

Corinne J. Mahoney. Make Do or Jump Ship? Solo Librarians and Internal Career Advancement Opportunities. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2005. 96 pages. Advisor: Evelyn Daniel

Data for this study was collected from a questionnaire sent to a random sample of solo special librarians. Two qualitative interviews with special librarians with solo experience were also conducted. The objectives of the study were to determine if organizations provide internal career advancement opportunities for solo special librarians and to establish whether such opportunities are more prevalent in specific types of organizations.

Analysis of the data suggests that widespread internal career advancement opportunities for solo special librarians do not yet exist. However, the majority of survey respondents also indicated that they would not be interested in an internal change of position. Development within a position, also considered advancement in this study, was the type of advancement most often reported. No significant relationship between organization type and the prevalence of internal advancement opportunities emerged. Several interesting relationships among variables that could impact career planning behaviors are also described.

Headings:

Librarians – Careers

Placement of Librarians

Surveys – Special Librarians

Special Librarians – Aims and Objectives

Small Libraries

MAKE DO OR JUMP SHIP?
SOLO LIBRARIANS AND INTERNAL CAREER ADVANCEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES

by
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1. Introduction

In a 1998 Special Libraries Association (SLA) survey, Rose defined a solo librarian as “an individual who is the sole professional librarian in his or her immediate work environment.” Solo librarians may have clerical or technical assistance and may be members of a corporate network of librarians (1998). The UK synonym of the One-Man Band, however, provides the archetypal image of the solo librarian—a talented, organized, and slightly eccentric master of multi-tasking. Why are solos eccentric? Well, they enjoy and excel at being in over their heads. They do it all. They order and catalog materials, provide reference services and instruction, search, file, budget, manage, and do everything necessary to make sure the show goes on.

Much has been written about solo librarians and the roles that continuing education and networking play in their professional success and development. However, while I have been attracted by the One-Man Band idea of solo librarianship, the Generation X'er in me cannot help but wonder, what comes next? Where does the solo librarian go when he or she has mastered the show? At first glance, solo librarian positions may appear to be dead end jobs. While you may gain experience and skills that increase your marketability, does a solo have any hope for career advancement within an organization? While neither employers nor employees still expect organizations to offer lifetime careers paths, are there *any* career internal opportunities for solo librarians? The literature could not definitively answer this question.

Solo librarians have the opportunity and the leadership characteristics to be true pioneers in the information field, bringing library and information skills to new environments and roles. Solos excel at working in non-traditional environments and are comfortable making decisions. Solo librarians can and do revolutionize their organizations by linking information strategically to the organization's goals and practices. So where are the executives who started out as the corporate librarian? While solo librarians have demonstrated their ability to burrow deep into their organizations, are they striving outward and upward in their organizations as well?

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

- Do the organizations that employ solo special librarians provide internal career advancement opportunities for them?
- If yes, is there a correlation between the type of organization and the prevalence of career advancement opportunities for solo special librarians?

Solo librarians work in all types of libraries, including school media centers, academic libraries and public libraries. However, this study focused specifically on solo librarians working in special library settings. For the sake of this research, solo special librarians were operationally defined as members of the Solo Librarians Division of SLA who confirmed in a survey that they are currently the sole librarian within their immediate work environment.

“Internal career advancement opportunities” is a nebulous concept that needs to be clearly defined within the context of this study. Career advancement is most traditionally

thought of in relation to promotions and movement up a hierarchical structure. However, career paths are not the vertical, linear paths they once were. Lateral moves and any key change that increases an employee's value should also be included. After all, a librarian's role may be expanded, and he or she may even be given appropriate raises without her position ever formally changing. Such a professional is still advancing.

Additionally, "opportunities" implies the organization's willingness to develop and advance an employee regardless of whether that employee takes the opportunity.

Training, mentoring, and an organization's commitment to professional development also contribute to advancement opportunities.

"Internal career advancement opportunities" were therefore identified by positive responses to survey questions addressing:

- Formal promotions or job redesigns within the solo librarian's current position
- Formal promotions or lateral moves to new positions within the organization
- The acquisition of new skills and the development of new roles without a formal position change
- Managerial behaviors and organizational events that indicate a commitment to the solo librarian's professional development

These questions (see questions 15-27 of the survey, Appendix A) comprise an index that is used to measure the prevalence of such opportunities systematically across different organizations.

Types of organizations were operationally defined in the following ways:

- For profit versus not for profit (Survey question 2)
- Corporate, academic, public, other (Survey question 3)
- Size based on number of on-site employees (Survey question 4)
- Scope of library's patron base measured by the number of people in the librarian's primary user group (Survey question 5)
- By field or industry defined by using and modifying the SLA subject related divisions. (Survey question 6)

This study was designed primarily to provide solo librarians and those interested in solo librarianship with job planning information. With an awareness of the prevalence of advancement opportunities and the types of industries offering the most opportunities, solos will be armed to make more informed and strategic career decisions.

2. Literature Review

The Solo Landscape

Several adjectives have been used in the literature to describe solo librarians. Judith Siess (1999) characterizes librarians attracted to solo positions by their independence, desire for variety and attraction to jobs that provide a heightened sense of self worth. She states that solos must be flexible, creative, organized, analytical, independent, and confident. They are “team player[s] who specialize in working alone” (33). Siess means that while solo librarians must enjoy working with people, they must also be comfortable with the prospect of being the sole person in the organization who does what they do. Despite a solo librarian’s continual contact with his or her colleagues, professional isolation will at times present a barrier to job satisfaction and development. The literature abounds with recommendations, if not outright directives, that solo librarians must develop a support network of other library professionals to overcome such isolation (Baines 1990, Siess 2001, Bryant 1995).

Guy St. Clair (1997) maps out a successful career in Solo Librarianship as one built on three layers of a “Power and Influence Pyramid.” The layers include Service to Customers, Political Awareness and Shared Vision and Partnership with Management. St. Clair’s article is useful because it gets at the fact that a solo librarian is successful when he or she has influence within the organization. Librarians are often characterized as being uninterested in management and office politics, yet key alliances are necessary

within an organization if the librarian wants to effect change. More so than their professional counterparts in larger libraries, solos cannot afford to shy away from the political backdrop of their organizations. Solos must position themselves strategically in ways that will lead to power, influence and control. In short, solos must be masters of their trade who are achievement oriented, who build on a foundation of customer service excellence and who also possess a certain business savvy. Successful solos must thrive in an environment where “out of sight” might not lead only to out of mind, but also out of a job.

Career Advancement

The literature abounds with information on the professional development of solo librarians within the context of continuing education and the expansion of the services and duties of the solo librarian. Siess (2001) spends a good deal of time in *The OPL Sourcebook* encouraging solo librarians to develop and promote their libraries. She also focuses on the necessity for continuing education, specifically for keeping technology skills up to date. However, the librarian’s development is always portrayed in conjunction with the library’s development; the possibility of formal promotions or position changes is markedly absent. The librarian’s one avenue for professional advancement is to advance the value of the library. There is scarce literature available that addresses intra-organizational mobility for solo librarians.

Like Siess, Farmer et al (1996) also remind us that career advancement does not alone equate to upward movement. Career advancement includes developing skills and

knowledge within the same position, lateral moves, promotions and even scaling back to part-time work. Career development or advancement involves key career changes that guide an employee down a chosen path.

Beyond employer hopping, what career moves are available to solo librarians? Ball (1998) reviews business related research studies that have shown that organizations now have flatter, less career tracked hierarchies than in the past. These new hierarchies have diminished the availability of vertical career moves for all employees. Employees used to expect that with hard work and success, they would naturally and rightfully progress up their corporations' corporate ladders. Flatter hierarchies have resulted in a marked change in the psychological contract between employer and employee. The psychological contract refers to the "perceived reciprocal obligations" that exist between employees and employers (Aryee and Chen, 2004).

The literature shows that as organizations have changed by downsizing and flattening their hierarchies in order to remain viable, the psychological contract has shifted. Whereas the psychological contract was once relational, where an employee counted on an employer to provide security and promotion opportunities, it has shifted to a transactional contract. Organizations no longer provide lifelong career paths; today's organizations demand a dispensable work force. Rather than accepting a job based on what the organization will offer in the future, employees are accepting jobs based on how the job will give them skills and experience now that will help them advance their careers later. Employees have responded to their own dispensability by adopting a careerist

orientation. A careerist orientation refers to an employee who builds a successful career by accruing professional achievements in different work environments. Personal and organizational goals once were aligned long term; professionals were successful if their organizations were successful. Now personal and organizational goals are only compatible in the short term (Aryee and Chen, 2004).

With the limited opportunities for lifelong career progression within a given organization, Ball (1998) observes that companies have shifted the focus from career development to personal development. Employers are introducing mentoring programs and offering professional trainings not to groom employees for designated future roles, but as a benefit to the employees in lieu of a secure career track. Aryee and Chen suggest that organizations are wise to provide these types of career growth opportunities as a way to instill trust in employees. Trust will help to mitigate the effects of the careerist orientation and increase loyalty to the organization.

Boundaryless Career

The careerist orientation that Aryee and Chen discuss is essentially the same concept as that of the “Boundaryless Career” which has attracted much attention in the business literature in recent years. A boundaryless career is simply the opposite of the traditional organizational, or bounded, career where an individual’s career unfolds within a single employment setting (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Rather, employees are increasingly mobile. They identify themselves by their skills and achievements, not by their organizational affiliation. Mobile employees advance their boundaryless careers by

taking increasingly advanced or compensated positions at different employment settings (Rosenbaum and Miller, 1996).

Loogma et al (2002) provide a good development of this construct. Careers are no longer bounded by an organization's walls or corporate structure. Employees, therefore, have adopted pragmatic and entrepreneurial answers to decreased job security within a given organization. Many identify not with the organization, but with an externally defined career, often cementing this identity through participation in professional organizations. At the same time, Loogma et al suggest that professional identity must also remain flexible; a single skill set or professional identity may not carry an individual through his or her lifelong career. Boundaryless careers grew out of "ambiguity, uncertainty and a need for flexible behavior" on the part of employees (324).

Farmer et al (1996) echo the boundaryless career concept when they state that the career trends of solo librarians tend "to be largely a matter of chance and opportunity" (14). However, solos seem to embrace only half of the boundaryless career concept. Solos have long been comfortable advancing their careers seeking new challenges or better compensation by changing employers. Acceptance of the flexible professional identity part of the concept lacks evidence in the solo librarianship literature. Solos seem as loyal to the library profession as workers once were to their employers. While solos are willing to jump from organization to organization, are they willing to jump into new, non-traditional roles within organizations? Are there any such opportunities even available?

Generational Changes

If a lack of literature about solo special librarians advancing to non-traditional jobs within their organizations is a sign that such mobility is not occurring, that may soon change. Younger generations have grown up without expecting job security. Many have seen their parents, who were loyal to employers for years, laid off. These younger workers exhibit more flexibility than earlier generations, and are committed to lifelong learning. They try to broaden talents by hopping from job to job and demanding that their job descriptions include training and the acquisition of new skills (Poskaitis, 1999). They are more comfortable with fluid career paths. Budding solo special librarians, therefore, may be more inclined than their older counterparts to shift professional identities and work in non-traditional roles.

Gender and Boundaries

Librarianship remains a predominantly female profession. It has been suggested in the business literature that women are more suited to boundaryless careers than their male counterparts. Women have historically experienced more fragmented or discontinuous careers. Additionally, women are more used to balancing unpaid and paid work. Women are also more apt to base their success on subjective factors such as satisfaction than on traditionally male criteria such as promotions, position level and salary (Ackah and Heaton, 2004). It is unsurprising, therefore, that solo librarians have been comfortable with this type of career path for years. However, while women's careers may have historically resembled boundaryless careers more so than men's, at least one recent study

showed that both men and women are increasingly leading boundaryless careers at the same rate (Ackah and Heaton, 2004).

Possibilities without boundaries

A 1998 survey of members of the Solo Librarian Division of SLA indicates that the majority of solo special librarians are in corporate settings working with scientific or technical collections. However, the academic credentials of the survey respondents suggest that most of these librarians do not come from scientific or technical backgrounds (Rose). Working in highly specialized settings, can librarians climb up the corporate ladder or even move laterally within the organization without the academic background to match the skill set of most of the organization's employees? Certainly knocking scientists dead for years with your information savvy does not qualify a librarian to be a scientist (or engineer or medical doctor); nor would most librarians desire these positions. However, most organizations have non-technical positions of power in a variety of different areas including sales, marketing, human resources and, most notably, management.

