

## **Retirement & Recruitment: A Deeper Look**

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*American Libraries* sounded an alarm with the March 2002 article entitled  
“Reaching 65: Lots of Librarians Will Be There Soon.” This article has been used

ALA learned that only 87,409, or less than half, of those reported librarians had the master's degree or higher. Degrees by discipline are not reported in the decennial census, so we do not know how many have an MLS itself. But possession of a master's degree or above in some field of inquiry seems a reasonable surrogate for the MLS. In 2000, the number of people who said they were librarians and also said they had a master's degree or above had increased to 106,228.

The 1990-based analysis predicted a significant wave of retirement that would peak in the 2010 to 2014 period. Updating the forecast with 2000 Census data, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 predicts a similar retirement surge in the near future. The main difference is that retirements now appear to peak slightly later—between 2015 and 2019. In total, the ten-year period beginning in 2010 will see 45 percent of today's librarians reach age 65. This surge of retirement represents the early-wave of baby boom librarians crossing the threshold of age 65.

In addition to the wave of retirements, several other related trends became evident in our analysis. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of working master's degree librarians grew by 18,819, an increase of nearly 22 percent. Much of this growth came from librarians following a career path that included a late entry or re-entry into the field, a sharp contrast from more traditional pathways to careers, and the pattern was more pronounced with female librarians as shown in figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 shows the number of female librarians by age in 1990 and 2000. During the 1990s, the number of female librarians grew by 30 percent or 20,202 people--from 67,239 to 87,441. The largest net increase occurred among women in their late thirties and early forties. Of particular note are the 27,469 female librarians age 35-44. A

decade later when they had aged to 45-54, their ranks had swelled to 40,465, a 47 percent increase. A similar pattern was found among the group of female librarians who started off at age 25-34 in 1990 with 7,785 people. By the time they reached age 35-44 in 2000 their numbers had grown to 16,179. This increase of nearly 8,400 more than doubled the

