2006, American Library Association (ALA) article, 54 percent of ALA members were born between 1940 and

1959, and 38.5 percent between 1960 and 1979 (Lenzini, 2002). This means that in the next five to ten years, numerous retirements will leave the profession short-staffed. Qualified individuals with the accredited master of library science degrees will be hard to come by in academic librarianship, particularly in areas of leadership. Also, the library profession has traditionally been white. This is a big concern in a field that is service-oriented. A diverse workforce is important in this profession because librarians serve a diverse population. Patrons feel more comfortable asking questions and a greater sense of ease and belonging when they feel represented by the staff that they encounter (Alire, 2001). Therefore, there is a feeling of urgency to recruit more students into the field of librarianship. Efforts to recruit more students have resulted in increases in national grants available to libraries and library graduate programs to create programs to attract students into library science. Many of the matching grants have been targeted to increase diversity within the profession. Examples of these programs are the ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program, the Association of Research Libraries Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, and the Knowledge River Institute. But, how do we attract people who have never before considered working in a library? We became very interested in finding out whether there is a connection between working in a library as a student and considering librarianship as a career. This may seem like an obvious connection, but the association has rarely been pursued.

The library is one of the larger employers of students on university and college campuses. The library hires student workers and trains them to perform tasks crucial to the functioning of libraries. Without the student workers the library could not remain open as long; costs for staffing the circulation desk would increase; document delivery and interlibrary loan services would take too long; materials would not be re-shelved in a timely manner; and processing new books would be slowed. It stands to reason that the library has a captive audience to introduce students to the profession and populate library schools. However, limited research has been conducted on the ways libraries are creating professional career paths for student workers and library staff to enter the field of library science. If we know whether we can have an impact at this level and what the best practices are, we might be better able to encourage students to consider library work as a career.

To this end, we created a survey with follow-up focus group questions in order to gain insight into the career paths of current staff at two university libraries. We initially sought to determine how many current library staff members also had earlier student work experience in a college or university library. But we also wanted to know whether, for those with previous student work experience, that experience helped shape the eventual career path the individual took, and if so what positive and negative influences shaped their decision. We also paid attention to factors associated

with encouragement or discouragement of pursuing a library career and how they might relate to career development within a library.

Literature Review

Student employees, also recognized as student workers and student assistants, have been a crucial part of the library workforce since 1910 (Gregory, 1995). According to the Academic Libraries National Center for Education Statistics 2006 report, student employees account for 25.6 percent of full-time equivalent hours in all U.S. academic libraries. Literature discusses how to recruit, train, motivate, and evaluate their student workers. Many of the articles were anecdotal and focused on best practices. Other articles provided information from the student perspective about their jobs and work environment. However, there is a dearth of articles that focused on developing career paths within the library for student workers and library staff. This was also the case for locating literature on comparable career paths for campus departments (e.g., student affairs, food services, campus recreation, etc.) that hire a large number of students (Larkin, LaPort, & Pines, 2007, p.92).

The primary focus of library personnel is not to attract student employees to the profession, but to fill needed positions in the departments. The students need jobs and the library needs the students to fulfill a number of tasks and responsibilities. From the library's perspective, students gain practical work experience, as well as team building, organizing, and supervisory skills. In addition to meeting the library's needs, student employment in the library also impacts student retention at the university (Rushing & Poole, 2002) and positive social integration and persistence at the university or college (Weston, 2009). Student workers also diversify library staff because of the number of minority and international student hired for work study positions (Wheeler & Hanson, 1995).

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) *Recruitment, Retention, and Restructuring Report* (2002) challenged the profession to develop ways to recruit new talent. John Berry, former editor of the *Library Journal*, suggested that support staff and students workers are a "prime group of new talent that can be persuaded to consider career opportunities" (Berry, 2003, p. 8). However, only a small number of libraries have created a formal career recruitment program for students and support staff. Texas A&M University developed scholarships for student workers and full-time support staff attending or accepted to library school (Benefiel & Conturbia, 1993). Programs at the universities of New Mexico, Arkansas, and Colorado successfully recruited non-MLIS graduate students into the profession through graduate assistant programs at their respective libraries (Knowlton & Imamoto, 2006).