Douglas (2003) states that people skills and other 'soft skills' are often lacking in individuals with highly developed technical skills. He also goes on to state that managers need these skills to be successful and that many organizations want to hire managers from within. Are the organization's corporate librarians armed with soft skills and information skills the perfect candidates for upper management positions? Where are the executive level employees who started out as corporate librarians?

In a short article that gives advice to solo librarians on career planning, Linda Appel (1999) makes three assertions:

1. There are no career paths for solo librarians within a given organization.
2. There is unlikely to be anyone in the organization able to serve as a mentor for the library profession aspects of the career.
3. Solo-librarians typically do not have time for continuing education due to job demands.

She essentially argues that career development for solo librarians comes in two varieties: fix the job you have by making it more rewarding or find a new employer. Is Appel's career planning ultimatum really exhaustive? If solo librarians can forge career paths within their organizations, mentors will exist for the organizations' future solo librarians. Mentorship has been shown to have a powerfully positive effect on career success (Allen et al, 2004). With mentorship and support, increased organization-wide understanding and value may well follow. It seems a waste to jump ship every time a new professional challenge is desired. Generally, it is in an organization's best financial interest to decrease turnover (Poskaitis, 1999). So, if solo librarians can prove their worth to the organization in a variety of contexts, the value of this position will increase.

Some literature exists about librarians moving into non-traditional roles. While not focusing or elaborating on how to do it, Bryant (1995) leaves room for the possibility that solo librarians can use their skills to be promoted into new areas of practice. In "You Can Take Your MLS Out of the Library," Williams (1995) goes even further to define alternative roles that librarians can take on in organizations. While many of the positions do not seem like information jobs, Williams describes these roles not in terms of leaving

library or information management work, but in terms of broadening the scope of information work and librarians. She also mentions the growing trend that new graduates are more open to the concept of moving out of, and later returning to, information work. Librarians can work in sales and marketing. Librarians are editors, publishers, writers, teachers, and trainers. Library skills are portable and can be transferred to a seemingly limitless number of positions. However, no studies show to what extent librarians are transferring these skills.

Koenig (1991) further develops the argument that many library skills are transferable, focusing on the following skills: knowledge of information sources, information and data organization and interpersonal skills and need elicitation. However, in a statement encouraging librarians to view groups of non-librarians taking up information work as allies, he cautions that, “our long tradition of vertical stratification, in turn deriving from our concern for professionalism, [has] produced a psychological mind set against horizontal mobility and against taking advantage of new opportunities” (23). Do solos share this same mind set?

3. Methodology & Analytical Techniques

This research study took both a quantitative and qualitative approach. A survey was sent to a random sample of 204 members of the Solo Librarian Division of SLA to assess the climate of career advancement opportunities within their organizations. This data was supplemented by field research involving in depth qualitative interviews with two solo special librarians as well as the often extensive commentary graciously provided on many surveys.

Survey

Using the Solo Librarian Division of SLA's directory as a sampling frame, a systematic probability sample of 204 solo special librarians was selected.

Prior research on solo librarians has often used the electronic listserv of this division. However, disproportionate use of listservs among certain members often occurs. Unknown factors may cause more active participation by certain types of members. Additionally, some members of the division may not subscribe to the list, and non-members can subscribe. There is no guarantee that a sample taken from this listserv would provide a representative sample of solo librarians. This assumption is supported by one respondent who commented that she would not have responded to the survey had I merely sent it out to the listserv. I, therefore, mailed a survey with a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to each person in the sample. (See Appendix A and B)

Questions were designed to address the following main topics:

- Type of organization
- Current career advancement opportunities at the librarian's organization
- Librarian's current perception of the availability of career advancement opportunities within the organization
- Librarian's satisfaction with current employer
- Personal and organizational demographics which may provide alternative explanations for perceived relationships between industry and career advancement opportunities.

As shown in the review of the literature, career paths today cannot accurately be measured by hierarchical advances or promotions. Advancement also occurs through lateral moves that broaden an individual's experiences and skill sets, by the acquisition of new skills and responsibilities within a position. These types of advancement should be included in study measurements of career success (Arthur et al, 2005).

In order to gauge career advancement opportunities accurately, or at least consistently across respondents, an index was created using survey questions based on tangible events. The index addresses all of the following dimensions of career advancement:

In-post career advancement:

The acquisition of significant new skills, knowledge or responsibilities while remaining in the same position.

Promotion advancement:

The acquisition of a new title with a corresponding pay or benefit increase suggesting increased responsibilities or power.

Lateral advancement:

Any official non-promotional move to a new position within the organization.

Additionally, questions included in the index asked about managerial behaviors and job openings to help assess the true climate. After all, some solos may not engage in career advancement behaviors by choice rather than due to a lack of opportunity.

Survey questions 15-26 comprise the 12 point index that gauges the level of career advancement opportunities within the organization. One point was given to each affirmative response.

Question 13 asks respondents whether they would be interested in a different position at their current place of employment if one were available for which they were qualified. This question is to determine whether interest in internal mobility on the librarian's part affects the prevalence of career advancement opportunities.

Question 14 asks about the fate of the respondent's predecessor (if the respondent started his or her current position within the past five years). While the question may be somewhat based on hearsay, it was designed to shed light on the career mobility habits of solo librarians based on a concrete phenomenon.

The multipart question 27, which asks about the respondents' likelihood of remaining at their current place of employment (and reasons for leaving, if applicable), was designed to assess whether the prevalence of internal career advancement opportunities is related to solos' decisions to remain with an employer over time.

Finally, survey questions 28-32 are subjective in nature. They ask librarians to assess their satisfaction with their current job, the advancement opportunities at their current employer and their level of influence within their organizations.

Respondents were also provided with space and encouraged to add qualitative comments about career advancement and solo librarianship.

The adjusted response rate for the survey, removing unusable surveys from the sample, was 49%. (See page 22 for more information on the response rate). Data from the surveys was coded and entered into SPSS for statistical analysis.

- The bivariate correlation between the career advancement index score and the various organization type fields (questions 2-6) were determined and tested for significance.
- The correlations between the index score and each other variable in the survey were determined to uncover possible strong correlations among the data (e.g. demographic data) and tested for significance.
- Finally, the correlation relationships among all of the variables were determined in case there were any interesting, significant relationships that were not direct objectives of the study

In this, study significance was set at the 0.05 alpha level (2-tailed).

Field Research

The survey data in this report was supplemented by qualitative interviews conducted with two solo librarians purposively selected from different types of organizations and at different stages in their careers. Each interview was conducted separately, and I took extensive written notes. The first participant is a solo government librarian nearing retirement who works with a scientific collection. The second is a librarian working for a not for profit organization who just recently left a true solo position for a job as the library manager of a small special library. Her collection is in the population and development field.

Interview questions focused mostly on the librarian's career path at the organization (past experiences and current perception of her future). Questions were also asked about the librarian's career prior to the current organization. (See Appendix C and D for copies of the interview consent form and interview questions).

As soon as possible after each interview, an hour of dedicated time was spent writing up a draft case report.

4. Results

Summary of responses

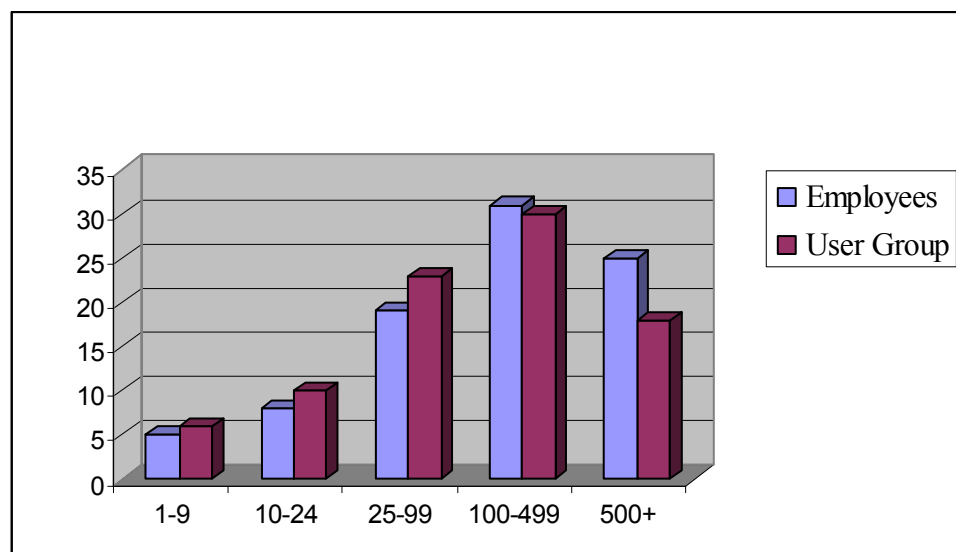
A total of 204 surveys were mailed. Two were returned as undeliverable which left a sample size of 202. Fifty-five percent of the original sample, or 112 people, responded to the survey. Twenty-two of these respondents did not meet the study criteria. They either self-selected out of the survey by notifying me or their surveys were removed from the overall analysis. Respondents did not meet the criteria if they indicated that they were not the sole professional librarian in their immediate work environment, if they were self employed, retired or a student not currently working in a solo environment. Two surveys that were missing substantial amounts of data were also removed. The final analysis, therefore, included 88 surveys. The adjusted response rate, removing the unusable surveys from the sample, was 49%.

The respondents were about evenly split between those working for not for profit and for-profit organizations. Forty-six percent indicated they worked for a not for profit organization; 52% indicated they worked for a for profit organization. The largest group of respondents was corporate librarians with 40 responses, followed by solo special academic librarians with 21, and government librarians with 12. An additional 14 chose “other.” Although it was listed as an option, none of the respondents were from public libraries.

Most respondents work in small to mid-size companies. Almost 15% of respondents work in companies with fewer than 25 employees, 21.6 % in companies with 25-99, and 35.2% in companies with 100-499. These numbers reflect the number of on-site employees. The assumption was that the number of on site employees would be more apt to affect career advancement opportunities than the total number of employees worldwide at an organization. It is unsurprising that most respondents were from smaller companies since large companies with librarians on staff are apt to employ more than one.

Primary user group size was also measured. The study sought to determine if exposure to many, or, alternatively, intense exposure to a few, might impact career advancement. There is evidence in the business literature that the number of intra-organizational network connections positively correlates to promotability (Bozionelos, 2003). The number of employees and primary users is reflected in Fig.1.

Fig. 1—Number of on-site employees and size of primary user group



As mentioned earlier, the survey question addressing field or industry (question 6) was designed by slightly modifying the divisions of SLA (removing those, such as the Solo Librarian Division, which are clearly not industry or field related). This design was chosen because the SLA divisions encompass a wide variety of fields and also would likely be a familiar method of categorization for the sample population (See survey question 6 in Appendix A for a list of options). “Other,” however, was the top response, indicating that future researchers should consider redesigning this question. Of the respondents, 18.2% could not categorize themselves within one of the given fields. The other top responses included Engineering (10.2%), Medical or Health Sciences (10.2%), Government Information (9.1%) and Education (8.0%). (See Table 1). These results are in line with the 1998 survey of the SLA Solo Librarian Division which showed that most solos are corporate librarians working with scientific or technical collections.

