

Library Manpower: A Study of Demand and Supply. By U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS. Bulletin 1852. Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, 1975. Pp. xii + 94. \$1.75 (paper). Stock no. 029-001-01367.

This bulletin is the most definitive statement to date on the demand and supply of librarians and library assistants in the United States. It is well researched and extremely comprehensive.

The report begins with a discussion of the expected future demand for librarians and library assistants through 1985. The structure of the analysis is in terms of demand by public, elementary and secondary school, college and university, and special library. In each of the sectors, statistics are presented about present and projected future employment levels. The projections are made within an economic framework used in almost all Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) publications—the BLS Economic Model. This model assumes (in part) that in 1985 U.S. unemployment will be at 4 percent, inflation at 3 percent per year, and that the basic institutional structure of the United States will remain the same as it presently is. Given this framework, demand projections are made on the basis of time-series analyses, interviews, and analyst judgments. Projected demand for staff in public libraries is based mainly on future population levels. Demand for elementary and secondary school as well as college and university library staff is based on projected enrollment trends. Due to a lack of data, projected employment in special libraries is based on estimates using the BLS Industry-Occupation Matrix. (For a description of this methodology, see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Tomorrow's Manpower Needs*, Vols. 1–4, Bulletin no. 1606 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969]. See also Bulletin no. 1737.)

In addition to the demand for library personnel arising from an expansion of the job market, there will also be jobs created by replacing those people who leave library employment due to retirement, death, etc. The BLS expects this replacement demand to be 75 percent of the total demand. This high replacement rate is due to the high proportion of women employed and the high median age of female library workers.

Due to lack of definitions of the occupation and of information on sources of supply, it was not possible for the BLS to project the supply of library attendants or assistants. Projections were made as to the expected number of MLS (and equivalent) degrees awarded.

The BLS expects employment of librarians to increase from 115,000 in 1970 to 162,000 in 1985, or 2.7 percent per year as compared with a 5.2 percent increase per year from 1960 to 1970. (In a recently completed study Cooper indicates that the demand for professional librarians in California will increase 2.4 percent per year to 1990. See Michael D. Cooper, *Future Demand for Librarians: Projecting California's Requirements* [Berkeley: University of California, Institute of Governmental Studies, 1975]. Background information on the demand analysis is given in Cooper, "An Analysis of the Demand for Librarians" in this issue of *Library Quarterly*.) Library attendants' and assistants' employment is expected to reach 212,000 in 1985 compared with 120,000 in 1970, for a 5.1 percent increase per year. (The 1960–70 rate of increase was 12.5 percent). At the same time, the BLS projects that the number of MLS (or equivalent) degrees awarded will increase 3.5 percent per year from 1970 to 1985. The job market for professional librarians is eased by the fact that the BLS projects only 80 percent of those receiving MLS degrees will actually enter the profession. Two alternative projections of the supply and demand balance were made. The basic projection assumes there will be 11,200 openings for librarians between 1970 and 1985 with 9,000 entrants into the field (a shortage of 147 per year for the nation as a whole). The low projection assumes 9,900 new openings and 9,000 entrants. One can only describe this as an extremely tight job market for professionals.

The task of projecting supply and demand is extremely difficult, and the report does an admirable job. Several points should be raised, nevertheless, with respect to it. It seems to this reviewer that a 4 percent unemployment rate and 3 percent inflation rate may be too small and that the BLS model within which the projections are set may be too optimistic. In addition, a great deal of the accuracy of the projections of supply-demand balance rest on the question of whether only 80 percent of library school graduates will enter the profession. If the percentage is higher, there could be an oversupply of librarians now. This point deserves additional research. Finally, it is the custom of most BLS reports to present only the conclusions of their study rather than the mathematical techniques used. In this case, the library profession could benefit from a technical journal article presenting the work. Such an article would allow interested researchers to make their own projections based on the statistical relationships derived by the BLS.

None of the above comments should be construed as detracting from an excellent report. Bibliographic citations to this document will never result in recognition for the personal authors. But the library profession owes a debt to Anne Kahl, Mary De La Vergne, and Michael Pilot for their outstanding contribution.

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