Several studies and articles address the number of retirements (DPE, 2009) and the profiles and issues of new librarians in the workforce (Neale,

2006). However, the most significant research about the labor force is the Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science (WILIS) research project studying North Carolina LIS graduates from six North Carolina library schools (Moran, Solomon, Marshall, & Rathbun-Grubb, 2009). Preliminary research revealed that library students develop their career interest from working in a library, whether public or academic. In fact, 55 percent of respondents selected "working in the library before entering library school" as a moderate to strong factor influencing their decisions to become librarians. Ultimately, academic libraries have an advantage in influencing career decisions because of the number of students employed in libraries. The key to retaining them as student workers and recruiting them into the library field is to provide stimulating work and inform them about career opportunities.

Library staff also need motivating and interesting tasks for retention, job satisfaction, and a positive, productive work environment. Developing job competencies, formal mentoring, cross-training programs, career opportunity workshops, internships, and continuing education classes are all strong components of both career development and staff development programs (Massis, 2004; Jennerich, 2006; McNeil, 2004). The relationship between the two programs is that career development uses skills learned through staff development to meet the goals of the individual and the organization (McNeil, 2004). As a result, pathways are created to fulfill the needs of the individual and the library, thereby populating library schools with experienced professionals who desire to become library faculty and professional librarians.

Methodology

This study originated from a discussion of issues surrounding recruiting and retaining people from underrepresented groups at a meeting of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries Diversity Committee. After discussing various aspects of attracting people to library work, we asked members, "What attracted you to work in a library?" We noted that many people in the library seemed to have started their careers as student workers. The committee decided to conduct an informal survey of library employees. A request for information was posted to the staff email. We asked staff members to respond to general questions about the start of their careers and invited them to tell us their stories about library work, whether they ever worked as student workers in a university library, and a brief overview of the path of their careers.

Results from the informal request showed that more than half of staff and faculty working in the library who responded did indeed have experience as student workers. Staff members were excited to share their own experiences. We then decided to pursue a formal study of the numbers of employees with student work experience, with the goal of

exploring ways libraries can better recruit student workers and staff into the profession.

The staff was surveyed from two large university libraries: University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC). Both are large doctoral-granting institutions located in the Midwest whose libraries belong to the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) consortium. The survey, approved by each institution's human research department, was anonymous and completely voluntary. Invitations to the online survey were sent via email on December 2008, with two follow-up email reminders to all staff of the two library systems. A total of 244 staff received emails (143 from UNL and 101 from SIUC). Both institutions have librarians with faculty rank and status.

The formal survey consisted of eleven questions about background information on rank, degrees earned, types of libraries worked in, length of service, and whether staff had previous student work experience at an academic library (see appendix A). It also included general questions about the opportunity for career mobility. Finally, open-ended questions generated additional comments about opportunities and hindrances to work as well as having a career in the library. The goal was to determine what portion of library employees started as student workers and to what extent the library offered a welcoming career path. In addition to the experiences of student workers, we wondered if the overall working environment was open to encouraging service- and professional-level people to pursue library science degrees and obtain faculty-level positions.

Information was also collected from the focus groups on the influences that drew people toward library work. Was it the type of work, the work environment, or was there a particular individual who made an impact? If a large percentage of staff had previous library experience as students, are there things that we can recommend in the way we treat our student workers that would make an impact and possibly encourage them to join the profession? We asked a second group of questions to determine whether, once working in the library, they felt that opportunities existed for career mobility. At the end of the survey, participants who self-identified as a former student worker were asked to take part in a follow-up focus group. In February 2009, sixty to ninety minute focus group sessions were held at each of the libraries as a way to gather more detailed and descriptive information about the student worker experience and why they sought permanent work. The researchers met separately with volunteers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Southern Illinois University. Participants were asked twelve questions (appendix B). Each group was facilitated by the researcher and had a note taker. A qualitative analysis was then performed to determine the factors that encouraged some people to join the profession at a service/professional level and pushed others to faculty level.