Table 1—Fields of respondents’ organizations

| Field | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Other | 16 | 18.2 |
| Engineering | 9 | 10.2 |
| Medical or Health Sciences | 9 | 10.2 |
| Government Information | 8 | 9.1 |
| Education | 7 | 8.0 |
| Environment and Resource Management | 5 | 5.7 |
| Museums, Arts & Humanities | 5 | 5.7 |
| Legal | 4 | 4.5 |
| Business and Finance | 4 | 4.5 |
| Physics, Astronomy or Math | 3 | 3.4 |
| Science-Technology | 3 | 3.4 |
| Transportation | 2 | 2.3 |
| Food, Agriculture & Nutrition | 2 | 2.3 |
| Advertising and Marketing | 2 | 2.3 |
| Information Technology | 2 | 2.3 |

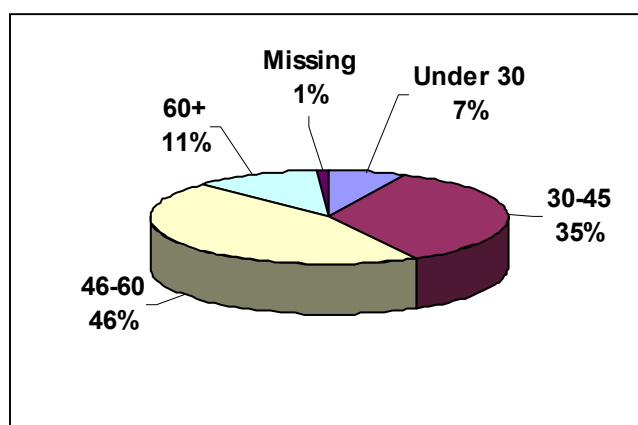
| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|-------|
| Social Science | 1 | 1.1 |
| Insurance/Employee Benefits | 1 | 1.1 |
| Pharmaceutical and Health Technology | 1 | 1.1 |
| Biomedical and Life Sciences | 1 | 1.1 |
| News and Journalism | 1 | 1.1 |
| Petroleum and Energy Resources | 1 | 1.1 |
| Missing | 1 | 1.1 |
| Total | 88 | 100.0 |

The average number of years the respondents had been in the library profession was 15.8 (Median: 15), and the average number of years the respondents had been with the same employer was 8 (Median: 5). Most respondents (56.8%) reported having no supervisory responsibilities at all. Of those who did act in a supervisory role, most supervised one person. Comments on the surveys reflected that many of these supervisees were volunteers (e.g. in hospital libraries) and students (e.g. in academic special libraries), which may explain the positive correlations found between not for profit employers (more apt to have volunteers) and number of supervisees and between academic employers and number of supervisees.

About 91% percent of all respondents had earned their MLS; of the remainder, several respondents mentioned that they are currently working toward or have taken some course work toward it. Close to six percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree only; 23.9% held a master's degree other than an MLS (either in addition or in place of an MLS), 2.3% held a PhD, and 5.7% held other degrees (for example, paralegal certificate or JD).

Four broad age categories were used: under 30; 30-45; 46-60; and 60+. The majority of respondents (56.9%) were 46 or older. Only 6.8% of respondents were under 30; 35.2% were between 30 and 45. As expected, the vast majority of respondents indicated they were female (89.8%).

Fig. 2—Respondents by age group



A large majority of respondents (70.5%) indicated they would not be interested in another position at their current employer if one were available for which they were qualified.

Survey comments suggest that there are a variety of reasons why this would be so, but most had common themes. Some love their jobs:

Personally, I have no wish to “advance.” After many years in corporate libraries, I like what I do: being a solo librarian. If I moved up, I would have to manage more people. I have no interest in that.

Once again, I am in a truly unique position here...I have no interest in advancing in any way within the organization. I’ve spent 25 years as a professional librarian and I’ve finally found my DREAM job! I have no interest in chasing technological advancements to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.

Some see adequate advancement opportunities within their own position, and prefer to advance that way:

My title has gone from Marketing Librarian to Business Resource Specialist to Business Intelligence Manager. Love my job!

It is largely up to solo librarians to create their own opportunities within an organization—by developing new projects, projecting the worth of the library to its patrons, thinking creatively and being service oriented.

Many view leaving their positions for another in the organization as leaving the library profession:

These “no’s” sure are depressing, [in response to survey questions] but to change jobs here will mean leaving the library profession. The closest match *might* be IT/database design. Not interested.

Others simply could not imagine a job at their organization which would be desirable:

I am the only library trained person in an organization that “worships” engineers. The only move I could make would be to something administrative or clerical.

Many of the comments seemed to be coming from a common voice. Solos were not interested in replacing their positions with more management heavy roles or with roles that take them away from the information work that they love.

Those who indicated interest in changing positions also echoed this same sentiment:

I like what I'm doing, and any "advancement" beyond this position would *probably* take me away from that. Therefore, it would take a very unusual offer to pull me away, whether internal or external.

Many of the respondents mentioned barriers to internal advancement:

In a small organization, it is very difficult to advance... In a profit driven organization, support groups do not get the recognition they should, in my experience.

My responsibilities keep increasing as has my management role, but after asking for a title change and raise along with it, I was declined... I was just lamenting to my employer that if there was no place to move "up" to, I probably wouldn't be here long.

The legal environment can be very frustrating if you're not an attorney. Without a J.D., you don't get as much respect, responsibility or influence... On the plus side, working for a law firm is interesting... But, if I could it over again, I'd get my J.D. first before working for a law firm. Without it, you also get to do a lot of clerical work.

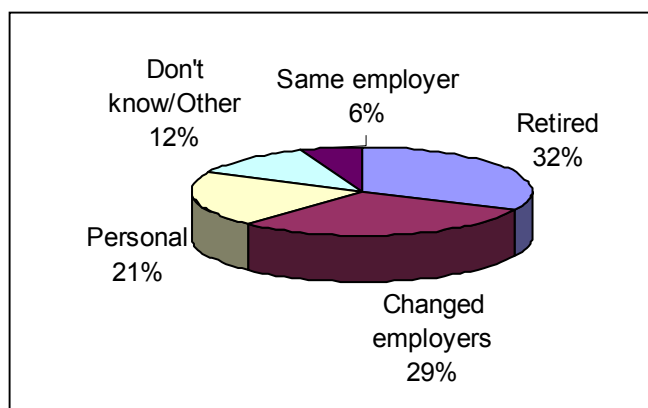
Some advancement problems stem from a tendency to tie salary and title to the position rather than the person, making progression more difficult. Until I came here, they had not thought very much about a career ladder for the librarians, as they had for the research staff.

No surveys came back with comments suggesting that a respondent had a clear idea of what his or her next internal career move would be.

In order to determine recent career mobility patterns based on concrete answers, those respondents who had been in their position for fewer than five years and who had predecessors were asked what happened to their predecessors. Of the 34 respondents who answered the question, 32% stated retirement, 29% stated changed employers, and 21% stated personal reasons (relocated, family, etc.). Twelve percent did not know or it was

for another reason, and only 6% (2 respondents) of respondents' predecessors remained at the same employer but moved to a different position. These results suggest that internal career mobility is not the norm for solo librarians, and, furthermore, most solos are not interested in it.

Fig. 3—If applicable, fate of respondents' predecessors (N=34)



Questions 15-26 comprise the 12 point index corresponding to the prevalence of career advancement opportunities offered by an organization. The range was 0-12 and the mean was 4.42. For detailed summaries of responses to each question, please see Appendix E, and for further analysis of the index results see page 38.

There was a strong and significant positive correlation between the advancement index and question 30, which asked respondents about their perception of whether there were career advancement opportunities at their current employer [Pearson Correlation=.432, 2-tailed sig.=.000, N=87]. This correlation suggests that the index is indeed successful at capturing the construct of career advancement opportunities. Moreover, it should be more reliable than question 30 as a measurement. Using this index based on questions that

measure concrete events and behaviors ensures that respondents are being measured according to the study's definition of career advancement, and not respondents' own varying concepts of it.

While all of the results to the individual questions making up the index will not be presented here, some of the more interesting or telling results are highlighted. (Again, see Appendix E for a detailed summary of all of the responses).

Over half of respondents stated that a manager had not had a conversation with them about their career goals. Only 18.2% stated that in the past year a job for which they were qualified (at an equal or higher level than their current position) had been available, regardless of whether they were interested in it.

Interestingly, over 20% of respondents stated that they had at one time held a different position at their current employer, suggesting that internal career mobility is indeed taking place. (Although some of these responses may reflect employees who started with a company before becoming the librarian). Twenty two and seven tenths percent reported receiving a promotion in the previous five years, indicating that some advancement in the traditional sense is also indeed occurring. Only 8%, however, reported making an official lateral job change in the past five years.

Only 6.8% of respondents report working for organizations with mentoring programs. This low prevalence of mentorship programs may be a factor that influences solo

librarians' lack of interest in changing positions internally. Librarians often come from different career and educational backgrounds than most other employees in the organization, and they may not understand what other careers at the organization would be like. Just as other employees tend to have a difficult time understanding what a librarian does, the reverse is also likely to be true. The business literature suggests that mentorship significantly impacts career advancement for employees (Allen et al, 2004).

Not surprisingly, the questions that received the most affirmative responses tended to be those measuring *in post* career advancement:

- 78.4% reported attending trainings paid for or led by their employer in the past year.
- 85.2% report that their employer pays for membership(s) to professional organizations
- 86.4% report that their employer pays for costs associated with professional conferences, workshops or activities.

Despite a seeming lack of advancement opportunities, most of the respondents are not planning to leave their organizations any time soon. As shown in Fig. 4, 89.8% reported they are likely or very likely to remain at their employer for one year, and 62.1% reported they are likely to remain at their employer for the next five years; 20.9% stated they were likely to remain for 10 years.

Fig. 4—Likelihood respondents will remain at current employer for one year

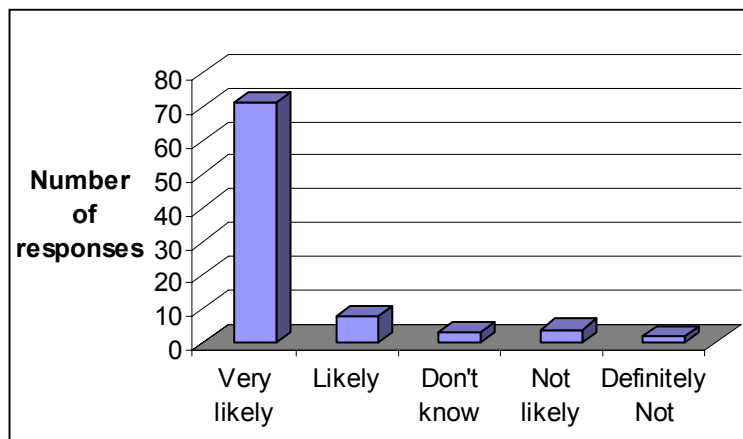


Fig. 5—Likelihood respondents will remain at current employer for five years

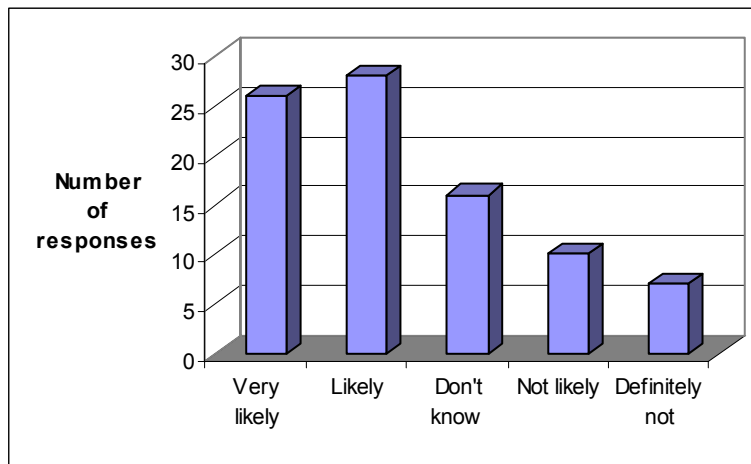
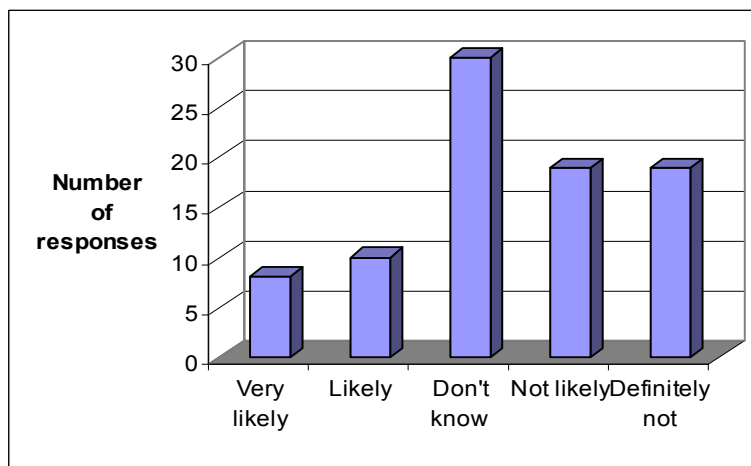
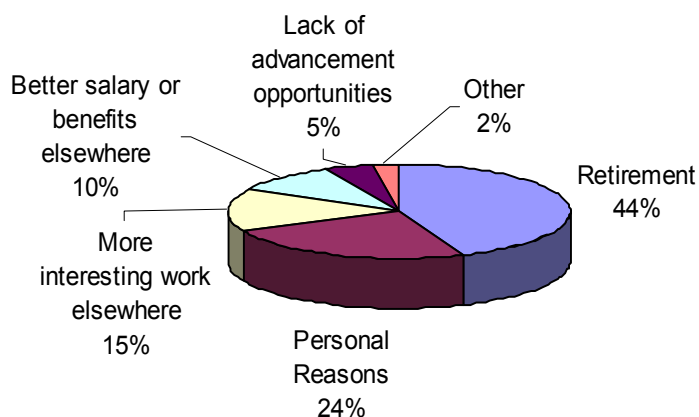


Fig. 6—Likelihood respondents will remain at current employer for ten years



The trend toward leaving at the 10 year mark is not a probable indication of dissatisfaction with the current employer. The drop may be attributed to the fact that many of the respondents are within 10 years of retirement. In fact 18 respondents, or 20% of all survey respondents, explicitly stated that retirement was the reason they intended to leave. In fact, it was the number one reason for leaving. Personal reasons followed by more interesting work elsewhere were the next most common responses.

