Academic BRASS

In their study on the shortage of business librarians, O'Connor and Marien (2002), found, although through a small pool of 30 respondents, that employers are not generally satisfied with the quality or quantity of the pool of applicants. They note that only 27% of the respondents to their survey indicated that their recruiting problems were centered on salary. Those responding cited high competition from public and private sectors and the low supply of applicants as the primary factors in recruiting.

O'Connor and Marien (2002) suggest that recruiting internally may be a cost-effective method in finding new business librarians because the majority of current business librarians have come from within the ranks. Many began in other specialties or as generalists. Current business specialists, especially those close to retirement, can help to develop training and recruiting strategies for their academic libraries. They can also help with training the other specialists and generalists in basic business reference practices, so that when these positions remain unfilled for a time, the quality of business reference does not diminish greatly.

This solution may be effective for academic libraries that have pools of employees to draw from, but what can be done about the dearth in the pool to fill the available positions in corporate libraries? Should schools of library and information science change their curricula just to specially train the new crop of business librarians, recruiting from within their student body as academic libraries pull from their current employees?

In his presentation on the future of library education at the Ohio Library Council at the Annual Conference, Dr. Richard Rubin spoke of the problem with developing strategies for the future of librarianship with the lack of quality employment statistics. It is difficult to know how large the problems truly are unless a comprehensive survey of the profession is made. He managed to piece together a rough picture based on old data from the United States Department of Labor

problems exist within this university environment that would prevent immediate action to remedy this situation, including lack of funding which leads to strains on faculty and staff.

Students in a current course in business sources and services at Kent State expressed their

changes. It awarded $1.8 million to seven universities and colleges to recruit and educate LIS students (G.F. 2002). The money will also help to fund continuing education and digital technologies. Those receiving the grants will match the funds.

Improvements like these can be important steps in enticing students to study in a particular program. Another step must be taken. All librarians must do their best to present the profession in its best light, as vital in the information age and encourage others to pursue employment in the field. One important problem to research is finding out what draws people to particular professions.

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2002) presents the idea of further study of vocational choice to help determine the best avenues in which to advertise the profession. They discuss the possibility of examining MLIS graduates to determine why they select the types of libraries they do. This strategy could also be applied to compare the differences between vocational choices of business students and LIS students.

Immediately, one could look to the implied prestige and higher salaries found in business

Survey 2002). A figure like this could channel those recruits with a business background directly into those unfilled librarian positions.

The profession is attractive, the schools are improving, and librarians are getting active. It is apparent that professionals are working to fill gaps in the pool of professionals. However, it is also obvious that this is no small task, with low salaries and self-image to contend with, not to mention the difficulties in obtaining funding to try to remedy these and other issues within the profession. Clearly, more research on the current state of the profession is needed to be able to truly assess the current environment and aid in developing strategies to effectively move the entire profession in a positive direction.

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