Definitions used throughout this study are "service" for civil service or office service positions, "professional" for managerial professional or administrative professional positions, and "faculty" for those hired with faculty rank. "Staff" is a general term used for all levels of work: service, professional, and faculty.

Survey Results

We received 114 responses for a 47 percent response rate. Thirty-seven faculty members completed the survey, while fifty-three service staff completed the survey. Twenty-two professional staff and two individuals completed the survey, but did not identify their rank. Of the 114 responses, forty-four (39 percent) had received a master of library science degree. Of these forty-four, seven do not hold a faculty level appointment.

The largest group of staff, (38 percent), has worked in libraries for more than twenty years. Seven percent have worked fifteen to twenty years, 24 percent five to ten years, and fifteen percent less than five years. Of those who had been student workers, the vast majority had one to four years of experience. Only ten individuals claimed to be "super students" with five-plus years of work as a student.

The answer to our initial question: "what portion of library employees had previous experience as a student worker at a college or university library," was 61 percent (sixty-nine participants) of all levels of library staff (see fig. 1).

Although there was some variation between the levels, each classification level had over 50 percent student worker experience. Those classified as professional had the highest percentage of student worker experience at 73 percent. This data confirmed our findings from the initial, informal poll (see fig. 2).

We found that these results were not statistically significant using the Pearson Chi-Square test at .05 reliability. So, although a majority of staff started as student workers, we cannot say that there is a direct correlation between working in a library as a student and working in an academic library as a career. However, identifying those with that experience and discovering whether there are commonalities in their experience may be very useful toward recruitment, retention, and diversity within our profession.

One problem identified with the survey was that of defining "student workers." From the comments received, at least two respondents worked as graduate assistants in the library and did not identify themselves as student workers. Graduate assistant work is different from the usual tasks given to undergraduate student workers. This is a group, given the nature of the work, on which we might have an even greater impact. On the other hand, there are not as many graduate assistantship or internship
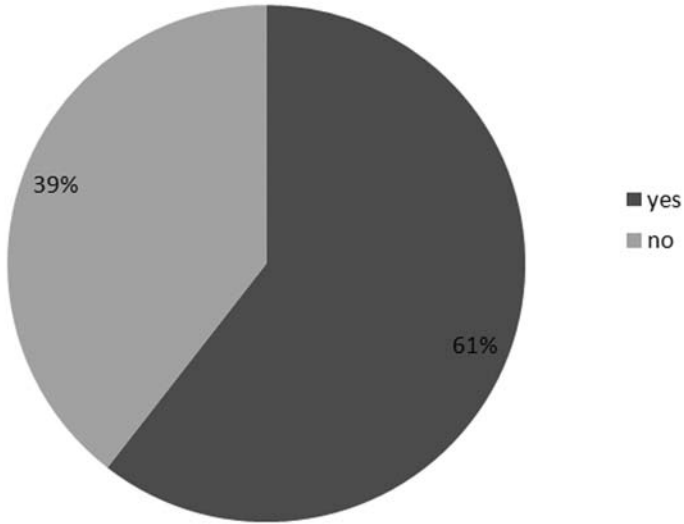
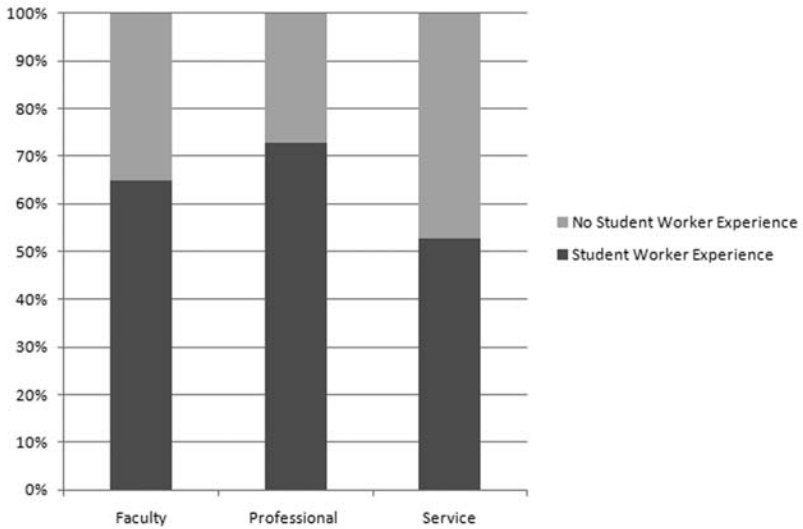Figure 1. Were you ever a student worker in a college/university library?