Fig. 7—Reasons respondents intend to leave current employers (N=41)

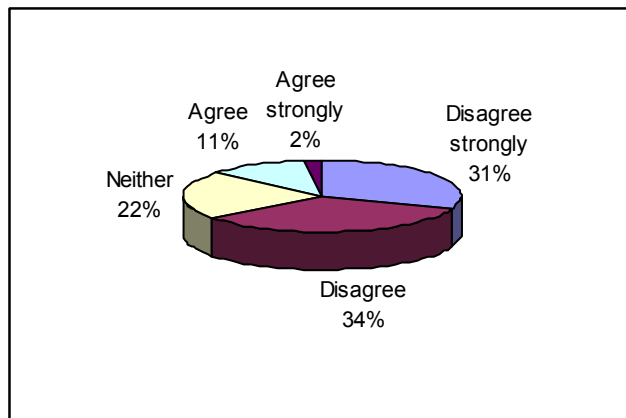


Interestingly, even though solos did not rate their employers high in terms of offering career advancement opportunities, the lack of advancement does not translate into likelihood to leave. Indeed there was no significant correlation between the advancement index and likelihood of staying with an employer. Advancement does not seem to motivate most solos.

Solos do believe they are developing professionally in their current roles. As shown in Fig. 8, 64.8% agreed or agreed strongly that they are currently gaining skills that would make them more marketable as their career progresses, and 69.3% are satisfied with the progression of their career at their current employer. There was no significant correlation

between the advancement index and satisfaction, providing further evidence that solos do not base career satisfaction on advancement. Only 13.8% agree or agree strongly that there are career advancement opportunities for them at their current employer.

Fig. 8—Respondents’ level of agreement to the statement “There are career advancement opportunities for me at my current place of employment.”



A more disheartening result was the response to the questions regarding organizational influence. More than half of the respondents could not agree with the statement, “I am currently in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.” Furthermore, over 60% did not agree to the statement, “In the foreseeable future, I could be in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.” I had hypothesized that the second question would receive a higher agreement rate since it gives room for those who are new in their positions to gain influence. This decline could suggest that some solos actually foresee losing some of the influence they already have.

Fig. 9—Respondents’ level of agreement to the statement “I am currently in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.”

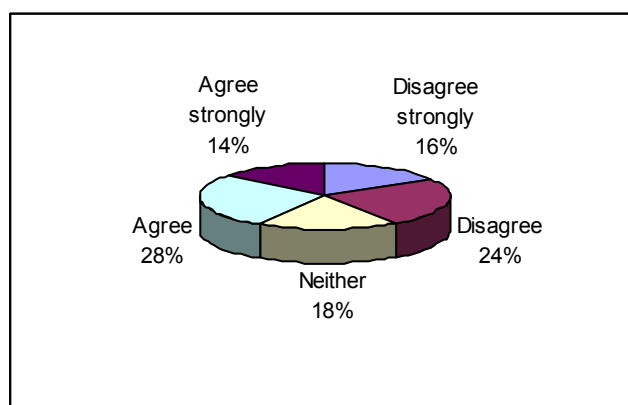
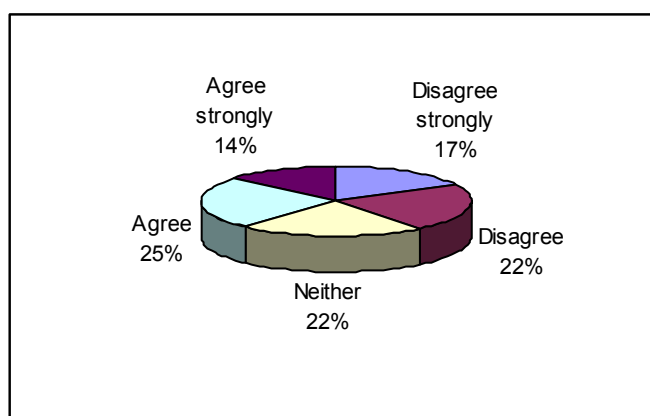


Fig. 10—Respondents’ level of agreement to the statement “In the foreseeable future, I could be in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.”



Career Advancement Analysis

The first research question is:

Do the organizations that employ solo special librarians provide internal career advancement opportunities for them?

Two pieces of data address this question. Respondents were subjectively asked to provide their level of agreement with the following statement: “There are career advancement opportunities for me at my current place of employment.” Respondents answered

according to a 5 point scale ranging from Agree Strongly (coded 4) to Disagree Strongly (coded 0).

As demonstrated in Fig. 8, 13.8% agreed or agreed strongly, and 64.3% disagreed or disagreed strongly. Another 21.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. The mean response was 1.2, with a standard deviation of 1.07. While not definitive, this data suggests that most solo special librarians do not perceive plentiful career advancement opportunities at their organizations. However, it is worth noting that close to 14% agreed to some extent, suggesting that internal advancement opportunities do indeed exist.

The above analysis represents the respondents' perception of advancement opportunities, which may represent a variety of constructs. The second piece of data used to measure career advancement opportunities was the less subjective Career Advancement Index described in the methodology section. This 12 point index was used to measure career advancement by tracking whether actual events that indicate advancement opportunities occurred. The mean result was a score of 4.42.

Unfortunately, we do not have data from a general sample of American workers or other comparable professionals to determine whether this is a high, low or average number. However, we can presume based on the relatively low value and the subjective response to the career advancement question above that advancement opportunities are not widespread.

Table 2—Career advancement index scores

| | N | Min. | Max. | Mean | Mode | Median | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Advancement Index | 88 | 1 | 9 | 4.42 | 4 | 4 | 1.82 |

The second stated research question is:

Is there a correlation between the type of organization and the prevalence of advancement opportunities for solo special librarians?

Type of organization was operationalized in the following ways:

- For Profit vs. Not For Profit (question 2)
- Corporate, Government, Academic, Public or Other (question 3)
- Number of on-site employees (question 4)
- Number of people who make up the librarian's primary user group (question 5)
- Industry or field (question 6)

There were no strong or significant correlations found between the advancement index and any of these fields.

Because of the great degree of variety in the responses to question 6, which asks for the type of industry (in an attempt to elicit subject matter), statistical analysis could not usefully be performed on the data. However, I correlations for the two most common responses (Engineering [yes/no] and Medical or Health Sciences [yes/no]) were calculated against the Advancement Index. Responses were also inductively categorized into a Science/Engineering/Technology yes or no question. The responses included as

affirmative were: Biomedical and Life Sciences, Petroleum & Energy Resources, Pharmaceutical & Health Technology, Food Agriculture & Nutrition, Information Technology, Physics, Astronomy & Math, Science-Technology, Environment & Resource Management, Engineering, and Medical or Health Sciences. The hypothesis was that in more technical fields, librarians might have fewer advancement opportunities since most (although not all) librarians are unlikely to have the subject specialty knowledge or degree that might be necessary for intra-organizational advancement. However, as shown below, there were no significant or strong correlations between any of the various types of industries and career advancement measurements.

Table 3—Correlation between organization type variables and career advancement index

| | Non-Profit | Corporate | Govern. | Acad. | Eng. | Medical | Science |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|---------|--------|-------|---------|---------|
| Advancement Index | -0.112 | 0.165 | 0.053 | -0.117 | 0.127 | -0.013 | 0.012 |

Entries are Pearson correlations. The above correlations are *not* significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Similarly, no strong or significant correlations existed between organizational types and the more subjective advancement question (question 30).

The only significant correlation found between an organization type and a potential indicator of advancement was a negative correlation between respondents in the Engineering field and the level of agreement with the statement of influence (question 31).

Table 4—Correlation between organization type equals engineering and solo’s perception of his/her current level of influence

| | Currently have influence? |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Engineering? | -.223* |

Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 level (2-tailed)

Other Advancement Index Correlations

While the advancement index score did not correlate to organizational type, some interesting relationships emerged between the index and a couple of variables.

Advancement index negatively correlates to years in the profession. This may be due to the fact that the longer someone is in the position, the more apt he or she is to have a higher level job (and therefore fewer advancement opportunities); this is sometimes termed the mastery effect. However, it could also indicate something more sinister because there was no correlation in the study between age group and whether respondents would be interested in an internal career position change.

Table 5—Correlation between years in profession and career advancement index

| | Advancement Index |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Years in Profession | -.217* |

Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 (2-tailed)

The advancement index was positively and significantly correlated with respondents’ level of agreement to the statement, “I am currently gaining valuable skills that will make me more marketable as my career progresses,” which is a relationship that is also intuitive.

Table 6—Correlation between agreement that one is currently gaining marketable skills and career advancement index

| | Advancement Index |
|---|-------------------|
| Gaining skills | .231* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 (2-tailed) | |

Finally, there were also strong, positive correlations between the index score and the respondents' level of agreement to questions 31 and 32, which assess their perceptions of their current and future levels of influence within the organization. This relationship is important because these strong significant correlations suggest that if your career is not advancing at a company (be it *in post* advancement or internal mobility), you are unlikely to play a key influencing role in your organization.

Table 7—Correlation between level of influence and career advancement index

| | Advancement Index |
|---|-------------------|
| Have influence now | .311** |
| Will have influence | .391*** |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (2-tailed) | |

Other Interesting Data Results

While this study was unable to make any direct determination between organizational type and the prevalence of advancement opportunities for solo special librarians, many interesting and telling relationships among different variables were revealed that are worth reporting and can impact career planning decisions.

Years in Profession and Age

As would be expected, there were strong, significant correlations between the variables of years in profession and age. Several other fields correlated to one of these two variables.

More experienced solos are more apt to work in large companies than their less established counterparts. Years in profession positively correlated with the number of on-site employees. This may reflect a variety of phenomena. Experienced solo librarians in larger companies may simply be staying put, and consequently less experienced solos are not being hired into larger companies. It could also mean that larger companies are possibly eliminating solo librarian positions when the positions become vacant. Thus, less experienced solos are not getting a chance to work for larger companies. Finally, and possibly most likely, it could also mean that larger companies who depend on one librarian to serve all of their needs purposely seek out very experienced librarians.

Table 8—Correlation between number of on site employees and years in profession

| | Years in Profession |
|--|---------------------|
| On site employees | .303** |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. **p < .01 (2-tailed) | |

It has already been noted that career advancement opportunities negatively correlated to years in profession, and it is important to determine the elements of the index that may have had an impact on that correlation. Solos with more years in the profession were less apt to have discussions with their managers about career goals and have the cost of their professional memberships covered by employers. These fields were also positively correlated to age group.

Table 9—Correlations between years of experience/age and managerial career discussions/membership costs covered

| | Years in Profession | Age Group |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Career Discussed in last year? | -.324** | -.274* |
| Membership costs covered? | -.289** | -.232* |

Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01 (2-tailed)

These correlations could conceivably be benign results of having seniority in one's position. I would presume that experienced librarians are more apt to report to upper level managers who play less of a supervisory or coaching role than the middle or lower level managers who may be more apt to manage less experienced librarians. Based on the literature about the boundaryless career, the benefit of having the cost of professional memberships covered is likely becoming more prevalent. As new librarians enter the job market, costs once considered the employee's responsibility such as professional memberships are now being included as a benefit in lieu of a secure job track. More experienced librarians are more likely to have been hired when companies were not expected to cover such expenses.

However, other relationships in the data suggest something less benign is happening with experienced solos and career advancement. Experienced librarians were also less apt to say that they are currently gaining valuable skills, are satisfied with their career progression at their current employer, and have or foresee having influence on important policy or strategy decisions.