Figure 2. Percent of Each Rank with Student Worker Experience

positions. Some libraries have developed non-MLS graduate internships to recruit students into the profession (Knowlton & Imamoto, 2006). Programs directed at research opportunities for undergraduates and graduate students should be included in a follow-up study to examine the impact of changing the image of the profession. Another point to note was that in the survey we did not ask participants to identify what university library they worked in, so we did not identify issues unique to UNL and SIUC.

A closer examination of the data revealed the career progression of library faculty with student worker experience. Sixty-five percent of faculty started as student workers. Thirty-three percent held both service and student worker positions before being hired as faculty. Only 17 percent of respondents held both student worker and professional positions before obtaining a faculty position. Remarkably, 13 percent of the faculty held jobs in all four classification levels: student worker, service, professional, and faculty (see fig. 3). This survey did not address whether there was continuous progression or a second career move.

For those with service or professional positions, student worker experience was roughly similar to that of faculty, at 60 percent. Based on the survey results, service and professional personnel have taken advantage of continuing education opportunities and earned MLS degrees, even though there are no library programs at either institution. Twenty-five percent of all staff who currently have an MLS obtained it while employed in a college or university library. Five individuals were currently working on a library-related degree: three for the MLS and two for another library certification. Another 30 percent who do not have an MLS have seriously considered it. This supports evidence of career mobility and awareness of opportunities to advance in the workplace.

For those who started their careers as student workers, the majority said that there was something specific in their experience that encouraged them to take a job in the library. While this is not an overwhelming endorsement of the student worker experience, it does indicate that some impact was made. The common elements in comments from the survey were related to the work environment and people who encouraged them.

Overall, 63 percent of the respondents felt that opportunities existed for career mobility in the library, while 33 percent did not and 4 percent were neutral. This question clearly hit a nerve on both sides. Respondents had the opportunity to comment on their answers, and this question generated ninety-two comments from people electing to describe their responses more fully. But within those comments there were often contradictory statements.

A large majority of the negative feedback emphasized there were limitations with mobility. Several commented on the glass ceiling within their
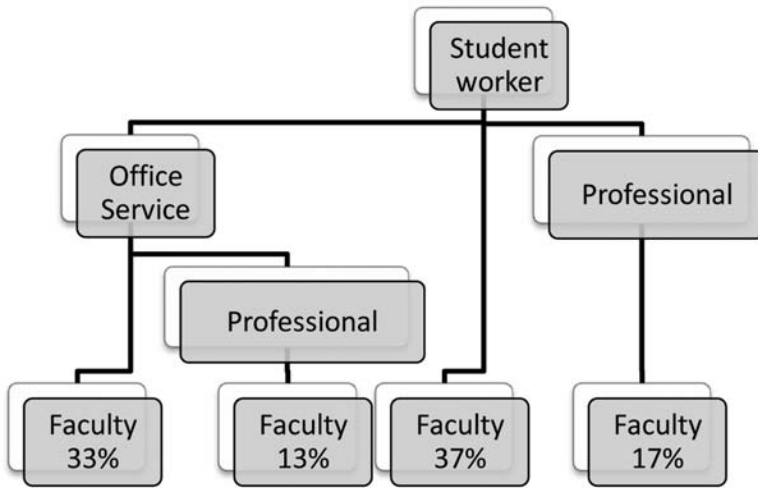
Figure 3. Career Progression of Faculty with Student Worker Experience

classification both with a MLS and without a MLS degree. Some of the hindrances included lack of a library science degree program on campus, difficulties with flexible time, affordability of courses, family concerns, high competition for positions, low salaries, favoritism by administration or personnel, and the feeling that having specific experience could "pigeonhole" a person into a career in a specific department. But the main concern was a lack of availability of open jobs, and numerous related concerns to the effect that to gain a faculty level position, one would have to relocate.

In contrast, several comments were received noting opportunities for mobility: ability to apply for open positions, continuing education, new job responsibilities, and work in related fields (instructional design, computer programming, technological areas). Other comments noted that the library provided flexible work schedules, information about career opportunities, tuition waivers, and encouragement and support by supervisors. It is notable that the type of personality necessary to advance was described in the comments by a number of individuals. Such a person is motivated, a team player, flexible, curious, and hardworking. Furthermore, a number of respondents earned an MLS while working and found faculty positions without having to move.

When asked to describe anything specific in their student worker experiences that encouraged them to decide to take library jobs, the respondents gave interesting responses. The atmosphere and work environment of the library was mentioned several times as a positive. The fact

that their experience as a student worker helped them win a permanent job was also mentioned several times. Most often it was the influence of people that made the difference. Both coworkers and supervisors were mentioned equally as offering encouragement and having an effect on a decision to join the profession. Knowing the staff made the environment welcoming to students. In a few cases staff notified the students of openings and encouraged them to apply for positions. Finally, one theme that appeared again in the focus groups, was that although they did not choose to go into librarianship right after college, their positive experience was remembered. As they reassessed their career choices later in life, this previous experience led them to return to library work.

Focus Group Results

Staff who were former student workers were invited to take part in a focus group to share their experiences in libraries in general, not just specific to their current libraries. The participants were asked to share what factors, behaviors, and opportunities encouraged them to stay in library work. Twenty-six volunteers expressed a willingness to attend a focus group and twelve actually participated (six at SIUC and six at UNL). All levels of staff were represented: seven faculty, two professionals, and three service workers. Each focus group was asked to reflect on the questions about the departments in which they had worked, what experiences had encouraged or discouraged them to obtain their MLS degrees, and any barriers they had experienced. They were also asked for their general comments about this research area. The feedback from both institutions produced some general observations that are useful in understanding the student worker experience.

Responses from the focus groups were coded into the following categories: previous library experience, departments students worked in, the number of years as a student worker, and positive and negative factors that encouraged students to explore a career in library work. Additional categories emerged from the semi-structured discussions on work environment, reasons they liked the job, duties and responsibilities, behaviors of supervisors, factors related to returning or staying in libraries, career mobility, and who encouraged the permanent position.

Many commented that they enjoyed the library environment. They liked the people they worked with and found them interesting. Working conditions were clean and comfortable. Several also commented on the nonthreatening working environment, decent hours, and flexible scheduling. Reasons for becoming a library student assistant included being close to dorms, salaries above minimum wage, and work study.

They found the best supervisors were those who set clear expectations and respected them as workers. They appreciated being given special or "cool projects." When they performed well, they had the opportunity

to increase their responsibilities and eventually reached the level of supervising other student assistants. Most of the focus group participants found that most department supervisors were supportive and flexible when it came to scheduling work around their class schedules. They also preferred working in departments with a variety of duties that used their skills and their expertise in technology, and that were relevant to their undergraduate studies.

Some of the negative experiences articulated by the participants centered on poor management and organization of the supervisor or department. Several found inconsistent expectations by different functional supervisors at service points. Some supervisors did not articulate any expectations. Other participants were challenged by tedious shelving and being treated like "second class citizens." Some were put in the middle of internal departmental conflicts. Faculty library users sometimes treated the students "like peons," and supervisors did not always manage the difficult users for them. As a career learning experience, very few had direct contact with librarians, and they were not usually supervised by librarians. It is noteworthy that none of the focus group participants were mentored or received significant in-house guidance.