Table 10—Correlations between years in profession and subjective career advancement variables

| | Years in Profession |
|---|---------------------|
| Gaining valuable skills? | -.357*** |
| Satisfied with career progression? | -.323** |
| Have influence now | -.312** |
| Foresee having influence | -.308** |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. **p < .01, ***p < .001 (2-tailed) | |

Educational Level

Some telling relationships occurred between respondents' level of education and other variables.

MLS graduates have been with their employers for fewer years than those without an MLS. This may reflect two phenomena. First, I would imagine that solo librarians without an MLS are more apt to have reached their current position through an internal or lateral job move, whereas MLS graduates are likely to enter the organization at the librarian level. This hypothesis is supported by the positive correlation between having held a previous position at the employer and having a bachelor's degree as the highest level degree. MLS graduates were also less apt than those without an MLS to have made a lateral job move in the past five years. Second, as the literature suggests, solos have long been unafraid of jumping from employer to employer in pursuit of a new challenge or better compensation. Solos with an MLS are likely to qualify for more librarian job openings. This propensity for employment hopping could account for shorter tenure at their current places of employment.

Table 11—Correlations relating to MLS vs. non-MLS librarians and career mobility

| | Highest degree held: bachelor's | Have MLS |
|--|---------------------------------|----------|
| Years with employer | .302** | -.222* |
| Held previous position | .251* | -.208 |
| Lateral move in last 5 years | .107 | -.252* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01 (2-tailed) | | |

Solos who indicated a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education were more apt to report internal job openings available (at their current level or higher) for which they were qualified than their MLS bearing peers. This relationship may suggest that MLS graduates consider themselves more highly qualified than their non-MLS colleagues, and therefore would consider fewer jobs to be at their current level or higher. Such a question might also indicate that MLS degreed solos are less open to considering non-traditional roles and may not be as motivated to learn about, or be as aware of, internal job openings.

Table 12—MLS vs. non-MLS librarians and prevalence of internal job openings

| | Highest degree held: bachelor's | Have MLS |
|--|---------------------------------|----------|
| Job openings? | .317** | -.260* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01 (2-tailed) | | |

Most telling of all is that interest in another position at the same employer was positively correlated to solos reporting a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education and negatively correlated to solos holding an MLS. These correlations likely reflect a different mindset between librarians who have been officially indoctrinated into the profession through formal education and those who have entered the profession through less traditional means. Librarians without an MLS may be more open to less traditional jobs. MLS librarians may be more apt to enjoy their current position because they are

prepared for what to expect. (However, it is important to note that there was not a significant correlation between satisfaction with current job progression and holding an MLS or holding a bachelor's degree only.)

Table 13—Correlations between MLS/non-MLS librarians and interest in other internal positions

| | Highest degree held: bachelor's | Have MLS |
|--|---------------------------------|----------|
| Interested in another internal position? | .279** | -.327** |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. **p < .01 (2-tailed) | | |

Having earned a different master's degree (either instead of an MLS or in addition to it) correlated positively to satisfaction with career progress at the current place of employment. Second master's degrees were often in the subject area of the organization's field. This relationship could be a result of the increased respect that subject specialists are likely to accrue or the possibility of being able to make wider organizational contributions.

Table 14—Correlation between master's degree (other than MLS) and satisfaction with career progress at current employer

| | Have other master's degree |
|---|----------------------------|
| Satisfied with career progress? | .240* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 (2-tailed) | |

As a final note on interesting relationships concerned with degree attainment, PhD graduates were more likely to be academic librarians and more apt to be male than solos without a PhD.

Table 15—PhD and significant correlations

| | Have PhD |
|---|----------|
| Gender (0=female, 1=male) | .216* |
| Academic? | .271* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 (2-tailed) | |

Organization Type

Government librarians were more apt to report internal job openings within the past year. Government agencies tend to retain rigid employment hierarchies; job openings may also be more transparent, which could account for this relationship. Government agencies may also simply have more non-technical jobs for which librarians are qualified.

Table 16—Correlation between government librarians and presence of recent internal job openings

| | Government? |
|---|-------------|
| Internal job openings? | .233* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05 (2-tailed) | |

Academic librarians were less apt to report that their organizations cover the cost of their professional memberships. They were also more apt to act in a supervisory role and supervise more people than non-academic librarians. This relationship is likely due to the fact that solo academic libraries often employ student assistants.

Table 17—Significant correlations relating to academic special librarians

| | Academic? |
|--|-----------|
| Membership costs? | -.291** |
| Number of supervisees | .253* |
| Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01 (2-tailed) | |

Intent to Stay

Almost everyone reported that they were likely to remain at their current employer for at least a year. This is a likely reflection of the sluggish job market.

However, two other fields were linked to intent to remain at current employer. Employers take notice! Solos whose employers pay for professional costs (workshops, conferences, etc.) were more apt to remain at their employers for both the next five and 10 years than their counterparts. Solos working for employers with mentoring programs were more apt to remain for 10 years. These correlations may reflect the fact that organizations who invest in developing their solo librarians professionally and who also introduce them to upper level positions in the company through mentors are more likely to attract and retain loyal solo librarians.

Table 18—Correlations between intent to stay at employer and other variables

| | Likely to stay 5 years | Likely to stay 10 years |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Professional costs? | .261* | .213* |
| Mentoring Program? | .151 | .270* |

Entries are Pearson correlations. * $p < .05$ (2-tailed)

The strongest correlations for intention to stay occurred with responses to the two final survey questions assessing perceived level of organizational influence. It is clear that solo librarians who believe they have and will continue to have influence are more apt to remain with an employer than those who do not.

Table 19—Correlations between intent to stay at current employer and perception of influence

| | Likely to stay 5 years | Likely to stay 10 years |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Have influence now | .319** | .299** |
| Will have influence in future | .450*** | .404*** |

Entries are Pearson correlations. **p < .01, *** p < .001 (2-tailed)

Promotions

Promotions have historically been the traditional, concrete measuring stick of career progression. It is worthwhile to look at relationships between promotions and other factors to assist those solos (or would be solos) with dreams of corporate corner offices.

Having been promoted at one's current place of employment in the last five years positively correlated with the following fields: number of supervisees, receiving a non-promotional title change, having a career discussion with a manager in the past year, having a manager who encouraged an internal change in the last year, internal job openings in the past year, attending trainings led by or paid for by one's employer, and perception of current and future influence over important decisions. Solos with an eye toward promotion should ask questions about these types of opportunities during the hiring or performance evaluation process.

Table 20—Significant correlations between promoted in last 5 years and other variables

| | Promoted in last 5 years? |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Number of supervisees | .251* |
| Title change? | .415*** |
| Career goals discussed? | .331** |
| Internal change encouraged? | .271* |
| Job openings? | .245* |
| Attended trainings? | .219* |

Entries are Pearson correlations. *p < .05, **p < .01, *** p < .001 (2-tailed)

Field Research Results

Case Study A: Government Librarian Nearing Retirement

The first case study was conducted with a Science Librarian working for a division of a government agency. She reports that she is likely to retire within the next 12 months.

Librarian A is responsible for all functions of the library, including collection development, interlibrary loan, reference, cataloging, training patrons, troubleshooting on equipment, web page development, and keeping abreast of new software and systems. In addition to her traditional library responsibilities, she is also heavily involved with the division's publication process. Her publication related role is twofold; she edits and compiles documents and she acts as a clearinghouse for division publications.

Her editing and compiling duties include preparing internal documents, such as editing the division's annual report. She also compiles a "Monthly Highlights" electronic document. She receives contributions and then categorizes and presents them. She also edits and compiles documents that list current publications coming out of the division, specifically highlighting those that may be controversial as a heads up to upper management.

Her library also serves as a publication clearinghouse for the division. Whenever a scientist prepares a product for presentation or publication, the document is tracked in the library. She maintains a check point to ensure that the document is formatted

appropriately and that agency affiliations and disclaimers are included as appropriate. She is also familiar with the review process and in certain cases is involved in distributing documents in need of review to appropriate experts within the division. While these roles do not fit into the traditional scope of library work, the librarian feels they help her provide better service to her patrons. She puts her hands on every single publication that comes out of the division. In doing so, she becomes intimately familiar with her scientists' research areas. This involvement allows her to develop working relationships with scientists and allows her to be more proactive in providing them with unsolicited information. She knows when a new journal comes in if any of the articles are on her patrons' "hot topic" lists.

Librarian A began working for her current employer 15 years ago. She began not as a librarian but in a temporary assignment as a Technical Information Editor. When the previous librarian left, she competed for the librarian position successfully and became a permanent employee. Because she did not have an MLS her title was not upgraded to Librarian. In the nineties, her position was cut during a government reorganization. However, the director of her division fought to have her position reinstated. It was during this time of job uncertainty that she decided to pursue her MLS. She realized that without the degree, she would not have been qualified to compete in the area for other librarian jobs.

Consistent with a solo's true "I can do anything" spirit, she went to school full time while continuing to work full time. Her director was supportive and allowed her to work

strange hours while she finished the degree. The librarian notes that she earned her degree at the right time. While she believes that her current director values the library, she does not believe he would afford her as much flexibility as the previous one. Additionally, the classification of Librarian within the government was upgraded making it a more desirable position. Even though she is a solo librarian, a career path in terms of promotions and raises exists, and she has been pleased with her career's progression.

This librarian commented that she never felt like a solo until a few years ago when her employer moved into a new building, and the library was given a new space. Her office had always been in the center of her division. She was surrounded by the scientists and could easily forge both work and social relationships with them. There was a strong sense of camaraderie that she misses in her new isolated location. While her library remains independent, she now shares space with another government library. Her library is no longer in the immediate, daily sight of her patrons. She fears that to new employees especially, she may be less visible. She still has a steady stream of users and strong relationships with her patrons. However, she reported that it is increasingly difficult to remain in the foreground of her division. For example, she worries that the director of the division may not realize how much her library is used simply because he never personally sees it. She remains confident that her services are valued by the members of her division, and she receives positive feedback from patrons and upper level managers who make sure of the library's services.

In terms of professional affiliations, this librarian has found smaller, more subject specialized professional organizations to be the most helpful. She receives support from her employer for conference and membership costs (within reasonable limits). Librarian A is collaborative in nature. She mentioned attending a conference that was held jointly between a subject specific professional librarian organization and a professional scientific organization. Holding the two conferences simultaneously allowed for increased collaboration and understanding between the librarians and their users. She was excited to see scientists milling about the librarian exhibits. She also once played host to the annual conference of the professional organization with which is most closely aligned. She does not belong to the bigger organizations, such as SLA, because they are not as relevant to her work and the membership costs are perceived as too high.

This librarian feels she has the opportunity to advance her career by improving and marketing her services. Her employer also covers related costs for training. Recent examples include a two day training session on OCLC Connexion and an off site workshop on Dreamweaver and web design.

This librarian's career, especially at the onset, struck me as being a fine example of a robust boundaryless career that happened to lead to librarianship. She began in the education field, receiving her BA in elementary education and working as a first grade teacher. She returned to graduate school and earned a master's in education with a graduate minor in political science. Government, in fact, was always her passion. After receiving her master's degree, however, she became disenchanted with education. She

stated that she experienced a lot of negativity about teachers, particularly from school administrators who participated in some of her course work. At that time, teachers were being called upon to be “social engineers,” a course she preferred not to follow.

Based on her love of government and politics, she decided to pursue a career in Washington on Capital Hill. With a positive, go getter attitude, she took off for Washington D.C. where she landed her first job on the Hill as a case worker for a congressman. Careers on Capital Hill, are, of course, contingent on reelection, and job security is never a given. Based on a combination of opportunities and the nature of Capital Hill jobs, she worked for several different congressmen throughout her early career, and one prominent senator. Her titles varied from legislative assistant to case worker to press secretary. She honed the writing skills that she uses today through writing letters to constituents, press releases, and even speeches. She kept her employers up to date and was responsible for communication with Congressional Liaison Offices.

She left the Hill when she and her husband decided to relocate away from D.C.; she was not interested in jobs in city and state government. She also found herself in a bad job economy. Despite the bleak job outlook, she was selective. She turned down an offer to do public relations work for a large insurance company because she felt the salary offered was far too low given her experience. At this point she began working for her current government employer in a temporary role.

What strikes me about this librarian is that she is a risk taker, motivated and flexible. She dealt with the constant turmoil of employment on Capital Hill, set her standards high, and was not afraid to stand out. In fact when she was in her first temporary role at her current employer, she called to have her building tested for asbestos. She speaks her mind, builds strong relationships and is comfortable talking about her value to an organization. I suspect if she were not so close to retirement, she would be doing more complaining about her library's current location or possibly even scouting out new opportunities.

Like many, Librarian A did not initially set out for a career in librarianship. In fact her professional experience as a librarian grew out of her openness to the concept of a boundaryless career well before the term was ever coined. Flexibility, confidence and enthusiasm are among the qualities that have taken her so far. This librarian thinks of career advancement in terms of taking on more responsibilities and new challenges. Clearly recognition and pay raises play a role as well. To paraphrase her words, being a solo is really all about what you make of it.

Case Study B: Librarian at a not for profit research organization

In contrast to the first case study, Librarian B has been a degreed librarian for four years, with four to five years working in library environments preceding the degree. Librarian B is just starting to settle into her career. She recently switched jobs, leaving a three year stint as a true solo librarian at a not for profit organization in the health and development field. Her new organization works in the same and related fields, but she is no longer a

true solo. She is the sole full time librarian, and she supervises two part-time professional librarians (as well as two student assistants).

Because she is not a true solo, she sees her role as slightly less grass roots and is not responsible for “doing everything.” Her new position is more clearly defined as a leadership role. She has management responsibilities and is in charge of strategic direction for the library, including improving and increasing use of library services. She is also still responsible for and enjoys providing direct services to users, such as reference and interlibrary loan. Her responsibilities also include web development (managing the library’s site on the organization’s intranet) and providing support for bibliographic software such as End Note.

Librarian B’s interest in libraries was likely sparked when she worked as an undergraduate in technical services at an academic library. After receiving her BA in International Relations, she moved to the west coast where she worked for a not for profit organization that unites agencies engaged in work that combats sexual assault. Part of her responsibilities included managing the center’s library. Additionally she coordinated training programs and was a spokesperson for sexual assault issues in front of the state legislature (an aspect of her job that she admits was outside her comfort level). She loved and focused her energy on the library aspect of her job. After leaving the organization during a lay off, she moved to the east coast where she volunteered for six months at a public library doing interlibrary loan for home bound patrons and working on the bookmobile. She then moved to Wisconsin where she worked for a year in an office job

establishing residency before beginning her graduate work toward her MLIS. While working toward her master's, she worked at the School of Education Library where she gained the bulk of her early reference experience. She also gained experience in technical services.

Her first professional job after earning her degree was the solo position she recently left. When she began this solo job, the position entailed straightforward librarian work. She and the collection supported the staff and various projects in which the organization was involved. However, while her career followed an interesting progression at the organization, she did not wield as much control over the progression as she would have liked. The organization was undergoing major changes at the time, and she increasingly was called upon to work on non-library related projects. She found herself pulled away both formally and informally from her role as the library manager.

Other senior employees had discovered that her talents could be tapped for a variety of tasks that may have seemed more pressing than the library. She was asked to participate in new projects, and she agreed as she was intrigued professionally by the new experiences. She began working *ad hoc* on new business development projects, each project lasting about one to three months. She believes that this transitional status could be viewed by some as an elevation of her rank within the organization, or, alternatively, as a demotion since she was pulled away from what she loved, in order to fill temporary roles. Eventually, she received a promotion to manager of new business with one hour of her week ("the 65th" hour, she added) allotted to library related work. Her new

responsibilities became time and labor intensive and completely removed her focus from the library. She found that when she was acting in official capacity as a librarian, she was usually doing so as a favor above and beyond her official responsibilities.

While she was not actively job searching, she learned of the opening for her current position as Head Librarian. She decided to interview for the position for practice or informational purposes as she assumed that an internal candidate would get the job. However, after the interview she decided that she wanted the position and then received an offer. The position was vacated during a period of leadership transition and had remained vacant for two years. When the position was vacated it was during a period of leadership transition. The new director of the organization decided to delay hiring until the organization was sure how the position fit into the organization. The librarian feels that this delay, which the organization used to assess the value and responsibilities of the position, set her up for success. This is an organization that made a conscious decision to hire a librarian and put a lot of thought into what the role would encompass.

When asked about professional development, Librarian B commented on both her recent solo experience and her new job. At the solo job she left, she discovered she had become uninvolved in professional development. She did not have time to participate in professional organizations, nor did she have the funding to attend library related trainings. This professional isolation combined with removal from her professional duties left her understandably unhappy. In her new position, she sees ample room for professional development. Membership to, and participation in a small specialized

professional organization is included in her job description. She is currently active on the Board of Directors of this organization. Membership fees to SLA are also included as part of the position's benefits. She is the official representative of the library, and because the organization is affiliated with a university, she participates in campus events and can attend training offered on campus. She is a member of a Scholarly Communications Working Group, comprised mostly of librarians, that meets once a month. While developing her library skills, she is simultaneously being inducted into the organization's structure and developing an institutional knowledge base. She attends a weekly lecture series where she learns about the breadth of work the organization does. She has also recently been appointed as the "go to" person for issues surrounding Open Access. She finds this role rewarding as it gives her the opportunity to learn about a topic of importance to her patrons and to her profession.

Librarian B used to think of herself as a "bouncer," and imagined moving from organization to organization throughout her career. However, she is interested now in building a long term career at her current organization. She sees room for development and progression. She remembers the impact the Director of the School of Education Library where she worked during her MLIS program was able to have on that library, and she hopes that she will be able to have a similar impact in her own career.

When asked what qualities she was looking for when she left her last job, she cited recognition for providing key and useful library services, advancement in terms of having

greater responsibility and a louder voice. She wanted a position more narrowly focused on libraries, and within a stable and supportive organization.

While she did not want to continue with her non-traditional new business development role, she remarked that having had the experience gave her skills and confidence that she might not have gained otherwise. It broadened her career experiences, and she feels that it gave her a different perspective that taught her to talk about her position in new ways. She still may be asked to do non-library related work, and she is not completely opposed to that notion. One project she has been asked to manage is the creation of an internal year book which will review the organization's projects over the last 40 years. However, she feels secure that such non-traditional roles at her new employer will not displace her role as librarian. Her skills are being utilized, not hijacked. These projects will put an organizational focus on the library rather than taking her focus away from the library.

At her current organization, while she recognizes that she is new and will have to prove herself first, she feels set up for success. As she succeeds, she believes that she will influence both library and organizational decision making. She has already been allowed to change the library's hours and make other changes without resistance.

When asked about how being a solo influences career advancement, Librarian B provided interesting insights. She reflected that being a solo requires self-initiative and the confidence to put together new services. She noted that with the exception of the academic library she worked for during her master's degree, none of the organizations

she worked for offered a career path or plan for their solo librarians. Interesting for this study, she commented that all of the organizations offered advancement opportunities, but only in areas outside of library work.

Librarian B also had an interesting take on professional networks. Similar to Librarian A, she found the most useful professional affiliation to be with a smaller, subject specialized professional organization. She did belong to SLA as a solo librarian, but found some of the listserv discussions to be distracting. While it was interesting to find out what other librarians were doing, much of the discussion was not relevant to her job. A professional network was important, but a more strategic network was believed to be most useful.

She mentioned that being a solo can lead to job insecurity. However, it also gives a librarian a well rounded experience. The library is a one stop shop, and the librarian is introduced to a variety of experiences. She is responsible for putting the spin on her own work and for tracking its success in conjunction with how it contributes to the organization's goals. Being the sole librarian in an organization makes you the instant resident expert, which of course has both positive and negative implications.

5. Discussion

Imagine Roberta who has a BA in English and four years of sales and management experience for a publishing company. Fed up with corporate America, she heads off to get her MLS. After graduating, she finds a job as a solo librarian for a government agency. She manages the agency's technical collection and becomes involved with its internal review and publication process. Seeing that the publication system is cumbersome to employees, she puts her systems analysis skills to work. She streamlines the existing process as best she can. She leads a series of short presentations about the new, easier process at departmental meetings. The number of publications begins to increase as employees find the process easier. Roberta convinces her boss, the Director of Information Services, that she needs part-time help to manage the increased work load. Eventually, she submits a proposal with her boss's approval to her division's director. The proposal is approved. Three years after she began she is promoted to the new position which she created, Director of Library Services and Communication Products Coordinator. She now oversees the publication and review process from beginning to end, is involved in public relations and marketing involving agency publications and manages her own budget. Her part-time assistant is promoted to be the full time librarian and continues to report to Roberta.

Imagine Carl who has an undergraduate degree in Marketing and Information Science. He heads straight to graduate school to earn his MLS. During school, he has an

assistantship at the Business School Library, first in reference and then in technical services. He enjoys his work and knows that a full time reference position is opening when he graduates, but he wishes that the position offered more diverse daily tasks. Carl likes to have a hand in everything. He finds out about a job running the Information Center for an advertising company and lands an interview. He is told he is too inexperienced for the job, but they are impressed with him and offer him an entry level Marketing Assistant position. He is assured they will include some Information Center duties in his job. Carl jumps at the chance to get his foot in the door. After a year as a successful Marketing Assistant, Carl is promoted to Information Center Manager when the position is vacated. Carl builds on the relationships he developed as a Marketing Assistant to provide excellent service. He loves his job, but keeps an eye on the New Business Research Department. He can definitely see a role for himself there in the future.

When I started considering a solo career, I had images of Roberta and Carl in my mind. My own concept of being a librarian is that of the skill set and not so much the place. I will be a librarian regardless of my title and environment because I will approach my job and the information work in my job as a librarian. When I started to design this study, I was convinced Roberta and Carl were already out there. Do they exist? Can they?

Yes, I think some Carl's and Roberta's are indeed out there in our ranks. Carl and Roberta are flexible and open to new positions. They love information work; it's what motivates and excites them, but they also integrate a librarian's way of working and

conceptualizing information into new, non-traditional roles. They raise the status of information work in an organizational context by proving that the information worker is multi-faceted. The organization can get more bang for its buck.

I was fully prepared for the study results showing less than half of respondents being interested in moving to new internal positions. Solos are librarians because they want to be librarians. I did not expect them to be keen on leaving the jobs they loved. However, I did expect them to love their jobs. A substantial number, 30.7%, however, could not agree with the statement that they were satisfied with the way their career had progressed at their current employer. The solo librarianship literature, while admittedly not steeped in empirical research, paints a fairly rosy picture of solos and career satisfaction. Many solos indeed are happy, but why are so many unsatisfied with their careers?

The most disturbing result of this study was the perceived lack of influence solo librarians have over important decisions. The survey questions assessing influence were purposely left flexible so that the respondents could subjectively define “important policy and strategy decisions.” Such decisions could include library policies or management decisions influenced by the research librarians have provided, or they might include convincing the organization to begin a Knowledge Management initiative. Less than half of all respondents felt they had such influence. However, only 11.4% of respondents stated that they disagreed with the statement, “I am satisfied with the way my career has progressed since I began working for my current employer.” If the information we provide does not influence the important activities and decisions of the organization,

employers are going to be hard pressed to find a reason to keep information professionals around. It was reassuring to see that indeed the amount of perceived influence did show a strong, positive correlation with both the internal advancement opportunities index and satisfaction with career progress. However, is a correlation enough? Shouldn't it be a prerequisite? Should solo librarians be satisfied with their jobs if they are not in positions of influence?

There is nothing wrong with solo special librarians who want to remain in traditional librarian roles, and I may likely be one myself. Librarian B is also one. What I admired most about her decision to leave a non-traditional role for a traditional one, though, is that she gave a non-traditional job a chance. She brought her librarian skill-set to the new project management position, she did a great job, and she realized that it did not make her happy. She then made the conscious decision to take a new job that would not lead her down the same path, although she appreciates and builds on the experiences and skills her non-traditional role gave her. While she did not say this outright, I think she would agree that her experiences in managing new business development projects have made her a better librarian and a better leader. She remarked herself that it gave her a new perspective and more confidence. Librarian A also felt that her non-traditional duties surrounding publications improved her more traditional library services, by giving her more in depth knowledge about her patrons' work.

Williams (1995) discussed librarians moving in and out of library work, being teachers and editors, and taking on other non-traditional roles while still maintaining their

librarian identities. This article was intriguing. Special librarians struggle to demonstrate their value to their organizations. By diversifying their experiences within an organization, they could potentially resolve this longstanding problem. Anecdotally, it seems that most executives or upper level managers have a breadth of experience that prepared them for their leadership roles, albeit internal or external experience. Solo librarians, however, seem unwilling to diversify their talents for fear that taking on a new role would eclipse their role as a librarian. Of course, as in the case of the Librarian B, an un-strategic or unplanned move into a new role can do just that, but it is possible as this librarian did to rebound and move back to information work with a stronger, more diverse repertoire of skills.