When asked about career mobility in the library, respondents gave mixed answers that mirrored the comments from the survey. Many felt there was some career mobility, but that it was limited. Others were not so sure. They commented that in the last few years there were more lateral positions available than vertical positions. People at both SIUC and UNL had known individuals who took advantage of the opportunities and moved up in the organization.

Service and professional staff were also aware they needed an MLS to advance within the library. They found that the biggest setbacks to gaining an MLS are location, cost, and the attitude that "it's up to you to do the hunt." They also noted the low salaries for all levels of the profession. Other hindrances to career mobility included staying in the same departments, the limited number of open positions, and the need to relocate to open positions. Service and professional staff were not compensated at the same rate as faculty, and if they earned an MLS, there was no guarantee they would get a faculty position in the same library. Some did not want a faculty position because of the pressure associated with tenure. Although the respondents agreed that there were opportunities, they also felt that the path to reach the opportunities was unclear.

Discussion

Very few student workers started with the idea of being a librarian; however, their experience did impact their career choice to work in libraries. Our findings support the WILIS preliminary results that indicated 55 percent of North Carolina librarians selected "prior library experience" as

a moderate to strong factor for their decisions to be librarians. With this new information we have the opportunity to build on these unstructured experiences and create strategies that will intentionally recruit students.

Student workers are drawn to library jobs and stay for a variety of reasons. Some mentioned the atmosphere and the working environment, others enjoyed helping patrons, and still others mentioned they were encouraged by a friend or relative. Within the department, good supervisors and the variety of the job responsibilities kept students working in libraries. Focus group participants shared wonderful memories of working in special collections, at the circulation desk, and interlibrary loan. Admittedly some of the jobs we need students to do are repetitive and boring, but efforts should be made to introduce some kind of variety to the work if possible.

Some observations from the focus group were unanticipated. For example, none of the focus groups reported being mentored, and there was no significant in-house guidance about career options as student workers. Instead, students were prepped to be permanent library staff. Their job training and experience gave them the advantage to be hired in entry-level staff positions. Some reported that they had been discouraged from library work due to a variety of reasons, low pay being a main problem. Poor salaries are an issue the profession continues to battle.

The discussion in the focus groups also revealed a gap between student workers and librarians. The majority of student hours are during times when librarians are not working. This limits opportunities for librarians to mentor and connect with students about their jobs and career experiences. Often the students are not aware of who the librarians are and how they differ from the service and professional staff.

Furthermore, most faculty who started working in a student position did not start with the idea of being a librarian. There is a disconnect between the library job and the library career. This is no surprise to career development researchers who study individuals developing educational interest into career goals and aspirations. According to research, first and second year students do not associate job decisions with career goals, but are "influenced in their decision making by job location, schedule flexibility, and having friends working there" (Larkin, LaPort, & Pines, 2007, p. 92). That said, even though positions are available, the negative image gets in the way of student workers seeing themselves as librarians. Multiple marketing initiatives by the professional organization have sought to address this ongoing concern. However, we can use this information to develop student appreciation and National Library Week programs that highlight career opportunities throughout the library showing students the "big picture." Librarians need to take the responsibility to mentor students and educate them about the professional career tracks.

In regard to career mobility, some believed that advancement was

possible, to faculty level or within service/professional staff levels. They point to members of their staff that have advanced, and recognized individuals who have successfully completed MLS degrees through distance learning. They also said that their library had supported their efforts.

Participants agreed that individuals who wanted to advance must look for and apply for opportunities. Others were unclear about the requirements and qualifications necessary for library school. This highlights another strategic path for recruitment efforts that can be further explored.