A survey respondent who recently relocated wrote:

Interestingly, I have come to think that working for so long for one company 'specialized' me too much to find a job after I moved...I applied for several [professional part time jobs] and had a few interviews but no offers—for which I don't blame them, as I had no recent experience in public libraries, law libraries, health sciences, academic libraries or in web design...

Her experience harkens back to Koenig's quote about the tradition of vertical stratification in librarianship leading to a mind-set against taking on new opportunities. Does our library education instill this mind-set? After all, the non-MLS librarians who participated in this survey demonstrated more openness to new opportunities. By taking on new opportunities, be they internal or external, solo librarians can prevent over-specialization, and can acquire a breadth of skills.

In many special library settings, the future of the library is not a given. Organizations change, and their libraries are changing as well. One way to help secure the future of small special libraries is to have librarians within the organization in positions of power working under different hats. Being promoted to Vice President of Corporate Communications does not have to take a librarian away from information work. Job descriptions can be re-written. Of course, his or her role would be expanded, and leadership and management skills would be in the foreground, but he or she, much like the director of a larger library, could become a powerful advocate for the library. He or she could also manage information related projects and keep a finger on the pulse of the information work happening in the organization. He or she could also act as an appropriate mentor for the new incoming solo. If the new job is a drain personally or professionally, the encumbered can move on to a new organization or a new role armed with more diverse experiences and skills.

This study has shown that more experienced librarians particularly are having difficulty with career advancement issues. More experienced respondents were no less likely than less experienced respondents to state that they would be interested in an internal position change. However, the more experienced respondents scored lower on the career advancement opportunity index. They were also less likely to report satisfaction with their career progression at their current employers, less apt to agree that they were gaining skills that would make them more marketable in the future, and less apt to agree that they were in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at their institutions. Their managers were less likely to have discussed their career goals with

them in the last year, and their employers were less apt to cover the cost of their professional memberships.

Perhaps more experienced librarians missed out on technological training that newer librarians receive in library school. A lack of marketable skills may prevent advancement. They may also be less likely than newer librarians to embrace the boundaryless career. While older librarians and more experienced librarians are not the same group, there was a strong overlap between the two. Older librarians may have started their careers in the hay day of the bounded career and may expect more internal progress and support than they experience. Certainly, an insidious ageism could account for these disturbing results as well. Clearly, there is a need to focus on career advancement for all solo special librarians. However, special focus should be given to established solos looking for advancement. Professional organizations should consider expanding programs and continuing education opportunities aimed at this group.

While the results offer compelling evidence of a lack of internal advancement opportunities, particularly for more experienced solo special librarians, it is important to discuss the limitations of this study. The results of this sample do not necessarily transfer to the entire population of solo special librarians. This study is also a cross-sectional study, and environmental factors such as a sluggish job market could certainly have affected the results. It would be interesting to run the study again under a different job market climate. It would also be interesting to run this study in the future to see if the results change as more Generation X'ers, Y'ers, and Millennials enter the profession.

Finally, this study does not have a control group against which to compare its results. Although the career advancement index mean of 4.2 seems low, we do not know for certain that this number is any lower than it would be in other professions. A lack of career advancement opportunities may be strongly related to the current economy and persist across different professions.

6. Conclusion

This research study set out to determine if internal career advancement opportunities exist for solo special librarians. It also sought to determine if the type of organization influences the prevalence of internal career advancement opportunities. The study results, although not conclusive, suggest internal career advancement opportunities are not widespread for solo special librarians. Furthermore, the results suggest that the majority of solo special librarians are not particularly interested in advancing to new positions within their organizations. However, solos are very much interested in developing their skills and elevating the role of their library and its services within the organization (also a type of career advancement). No correlation was found between type of organization and the prevalence of internal career advancement opportunities.

Interesting significant relationships between internal career advancement opportunities (measured by a 12 point index) and other survey responses included:

- a positive correlation between internal career advancement opportunities and agreement with the statement that one is currently gaining skills that will make one more marketable in the future
- a positive correlation between internal career advancement opportunities and the belief that one is in a position (or will be in a position in the foreseeable future) to influence important policy or strategy decisions at one's institution
- a negative correlation between internal career advancement opportunities and the number of years in the library profession

The majority of respondents could not agree with the statement, “I am currently in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.” These results suggest that more attention should be given to career advancement issues for solo librarians. More training in library schools, at conferences and at professional workshops should address career advancement and how solo (or nearly solo) special librarians can position themselves to influence important organizational decisions.

For those solos who have ambitions to advance in the traditional sense by promotion, it is worth noting that several variables were significantly related to having received a promotion in the past five years. These variables include:

- number of supervisees
- receiving a non-promotional title change
- having a discussion about career goals with a manager in the past year
- having a manager who encouraged an internal job change in the last year
- the availability of internal job openings in the past year
- attending trainings led by or paid for by one’s employer in the past year
- the perception of having current and future influence over important policy or strategy decisions

Solos with an eye toward promotion should ask questions about these types of opportunities and events during the hiring or performance evaluation process.

Absence of or resistance to these events could be a red flag that promotions are not forthcoming.

Finally, although the majority of survey respondents indicated that internal career advancement opportunities are scarce or undesirable, it is also important to note that there were some salient exceptions who reported ample opportunity for advancement. Almost 14% of respondents agreed that there were internal career advancement opportunities for them, and almost 23% had received a promotion at their current employer in the past five years. Close to 30% of respondents would be interested in an internal change of position. Some solos are open to taking on new roles in their organizations. This survey suggests, however, that there is not a lot of precedence. As information skills become increasingly relevant to organizations, solos interested in new roles may pave their own career paths within the organization and, in doing so, increase the value of librarians to the organizations. Solo special librarians will continue to change employers when necessary to advance their careers; however, jumping ship need not be the *only* advancement option.

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Appendix A. Survey

Solo Special Librarians and Career Advancement Opportunities

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The results will help solo librarians and other ILS professionals make more informed career decisions.

Directions: Place a check mark in the box that corresponds to your answer. Unless otherwise indicated, choose only one response. Use the comment areas provided to share your thoughts about this topic or the survey.

| | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Are you the sole professional librarian in your immediate work environment? | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you work for a Not For Profit organization/institution? | | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Which of the following choices best describes your work environment? | | | |
| Corporate | <input type="checkbox"/> | Academic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Government | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| 4. How many people work at your place of employment (at your site)? | | | |
| 1-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 100-499 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 2,500-4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 500-999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 5,000-9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-99 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1,000-2,499 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 10,000+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. How many people make up your primary user group? | | | |
| 1-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 100-499 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 2,500-4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 500-999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 5,000-9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-99 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1,000-2,499 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | 10,000+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Indicate the type of institution or industry that best represents your employment setting: | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Advertising and Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Biomedical and Life Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> | Materials Research and Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Business and Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Medical or Health Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chemistry | <input type="checkbox"/> | Military Library | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Competitive Intelligence/Market Research | <input type="checkbox"/> | Museums, Arts & Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education | <input type="checkbox"/> | News and Journalism | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> | Petroleum and Energy Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Environment and Resource Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pharmaceutical and Health Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Food, Agriculture and Nutrition | <input type="checkbox"/> | Physics, Astronomy or Mathematics | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Government Information | <input type="checkbox"/> | Science-Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social Science | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Insurance/Employee Benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | |

7. Rounded to the nearest year, how many years do you have in the library profession? _____

8. Rounded to the nearest year, how many consecutive years have _____

you worked for your current employer? _____

9. How many people, if any, do you supervise? _____

10. Indicate which of the following degrees you have earned (check as many as apply):

Bachelor's Degree(s) Master's Degree in Library or Information Science Other Master's Degree(s)

Ph.D.(s) Other (please specify) _____

11. To which age group do you belong?

Under 30 30-45 46-60 60+

12. Indicate your gender:

Female Male

Comments:

The following questions apply only to your current place of employment. If a question specifies a time frame longer than the period of time you have worked for your current employer, please limit your response only to the time frame in which you have worked for your current employer.

13. Would you be interested in a different position at your present place of employment if one were available for which you are qualified?

Yes No

14. If you have held your current position for fewer than 5 years, what happened to your predecessor?

Moved to a new position at same employer Changed employers Left for personal reasons (family, school, relocation, etc.)

Retired Don't Know/Other Not applicable (you had no predecessor or have been in your position more than 5 years)

Yes No

15. Have you ever held a different position at your current place of employment?

16 a) In the past 5 years, have you been promoted?

If you answered yes to 16a, please skip question 16b and proceed to question 17.

16 b) In the past 5 years, have you been offered a promotion that you declined?

17 a) In the past 5 years, have you made a lateral job change?

If you answered yes to 17a, please skip question 17 and proceed to question 18.

17 b) In the past 5 years, have you been offered a lateral job change that you declined?

18. Other than at times of promotion or lateral job changes, has your official job title changed to reflect the acquisition of additional responsibilities?

Yes No

19. Other than at times of promotion or lateral job changes, have your responsibilities increased significantly while your job title remained the same?
20. In the past year, has your manager discussed your career plans and goals with you?
21. In the past year, has your manager encouraged you to apply for or to consider an internal job change?
22. In the past year, has there been an internal job opening at the same or higher level as your current job for which you were qualified (regardless of whether you were interested in it)?
23. In the past year, have you attended trainings arranged or paid for by your employer which contributed to your career development?
24. Does your employer offer a mentoring program?
25. Does your employer pay for membership to any professional organizations?
26. Does your employer pay for expenses associated with professional conferences, workshops or activities?

Comments:

27 a) How likely are you to remain at your current employer in the following time frames?

Very likely Likely Don't know Not likely Definitely not

| | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered Very likely, Likely or Don't know to all of the above, skip question 27b and proceed to question 28.

27 b) If you indicated that you are not likely to remain at your current employer for any of the above times frames, which of the following best describes why?

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Retirement | <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal reasons (e.g. school, family, relocation) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More interesting work opportunities elsewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> | Better salary or benefits available elsewhere | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dissatisfaction with advancement opportunities at current employer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dissatisfaction with employer for reasons other than advancement opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | |

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 28. I am currently gaining valuable skills that will make me more marketable as my career progresses. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. I am satisfied with the way my career has progressed since I began working for my current employer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 30. There are career advancement opportunities for me at my current place of employment. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. I am currently in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. In the foreseeable future, I could be in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you for completing the survey. Please feel free to use the space below to share any comments you have about career advancement opportunities for solo librarians.

Comments:

Appendix B: Survey Cover Letter

February 26, 2005

Dear Solo Librarian:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a survey that will assess the availability of internal career advancement opportunities for solo special librarians. I am a Master's student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and I have a strong interest in the career development of solo librarians.

As the library profession evolves, career planning becomes both more difficult and more exciting. Librarians and especially solo librarians are bringing information skills to new and unique environments. This study sets out to determine whether librarians in solo positions have the opportunity to advance professionally within a single organization. I hope to determine whether advancement opportunities exist for solo librarians, and if so, what types of organizations are providing the most opportunities. The results of this survey will help to inform the career planning decisions of librarians working in or considering solo positions.

This survey was designed to assess the current advancement opportunities that organizations provide solo librarians. If you are self-employed or currently not working as solo librarian, please discard this survey or return it uncompleted with a brief statement indicating that you do not meet the study's criteria. Two follow up mailings will be sent as reminders to non-respondents.

You are under no obligation to take or return this study. You were randomly selected from the membership directory of SLA's Solo Librarian Division. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you choose to respond, all of the information you provide will be kept confidential. In order to protect your privacy, neither your name nor your organization will be identified.

If you would like to request a summary of the findings or if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at cjmahone@email.unc.edu or (919) 933-3151. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Evelyn Daniel, at Daniel@ils.unc.edu or (919) 962-8062.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or at aa-irb@unc.edu.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Corinne Mahoney
MSLS Candidate
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

March 11, 2005

Dear Solo Librarian:

I am inviting you to participate in a research study that will assess the availability of internal career advancement opportunities for solo special librarians. I am a Master's student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and I have a strong interest in the career development of solo librarians.

As the library profession evolves, career planning becomes both more difficult and more exciting. Librarians and especially solo librarians are bringing information skills to new and unique environments. This study sets out to determine whether librarians in solo positions have the opportunity to advance professionally within a single organization. I hope to determine whether advancement opportunities exist for solo librarians, and if so, what types of organizations are providing the most opportunities. The results of this study will help to inform the career planning decisions of librarians working in or considering solo positions.

Your participation in this study will consist of two parts, a survey (which has also been mailed to 200 randomly selected solo librarians) and a qualitative interview (two other librarians will also be interviewed). The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and the interview will take approximately one hour. If at any time during the study or after the study, you wish to discontinue your participation you may do so. Additionally, you may decline to respond to any of the survey or interview questions. In order to protect your privacy, neither your name nor your organization will be identified.

There are neither personal risks nor benefits anticipated should you participate in this study. However, there will be professional benefit from this study, as my Master's paper will be indexed and available to library professionals and students. There is no cost to you or financial benefit for your participation. I would be happy to provide you with a summary of the findings if you are interested.

You may contact me if you have any questions or concerns at cjmahone@email.unc.edu or (919) 933-3151. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Evelyn Daniel, at daniel@ils.unc.edu or (919) 962-8062.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or at aa-irb@unc.edu.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,
Corinne Mahoney
MSLS Candidate
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What are your main responsibilities and tasks in your present position?
2. How long have you been a librarian?
3. Briefly describe your career path.
4. How has your career progressed at your current employer?
5. How has your current employer provided career development opportunities?
6. Do you feel there are internal career advancement opportunities available to you? What kind?
7. Does your employer provide trainings? Cover expenses for professional memberships and activities?
8. How long do you predict you will stay at your current employer? If not indefinitely, why do you think you will leave?
9. Does being a solo librarian affect your career development (negatively or positively)? How so?
10. If you have worked as a non-solo librarian in the past, how did the organizations you worked for differ in terms of career development opportunities?
11. If you are interested in changing positions (either internally or externally), what characteristics would you be looking for in your next job?
12. Would you consider leaving library or information work either temporarily or permanently?
13. Do your duties include tasks, responsibilities or skills that are not typically considered library skills? What are they?
14. How does your organization value you? Do you feel you can influence important decisions?

Appendix E: Detailed Summary of Survey Responses

Question 1: Are you the sole professional librarian in your immediate work environment?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| yes | 88 | 100.0 |

N=88 (All negative responses were removed from the analysis)

Question 2: Do you work for a Not For Profit organization?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 46 | 53.5 |
| yes | 40 | 46.5 |

N=86

Question 3: Which of the following choices best describes your work environment?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Academic | 21 | 24.1 |
| Corporate | 40 | 46 |
| Govern. | 12 | 13.8 |
| Other | 14 | 16.1 |

N=87

Question 4: How many people work at your place of employment (at your site?)

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| 1-9 | 5 | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| 10-24 | 8 | 9.1 | 14.8 |
| 25-99 | 19 | 21.6 | 36.4 |
| 100-499 | 31 | 35.2 | 71.6 |
| 500-999 | 10 | 11.4 | 83.0 |
| 1000-2499 | 11 | 12.5 | 95.5 |
| 2500-4999 | 1 | 1.1 | 96.6 |
| 10000+ | 3 | 3.4 | 100.0 |

N=88

Question 5: How many people make up your primary user group?

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| 1-9 | 6 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| 10-24 | 10 | 11.5 | 18.4 |
| 25-99 | 23 | 26.4 | 44.8 |
| 100-499 | 30 | 34.5 | 79.3 |
| 500-999 | 7 | 8.0 | 87.4 |
| 1000-2499 | 3 | 3.4 | 90.8 |
| 2500-4999 | 3 | 3.4 | 94.3 |
| 5000-9999 | 3 | 3.4 | 97.7 |
| 10000+ | 2 | 2.3 | 100.0 |
| N=87 | | | |

Question 6: Indicate the type of institution or industry that best represents your employment setting.

| | Freq. | Percent | | Freq. | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|--------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Other | 16 | 18.2 | Transportation | 2 | 2.3 |
| Engineering | 9 | 10.2 | Food, Agriculture & Nutrition | 2 | 2.3 |
| Medical or Health Sciences | 9 | 10.2 | Advertising and Marketing | 2 | 2.3 |
| Government Information | 8 | 9.1 | Information Technology | 2 | 2.3 |
| Education | 7 | 8.0 | Social Science | 1 | 1.1 |
| Environment and Resource Management | 5 | 5.7 | Insurance/ Employee Benefits | 1 | 1.1 |
| Museums, Arts & Humanities | 5 | 5.7 | Pharmaceutical and Health Technology | 1 | 1.1 |
| Legal | 4 | 4.5 | Biomedical and Life Sciences | 1 | 1.1 |
| Business and Finance | 4 | 4.5 | News and Journalism | 1 | 1.1 |
| Physics, Astronomy or Math | 3 | 3.4 | Petroleum and Energy Resources | 1 | 1.1 |
| Science-Technology | 3 | 3.4 | Missing | 1 | 1.1 |
| N=88 | | | | | |

Question 7: Rounded to the nearest year, how many years do you have in the library profession?

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Mean | 15.8193 |
| Median | 15.0000 |
| Mode | 5.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 10.64980 |
| Minimum | 2.00 |
| Maximum | 40.00 |
| N=83 | |

Question 8: Rounded to the nearest year, how many consecutive years have you worked for your current employer

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Mean | 8.0455 |
| Median | 5.0000 |
| Mode | 5.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 7.47549 |
| Minimum | 1.00 |
| Maximum | 31.00 |
| N=88 | |

Question 9: How many people, if any, do you supervise?

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Mean | .7722 |
| Median | .0000 |
| Mode | .00 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.41659 |
| Minimum | .00 |
| Maximum | 9.00 |
| N=88 | |

Question 10: Indicate which of the following degrees you have earned (check as many as apply):

Respondents who checked bachelor's degree *only*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 81 | 94.2 |
| yes | 5 | 5.8 |

N=86

Respondents who checked MLS

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 6 | 7.0 |
| yes | 80 | 93.0 |

N=86

Respondents who checked a master's degree other than MLIS

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 65 | 75.6 |
| yes | 21 | 24.4 |

N=86

Respondents who checked PhD

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 84 | 97.7 |
| yes | 2 | 2.3 |

N=86

Respondents who checked "other"

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------|
| no | 81 | 94.2 |
| yes | 5 | 5.8 |

N=86

Question 11: To which age group do you belong?

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|
| Under 30 | 6 | 6.9 | 6.9 |
| 30-45 | 31 | 35.6 | 42.5 |
| 46-60 | 40 | 46.0 | 88.5 |
| 60+ | 10 | 11.5 | 100.0 |
| N=87 | | | |

Question 12: Indicate your gender

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| Female | 79 | 90.8 |
| Male | 8 | 9.2 |
| N=87 | | |

Question 13: Would you be interested in a different position at your present place of employment if one were available for which you are qualified?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 62 | 70.5 |
| yes | 26 | 29.5 |
| | | 88 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 14: If you have held your current position for fewer than 5 years, what happened to your predecessor?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| N/A | 49 | 55.7 |
| Retired | 11 | 12.5 |
| Changed employers | 10 | 11.4 |
| Personal | 7 | 8.0 |
| Missing | 5 | 5.7 |
| Don't know/Other | 4 | 4.5 |
| Same employer | 2 | 2.3 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 15: Have you ever held a different position at your current place of employment?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 70 | 79.5 |
| yes | 18 | 20.5 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 16: Answered affirmatively to either a) in the past five years have you been promoted *or* b) in the past five years have you been offered a promotion that you declined?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 68 | 77.3 |
| yes | 20 | 22.7 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 17: Answered affirmatively to either a) in the past five years, have you made a lateral job change *or* b) in the past five years have you been offered a lateral job change that you declined?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 80 | 92.0 |
| yes | 7 | 8.0 |
| N=87 | | |

Question 18: Other than at times of promotion or lateral job changes, has your official job title changed to reflect the acquisition of additional responsibilities?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 65 | 75.6 |
| yes | 21 | 24.4 |
| N=86 | | |

Question 19: Other than at times of promotion or lateral job changes, have your responsibilities increased significantly while your job title remained the same?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 46 | 52.3 |
| yes | 42 | 47.7 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 20: In the past year, has your manager discussed your career plans and goals with you?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 48 | 55.2 |
| yes | 39 | 44.8 |
| N=87 | | |

Question 21: In the past year, has your manager encouraged you to apply for or to consider an internal job change?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 83 | 95.4 |
| yes | 4 | 4.6 |
| N=87 | | |

Question 22: In the past year, has there been an internal job opening at the same or higher level as your current job for which you were qualified (regardless of whether you were interested in it)?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 68 | 81.0 |
| yes | 16 | 19.0 |
| N=84 | | |

Question 23: In the past year, have you attended trainings arranged or paid for by your employer which contributed to your career development?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| yes | 69 | 78.4 |
| no | 19 | 21.6 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 24: Does your employer offer a mentoring program?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| no | 82 | 93.2 |
| yes | 6 | 6.8 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 25: Does your employer pay for membership to any professional organizations?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| yes | 75 | 85.2 |
| no | 13 | 14.8 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 26: Does your employer pay for expenses associated with professional conferences, workshops or activities?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------|-----------|---------|
| yes | 76 | 86.4 |
| no | 12 | 13.6 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 27a: How likely are you to remain at your current employer in the following time frames?

| Remain 1 year | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Very likely | 71 | 80.7 | 80.7 |
| Likely | 8 | 9.1 | 89.8 |
| Don't know | 3 | 3.4 | 93.2 |
| Not likely | 4 | 4.5 | 97.7 |
| Definitely Not | 2 | 2.3 | 100.0 |
| N=88 | | | |

| Remain 5 years | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Very likely | 26 | 29.9 | 29.9 |
| Likely | 28 | 32.2 | 62.1 |
| Don't know | 16 | 18.4 | 80.5 |
| Not likely | 10 | 11.5 | 92.0 |
| Definitely not | 7 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| N=87 | | | |

| Remain 10 years | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Very likely | 8 | 9.3 | 9.3 |
| Likely | 10 | 11.6 | 20.9 |
| Don't know | 30 | 34.9 | 55.8 |
| Not likely | 19 | 22.1 | 77.9 |
| Definitely not | 19 | 22.1 | 100.0 |
| N=86 | | | |

Question 27b: If you indicated that you are not likely to remain at your current employer for any of the above times frames (See question 27a), which of the following best describes why?

| Reason leaving | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| N/a or Missing | 47 | 53.4 |
| Retirement | 18 | 20.5 |
| Personal | 10 | 11.4 |
| More interesting work elsewhere | 6 | 6.8 |
| Better salary | 4 | 4.5 |
| Dissatisfaction with advancement opportunities | 2 | 2.3 |
| Other | 1 | 1.1 |
| N=88 | | |

Question 28: I am currently gaining valuable skills that will make me more marketable as my career progresses.

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Agree strongly | 28 | 31.8 | 31.8 |
| Agree | 29 | 33.0 | 64.8 |
| Neither | 22 | 25.0 | 89.8 |
| Disagree | 7 | 8.0 | 97.7 |
| Disagree strongly | 2 | 2.3 | 100.0 |
| N=88 | | | |

Question 29: I am satisfied with the way my career has progressed since I began working for my current employer

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|----------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Agree strongly | 23 | 26.1 | 26.1 |
| Agree | 38 | 43.2 | 69.3 |
| Neither | 17 | 19.3 | 88.6 |
| Disagree | 10 | 11.4 | 100.0 |
| N=88 | | | |

Question 30: There are career advancement opportunities for me at my current place of employment

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Agree strongly | 2 | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| Agree | 10 | 11.5 | 13.8 |
| Neither | 19 | 21.8 | 35.6 |
| Disagree | 29 | 33.3 | 69.0 |
| Disagree strongly | 27 | 31.0 | 100.0 |
| N=87 | | | |

Question 31: I am currently in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Agree strongly | 12 | 13.8 | 13.8 |
| Agree | 24 | 27.6 | 41.4 |
| Neither | 16 | 18.4 | 59.8 |
| Disagree | 21 | 24.1 | 83.9 |
| Disagree strongly | 14 | 16.1 | 100.0 |
| N=87 | | | |

Question 32: In the foreseeable future, I could be in a position to influence important policy or strategy decisions at my institution.

| | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Agree strongly | 12 | 14.0 | 14.0 |
| Agree | 21 | 24.4 | 38.4 |
| Neither | 19 | 22.1 | 60.5 |
| Disagree | 19 | 22.1 | 82.6 |
| Disagree strongly | 15 | 17.4 | 100.0 |
| N=86 | | | |