Some of the deterrents to seeking advancement were fewer open positions, low turnover rates, and positions remaining unfilled due to funding problems. Many participants expressed the concern that real advancement in the profession would require relocation. Eleven comments included some mention of "willingness to relocate" or the belief that "the only way to advance would be to leave." Also apparent was frustration at finding faculty level work once an MLS had been achieved. According to our study, there were seven individuals that have MLS degrees but were not in faculty positions. Positions at the faculty level are open to a much wider pool of candidates. Unless open to relocation, one must be prepared to "wait it out." At service and professional levels, a few expressed the need for greater flexibility in the pay structure, in order to feel that they were moving up. Others were frustrated at the lack of compensation for performing responsibilities held by librarians at other institutions.

Neither of these institutions has an MLS program, and a number of participants claimed that they could not afford to pursue an MLS because they would not get a tuition reimbursement. However, 50 percent of staff without the degree has considered continuing their education through distance online programs. The biggest setbacks to attaining an MLS are the absence of local MLS degree programs, economics, and the "it's up to you to do the hunt" mentality.

Career and staff development programs can develop professional career paths and address the complaints and the lack of awareness about career opportunities. Some participants complained that service level positions offered few opportunities for conferences/workshops to improve their skills. Funds for continuing education opportunities and travel must be considered. Libraries should also consider providing cross-training experiences within these programs. Some participants were concerned that once experience was gained in one area of library work, it was very difficult to move into other areas. This concern was expressed at all staff levels.

It is interesting to also note that while service and professional staff have considered working in faculty positions, some stated that they had no desire to work at a faculty level because of the pressures associated with the position, such as promotion and tenure. Additional research into perceptions about faculty rank positions is another area to explore, especially if false perceptions hold people back.

Study Limitations and Future Research

This work is limited by the lack of controls that were able to be placed on the study. By surveying staff we asked only those who successfully went into library work, so there may be more significant deterrents to library work not discussed due to the nature of the group surveyed. Because this was not a controlled study it cannot account for many of the "why factors" left unexplored. The focus groups participants did provide some reasons why they returned and remained working in libraries; these external motivators include economic, family, health, and geographic factors. There is also an element of "luck," being in the right place at the right time, or meeting the right person who may have an impact outside of the realm of the survey.

The study was limited to previous student worker experience. We need to gather more information about the specific characteristics (academic background, previous library experience) of individuals drawn to work in the field. Focusing our attention on the current student worker will open the door to our understanding of career development and their expectations. Related research studies by Weston (2009) and WILIS will continue to add new knowledge to this area. Another future area of study may address whether the presence of an accredited library degree program on campus makes a difference in the number of staff who take advantage of the MLS programs to advance in their careers.

As mentioned earlier in the article, we did not take the difference between graduate assistants and undergraduate student workers study into account, therefore studies separating these two groups could be enlightening. Future work with graduate assistants in particular could be fruitful, as this is a group whose advanced skills, or area of study, have brought them to work in the library.

A potential value of this study is raising awareness of our student workers as possible future staff. We should reevaluate the way we work with students and view their value, not just for the work that they provide now, but as potential permanent employees. Further research should focus on how to build models to introduce student workers into the profession and see if training programs have an effect. Additional studies could be done on student worker's supervisors in academic libraries to assess their attitudes, training, and supervisory skills. More studies could also be done of graduate students entering into MLS programs to identify their motivations. Finally, long-term research of undergraduate student workers tracking their career choices could also be considered.

Conclusion

It is time to recruit the untapped potential of our students and existing staff by sharing our stories and encouraging others to pursue the profession. Mentoring and discussing career opportunities are crucial to making

a difference in our workforce. The most diverse employees in the library may be student workers. It is difficult to substantiate this fact because libraries do not collect these statistics. Nevertheless, recruiting and reaching out to this diverse group of employees can drastically change the face of librarianship. Librarians can and do play a role in informing students about what they do when interacting with them on a regular basis. Every staff member can encourage a student to consider career opportunities available. The library website could provide information campus-wide. Libraries are obtaining student feedback about their Web pages in order to meet the needs and expectations of our largest clientele: university students. Staff and career development programs can provide forums, workshops, and mentoring opportunities for staff to learn about career opportunities offered within librarianship.

Most library staff have previous experience as students working in an academic library. It would be interesting to further study the role graduate assistantships play in recruiting students and tracking student workers to observe their "in the moment" perceptions of libraries and librarians. The impact of previous library experiences, in areas such as public library, is another potential area for study.

Student supervisors have the most influence over students. A participant nicely summed up the impact of how we treat student workers:

> I feel like student workers are a little more invisible sometimes than they have to be. [Supervisor] always introduces her students to me when I come down to [department name], just like the student is another member of our staff, because they are, really. I can tell that she really values them and makes them feel special, and I really like that. Sometimes I feel some supervisors have low expectations for student help; maybe they've been hardened by the fact that students aren't around for very long, or have had bad experiences, but I think that if supervisors thought more about the fact that student workers do often end up becoming staff, maybe they wouldn't think of the student assistants as so nameless.

By offering different tasks and a variety of responsibilities we can engage the current student workforce and possibly attract them to the profession. Furthermore, if we pay attention to our student workers and employ best practices for sparking interest and educating them about the choices and variety in library work, we are likely to have an impact on recruitment and diversity in our library staff. The results from this research will have implications for improving job satisfaction, developing career ladders for staff, and recruiting student workers into the profession.

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Appendix A. Survey Questions
Library Ladder: Welcoming Career Paths Survey

Thank you for participating in our study. The following survey should only take 10–15 minutes.

Top of Form

Were you ever a student worker in a college/university library?
    Yes
    No

Have you ever worked in another type of library?
    Yes
    No

If yes, please indicate the type of library.
    Public
    School (K–12)
    Community College
    Other

What degrees have you earned?
    High School
    Associates
    Bachelors
    Masters (not Library Science)
    Masters (Library Science)
    Doctorate

How many years have you been working in libraries (including student worker years).
    0–5
    5–10
    10–15
    15–20
    20+

Of those years how many were as a student worker?
    0
    1
    2
    3
    4
    5+

If you have an MLS, did you obtain it while employed in a college/university library?
    Yes
    No

Are you currently working toward a library-related degree?
    Yes
    No

If yes, please indicate which type.
    Library Technician
    Masters in Library Science
    Other: _____

Which of these job classifications have you had while employed at the library?
    Student Worker
    Office Service/Civil Service
    Managerial Professional/Administrative Professional
    Faculty

If you do not have an MLS, have you seriously considered it?
    Yes
    No

Do you feel that opportunities exist for career mobility in the library?
    Yes
    No
If yes, briefly describe the opportunities.
If no, briefly describe hindrances.

If you started your library career as a student worker was there something specific in your experience that encouraged you to take a job in the library?
    Yes
    No
    Not applicable
If yes, briefly describe.

If you started your library career as a student worker in a college/university library would you be willing to be contacted to participate in a focus group to discuss successful ways to encourage individuals to seek a career in the library? If so, please include your contact information. Name, Dept., email address, phone number.

Completion and return of contact information indicates voluntary consent to participate in the focus group.

Additional comments?

Appendix B. Focus Group Questions
Library Ladder: Welcoming Career Paths

Instructions: These questions are not specific to UNL/SIUC. Please answer these questions about libraries in general.

For those of you who started your career as a student worker, how many years did you work in the library?

1. What department(s) did you work in?
2. Did you stay in the same department? Why/Why not?
3. What did you like about your job(s)? What did you dislike about your job(s)?
4. Do you feel that there is career mobility within the library? What are the helps/hindrances you have encountered?
5. Did you always want to become a librarian? Why/Why not?
6. How did you find out about the requirements for becoming a librarian?
7. What experiences did you have that encouraged/discouraged you to obtain your MLS degree?
8. What factors did you consider when making your decision?
9. Who encouraged you to explore librarianship? What words of encouragement did you receive to get more information about librarianship?
10. What barriers have you noticed for student workers and library staff?
11. What have you done to encourage library staff or student workers to pursue librarianship?

    Final Comments: