



Review Article

Career Advancement and Writing about Women Librarians: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Objective – This review of the literature provides a framework for understanding the professional experiences of women library directors in academic libraries. It focuses upon career advancement and writing about women librarians in the United States and Canada from the 1930s to 2012.

Methods – Databases from the disciplines of library science and business and management, including the larger social sciences, were searched for references to sources that dealt with career advancement and progression of women, specifically women librarians, from the 1930s to 2012. Similarly, these databases were also searched for sources pertaining to writing about women, especially women in libraries. Sources were also culled from major bibliographies on women in libraries. Articles and monographs were selected for inclusion in the review if they reported research findings related to these broad topics. In some cases sources from the professional literature were included if they offered a unique perspective on lived experience.

Results – Evidence shows the number of women in senior leadership roles has increased over the years. From the 1930s to the 1950s it was the natural order for men to be heads of academic libraries, particularly major research libraries. Research studies of the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s provide evidence of a shift from the assumption that various personal and professional characteristics could be identified to account for differences in

the number of men and of women recruited into senior positions in academic libraries. Despite this, women remained vastly under-represented in director positions in academic libraries. From the 1990s to the present, the evidence shows the number of women in senior leadership roles increased, despite factors such as mobility, career interruptions, or lack of advanced degrees that were traditionally identified as limitations to career growth. While women have gained in terms of the number of senior positions in academic libraries in the U.S. and Canada they are still not proportionately represented. The results section concludes with a review of sources that pertain to writing about women library leaders. This emphasizes that the professional lives of women librarians are largely unknown, as is the importance of their contribution to the development of libraries and librarianship. These sources were included to highlight the critical importance, but lack of material that speaks to writing about women and their professional lives and experiences.

Conclusions – Research into the lives of women library leaders is important because women traditionally represent 75-80% of library professionals, yet the story of their career advancement and leadership within librarianship is bounded by characteristics – real or perceived – that affect their career progression. Future research focusing on collecting current data about career advancement of women in Canadian academic libraries as well as the contributions of women to development of libraries is suggested.

Introduction

The specific focus of this review is women academic librarians' career advancement and progression as well as writing about women in libraries. It was judged important to include the latter review of works as there is a dearth of material that speaks to writing about women and their professional lives and experiences. The literature review primarily includes sources from the United States and Canada from the 1930s to 2012, although there is some brief reference to sources of importance from other countries for comparative purposes. The year 1930 was chosen as a beginning date for the review as no major studies or surveys of library staff could be located prior to that point in time. While the focus is on women academic librarians, many research studies include data about male librarians and their career advancement or in some cases the career advancement of women librarians in general.

The story of women in librarianship in the United States and Canada is strikingly similar

and the entrance of women into the library profession and their career advancement can be found in chronicles or accounts of the time, primarily from the United States and predominantly written by male librarians (Hildenbrand, 1992). In one account from C. F. McCombs (an American surveying library services in Canada in the early 1940s), the story of women in Canadian librarians is found in the backdrop of a recounting of staffing that acknowledges that women's salaries were significantly lower and opportunities for advancement much more restricted than those of men in similar positions (Buxton & Acland, 1998).

Beginning in the late 1960s, some U.S. researchers asked a crucial question related to career advancement: "What is the status of women in librarianship?" (Schiller, 1979, p. 222). Both Bradley (1968) and Schiller (1969) found a similar trend of hiring men rather than women as chief librarians in U.S. libraries. In Canada, the closest attempt to systematically investigate the status of women in Canadian libraries was

that of librarians Sherrill Cheda and Phyllis Yaffe, along with sociologists, Dr. Linda Fischer and Mary Ann Wasylycia-Coe. Their research in the early 1970s was completed with the help of a grant from the Canada Council and the data were analyzed but the study was never published in its entirety for reasons that are still unclear. Lack of time, interest, funds; problems in methodology, research design, and implementation; possibly even political suppression, have all been suggested as reasons (Futas, 1983). However, several articles were published using data from the study, and cited widely as illustrative of the fairly low status and salaries of women in Canadian libraries and the different career structures that existed for men and women during the 1970s, as first detailed in the article by Cheda, Fischer, Wasylycia-Coe, and Yaffe (1978). Kristy (1983) examined the status of women in librarianship on a cross-national basis. Her study encompassed western style democracies (including the United States, Canada, France, and New Zealand), Soviet bloc countries (Bulgaria, Cuba, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR) and developing nations (Nigeria, India, and Brazil). With the exception of Nigeria, librarianship was found to be a profession in which women dominated numerically, however all countries exhibited patterns of intra-occupational segregation which was defined as different career tracks for men and women in the same profession. Overall, men were found to have attained higher levels of position and salary than their female counterparts.

The trend to hire male library administrators began to reverse itself by 1990. Wilder (2003), who enumerated the gender of directors of ARL libraries from 1980 to 2000, described greater balance between the genders; the number of male directors decreased from 84.5% in 1980 to 54.1% in 2000. Recent survey data from ARL shows a further decline in the number of male directors to 40% in 2009 (Association of Research Libraries, 2010). Data compiled by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, which is affiliated with over 57

unions, indicate the majority of library workers in the United States are female while men make up less than 20% of the library profession (AFL-CIO, Department for Professional Employees, 2009). Further, academic (ARL and non-ARL) library directors are 47% male and public library directors are 35% male. In Canada, a 2005 study by the 8Rs Research Team determined that 79% of library professionals were women; 41% of senior administrators in CARL libraries were male, as were 29% of senior administrators in CULC (Canadian Urban Libraries Council) libraries. While more women are heads of academic libraries in the U.S. and Canada in the twenty-first century than in the past, the 80/20 rule of women and men making up the profession has remained fairly constant throughout the years, and on this proportional basis women are still under-represented at the most senior rank of librarianship, including academic libraries.

Turning to writing about women, there is little evidence that women have written openly about themselves or their accomplishments, and this is true of women in the library profession where there is little documentation or history of women's professional experience, including their career progression and development as leaders. Gerda Lerner, a distinguished historian, has written extensively about why the history of women's experience matters (Lerner, 1997), and in an interview about her work she states its importance:

And now people may think that's not so very important, but the fact is that our ideas about what is possible for the future are formed out of our knowledge of what was possible in the past. And if we have no past, if a group is deprived of its past, it cannot imagine a future for itself. It can only imagine a future for the people that it thinks have done the historic work in the past, and that's men. (Lerner, n.d.)

Thus, reviewing the literature and understanding the past is timely as the current generation of women who aspire to senior administrative and leadership roles in academic libraries prepare themselves for the future.

Aims

This review of the literature provides a framework for understanding the past experiences of women library directors. It focuses upon career advancement and writing about women librarians, almost exclusively in the United States and Canada from the 1930s to 2012. Why is this important? As the current generation of library directors moves into retirement, women library leaders will look to the experiences of their predecessors as they prepare to assume senior management positions and senior roles. While they will find evidence of change in career patterns of male and female librarians, they will also appreciate that these changes are of relatively recent date and that hiring trends and the status of women in libraries cannot be taken for granted. Finally, the literature review will be concluded by suggestions for areas for further research with a focus on women academic librarians in Canada in particular.

Methods

Databases from the disciplines of library science and business and management, including the larger social sciences, were searched for references to sources that dealt with career advancement and progression of women, specifically women librarians in academic libraries. These databases included: Library and Information Science Source (EBSCO), LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, ABI Inform Global, CBCA Complete, and ERIC (EBSCO).

Additionally, it is critical to acknowledge a primary source of works about women in librarianship, the bibliographies *On Account of*

Sex: An Annotated Bibliography on the Status of Women in Librarianship, published from 1977 to 2002, and its forerunner *The Role of Women in Librarianship, 1897-1976: The Entry, Advancement and Struggle for Equalization in our Profession* provide descriptions of works important to the literature review. As Maack (2002) noted, historical and biographical works make up a large part of the entries and “we now have bibliographic access to over 120 years of writings that vividly demonstrate that there have always been women in librarianship who were not silent or complacent or lacking in ambition” (p. 242). These bibliographies were also scanned for works important to the topics of career advancement and writing about women librarians.

Although the emphasis of the literature review is upon women in academic libraries, there are relatively few references that pertain solely to academic librarianship, so works on women’s careers and leadership in libraries generally were examined as important source materials and included as appropriate. As stated in the introduction, this review primarily includes sources from the United States and Canada with some brief reference to sources of importance from other countries for comparative purposes. Studies were selected for inclusion if they provided research data that added to the discussion of career progression of women in librarianship or were helpful in outlining the thinking about women in libraries and their status in the profession during the time period in which they were written. Most works receive brief treatment with a basic outline of their results or conclusions, unless they provide evidence of a change in the number of women in administrative positions in academic libraries or add substantially to the discussion of personal characteristics and professional qualifications of women.

Results

The results of the literature review fall into the two categories identified as the objectives of the

review. First, the section on career progression of women in academic libraries highlights demographic profiles and professional characteristics and qualifications of female librarians as well as issues such as mobility and career interruptions. Evidence shows the number of women in senior leadership roles has increased over the years. However, women are still underrepresented today in leadership positions in academic libraries. Second, the results section concludes with a review of sources that pertain to writing about women library leaders. The noted dearth of writing about women librarians emphasizes that the professional lives of women librarians are largely unknown, as is the importance of their contribution to the development of libraries and librarianship. These sources were included to highlight the critical importance of but lack of material that speaks to writing about women and their professional lives and experiences.

Career Progression of Women in Academic Libraries

Studies of career progression of women in academic libraries vary, but most focus on demographic and personal characteristics and professional qualifications of women librarians. Bradley (1968) defines personal characteristics as factors that differentiate librarians from one another but have little or no relationship to the ability to perform in a job, and qualifications as those things that distinguish librarians from each other and have an assumed relationship to performing well. The personal characteristics of job mobility and career interruption are ones that are often identified as issues and commonly highlighted for discussion as these are factors most closely associated with women's careers. Most often the data or results of the research are described in career profiles and examined for career patterns that have determined women's professional lives. In conjunction with data about women, characteristics and qualifications of male librarians are often gathered and used to compare and contrast, so may illuminate the differences men and women experience in career

progression or advancement in academic libraries.

From the 1930s to the 1950s in the U.S. and Canada: Limited prospects for women

Irvine (1985) reviewed the writing on gender in academic library administration beginning in the 1930s with Randall's (1932) acknowledgement that the administration of college libraries was primarily a male exercise. Alvarez (1938), Williamson (1939), and McDiarmid (1942) pointed to the importance of advanced degrees and experience in administration for recruitment into senior positions in academic libraries. While Alvarez argued women have just as many opportunities to become chief librarians as men, both Williamson and McDiarmid acknowledged that prospects were much more limited for women. O'Brien (1983), who reviewed a number of articles published in the library literature from 1941-1950, concluded that "The fact that men were preferred as administrators was acknowledged both within and without the library profession during the 1940s" (p. 60). Various reasons were advanced for this, including Bannister's assessment (as cited in O'Brien, 1983) that women were unable to handle prolonged periods of responsibility.

Samuel Rothstein, a noted Canadian library educator, commented upon the tenor of professional life in Canadian libraries in the 1930s and 1940s and recalled that:

Yes, most of us were women (perhaps nine out of ten professionals), but this marked disproportion, which was certainly one of the most salient and influential features of the library community, was also one of the least discussed subjects. Oh, one heard adjurations about the desirability of getting more men into the profession but scarcely a word about women being passed over in appointment to high-level positions. It was as though most

women librarians saw themselves as natural subordinates and their careers as temporary jobs to be held only until marriage. (1990, p. 6)

As Rothstein (1990) concluded, "In other words, when almost the only alternatives were nursing, social work, or teaching, librarianship found it easy to recruit women of very superior ability who were willing to dedicate themselves to demanding jobs for small practical rewards" (p. 7).

In the 1950s, Schick (1950) and Harvey (1958) both observed the tendencies for women chief librarians to be clustered in smaller academic institutions, to be promoted from within, and to lack both academic degrees and job mobility. It was also common for these women to be single and younger than male chief librarian colleagues and have fewer years of professional library experience.

Examining the writing and research over this time period provides evidence that women's administrative and leadership abilities were often recognized, but given greatest credence under specific circumstances. Career advancement for women, who were the majority in libraries, was bounded by the size of the responsibilities, usually also determined by the size of the institution, by job mobility, and by years of education and experience. It was the natural order for men to be heads of academic libraries, particularly major research libraries, and the male minority presumably advanced the careers of other men.

The 1960s to 1980s in the U.S. and Canada: "Who are these women?"

In the 1970s, Cohn (1976) and Parsons (1976) both retrospectively reviewed the recruitment of directors into large research libraries. Parsons, who compared the number of women directors in 1958 to that of 1973, found that five female directors had been recruited during that period. Cohn's work, which spanned 1933 to 1973,

identified two women appointed between 1934 and 1969 and five between 1970 and 1973. All of these director appointments were internal. Wong and Zubatsky (1983), who studied the demographic and professional characteristics of first-time appointed college and university library directors between the years 1970 to 1980, found women were most often appointed at smaller institutions. Since they tended to be unmarried, it was presumed they were more mobile. When Morrison (1969) surveyed academic library administrators he found female chief librarians had less academic training, but also found there was not a great difference in job mobility of male and female chief librarians. Men and women differed on two additional characteristics, however; male chief librarians tended to enter the profession later than their female counterparts and they tended to be published more frequently. Bradley (1968), in his study of 100 heads of large U.S. academic and public libraries, noted there was a definite tendency for men to replace women at this position level, reaching its zenith among large academic library directors, all of whom were men. Schiller's (1969) work on academic librarians does not separate the characteristics of chief librarians from the population of over 2,200 librarians she studied, but does describe how the tendency to hire male librarians to fill administrative positions had become more apparent over the last few decades. She found that as women directors retired men were hired to take their places. She also noted that men apparently have greater job mobility. Schiller's work (1979) on the status of female librarians, with respect to salary, position level, and career advancement, "has become a benchmark against which to measure women's progress" (Maack, 2002, p. 244).

The question of mobility in job seeking and its influence on career advancement tended to dominate discussions of career progression. In a large scale study of American Library Association members, almost 2,000 respondents provided career and personal data. The data indicated that overall career patterns of male

and female members were relatively similar (Heim, 1983). Women, however, were twice as likely to report geographic location as a factor in accepting positions and career advancement was often related to job mobility. Studies by Metz (1978), Martin (1979), and Maag (1981) provided data on recruitment of academic library directors, job mobility and advancement. Metz, who examined succession patterns of academic library directors, found external male candidates were most often recruited into academic libraries. If women were hired they were most often internal candidates. He speculated this may be due in part to their more limited geographic mobility. Martin's findings did not support a statistically significant difference in the mobility rates of men and women in ARL libraries, although there were important predictor variables for position level (e.g., career work continuity and working in a large number of libraries). Maag found that appointments of academic library directors typically went to external male candidates and women were more likely to be internal appointees.

In 1983, Robinson, who studied mobility and career patterns in a large population of female and male academic librarians, found a statistically significant relationship between mobility and position level. Her research also showed that men gained greater position levels through mobility, and even when men and women were moving in order to advance their careers, rather than for personal or family reasons, men achieved greater position advancement. Robinson examined career interruptions and leaves of both men and women in order to determine the influence of work interruptions on careers. While women more frequently took leaves from work, and these were more usually personal or family related leaves, there was no statistically significant difference in position advancement between women who had interrupted their careers and those who did not. Robinson concluded neither the issue of job mobility nor career interruption could be held responsible for

the differences in career progression of men and women in academic librarianship.

Fennell (1983), referenced Fairchild's (1904) oft quoted query about whether women would ever hold the highest administrative positions in libraries to note that Fairchild's question was still open. She asked a follow-up question of her own, "The most important positions of leadership and administration in the academic-library profession are reserved for men, or, at best, include only a small proportion of women. Yet, who are these women?" (p. 209). Fennell explored personal and professional backgrounds, education and training, the role of work in their lives, and factors that influenced career achievement to develop a composite career profile of 11 (from a total of 17) women directors of the 164 largest academic libraries in the United States. The women administrators were asked what recommendations they would have for women interested in academic library director positions. Their advice was summarized as "get an advanced degree, work hard, be mobile, and choose your job because of the person for whom you will be working rather than for any other reason" (p. 239). The career profile of these women did not necessarily exemplify their advice; they believed they had worked hard and been in the right place at the right time but for the most part had not been deliberate in planning their careers.

At the same time that Fennell was examining the career profiles of female library directors, Moran (1983) was studying the comparative career progression of over 400 male and female academic library administrators who had been either assistant or associate library directors ten years previously. She explored personal characteristics, professional qualifications, and the relationship of these factors to having attained a director's position. There were distinctive differences by gender. For women there was no statistically significant relationship between personal characteristics such as marital status and number of geographic relocations and becoming a director. Men, however, were

much more likely to have attained a director position if they were married with children and had made a number of moves to assume administrative positions. Similarly, professional qualifications showed little influence in determining whether or not the women in the study group became directors, but did effect whether men did. Even when examining types of academic libraries, from college to large research libraries, these same patterns held true. Moran concluded that the personal and professional factors that are commonly used to explain why women do not attain the director position in academic libraries are not related to success in achieving that role. An explanation lies in the different career patterns of men and women in academic librarianship. Male librarians who achieve advanced degrees, participate in professional associations, and are published in the professional literature are likely to become directors in academic libraries; women following the same career pattern would not be as likely to attain a directorship. The only variable likely to influence the success of women in achieving the director's position was whether they were an internal candidate for the position, having been an assistant or associate director in the same institution. Several years earlier, Metz (1978) had reported this same pattern of internal succession for women – a pattern that is much less likely for men.

It is worthy of note that the advice given to women interested in academic library directorships by the female directors in the Fennell study is similar to the male career pattern Moran (1983) describes. Olsgaard (1984) developed a set of attributes of the successful academic librarian by studying academic librarians listed in *Who's Who in Library and Information Services* published in 1982 and provided a composite of the successful academic librarian. Among other attributes, the successful academic librarian is most likely to be a male administrator working in a large academic library. Olsgaard stressed that these composite characteristics are not necessarily the most

desirable and that a set of standards for success would be useful for the profession.

Several studies published in the 1980s examined personal and professional characteristics of male and female librarians. They found few differences other than the number of men and women recruited into senior positions in academic libraries. Swisher and DuMont (1984) studied the professional qualifications of over 300 academic librarians in an effort to ascertain how these factors influenced attainment of administrative positions. They identified tangible job qualifications (educational background, previous experience, publications, and professional activity) and compared men and women to show that even with almost identical qualifications men were more likely to advance to administrative positions. Irvine (1985) examined the characteristics of directors, associate directors, and assistant directors of the 99 academic libraries that were members of ARL in 1980. Of the 371 individuals identified, 256 men and 115 women answered survey questions about demographic characteristics and career patterns that could have influenced their attainment of administrative positions. Overall, Irvine found that women displayed many of the characteristics of their male colleagues and far fewer gender related differences than expected. Women, on average, were younger, had worked fewer years in libraries, and had only half the administrative experience as men in comparable positions. Irvine attributed these differences to the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, coupled with affirmative action programs, as having given women access to administrative posts and increased the number of women in administrative positions. The enactment of federal laws and regulations likely encouraged women to apply for administrative posts, as women perceived that positions were accessible to them. Irvine (1985) also pointed to ARL data that indicated that there were no women directors and only 16% of associate and assistant director positions filled by women in 1970, but by 1976/1977 11% of ARL

directors and 30% of associate and assistant directors were women.

In 1989, Moran replicated the research on career progression she had done some ten years earlier. She found there had been significant changes in the career progression patterns of female academic library administrators. The personal characteristics of male and female library directors remained unchanged, but professional characteristics showed statistically significant differences. In the 1983 study, neither educational level nor professional activities were associated with female success in career advancement, and internal succession was the norm. By 1989, professional characteristics of advanced degrees, publications, professional activity, and mobility were associated with success of both men and women.

Looking specifically at the Canadian context from the 1960s to the 1980s, several studies are illustrative of the trends found in the U.S. professional library community. In 1974, Cheda, Fischer, Wasylycia-Coe, and Yaffe examined the career patterns of Canadian librarians. The research group broke up before the study was published in its entirety (Futas, 1983), but the group later produced a study which examined salary differentials of male and female librarians (Cheda, Fischer, Wasylycia-Coe, & Yaffe, 1978). Wasylycia-Coe (1981) also profiled Canadian chief librarians by gender, analyzing data collected in the larger study. She compared male and female chief librarians on a number of career characteristics and social background variables and noted that male and female heads of libraries were fairly equally represented in small to large public libraries and college libraries, whereas women in special libraries outnumbered male heads almost two to one. There were, however, no women heading large university libraries in the sample data. She also found men were much more likely to have obtained a first job as chief librarian, and it was more usual for a man than a woman to become a chief librarian early in his career. The salary and advancement findings that Cheda, Fischer,

Wasylycia-Coe, and Yaffe (1978) first noted were echoed by Plate and Siegel (1979) in their study of Ontario librarians. Almost 10 years after the Cheda, Fischer, Wasylycia-Coe, and Yaffe study, Harris and Monk (1986) surveyed Masters of Library Science graduates from the University of Western Ontario and undertook a "prestige analysis" of professional tasks and work settings to find that men were most often performing higher status tasks, such as administrative tasks, more of the time than were women, and that men were paid more, on average, than women in every setting except for community college libraries. In 1987, Bowron tabulated the number of men heading large Canadian university and public libraries in 1948 and in 1986, and found that there had been an increase in the male majority.

Overall, the career progression of Canadian library directors is similar to that of their U.S. counterparts. Harris and Tague (1989) explored the career paths of 26 male and female directors in academic, government, and large public libraries. Noting work done by U.S. researchers such as Moran, the Canadian investigators studied whether similar career patterns might be found in Canadian librarianship. By and large the findings were similar: male directors did not have higher degrees in education, higher publication levels, or higher professional activity than female directors, and mobility was not found to be a factor in career advancement. Deschatelets and Saint-Marseille (1991) reported similar findings in their study of directors of large francophone libraries in Canada.

Summing up to the 1990s, the research studies of the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s provided evidence of a shift from the assumption that various personal and professional characteristics could be identified to account for differences in the number of men and of women recruited into senior positions in academic libraries. Overall, women began to display many of the characteristics of their male colleagues and far fewer gender related differences than expected. Despite this, they

remained vastly underrepresented in director positions in academic libraries.

The 1990s and beyond in the U.S. and Canada: "Is the revolution over?"

Kirkland (1997), who surveyed 135 women academic library directors, identified the variables participants had found most important in their career advancement. While variables such as mobility, academic qualifications, service in professional organizations, and tenacity and perseverance were most commonly chosen, mentoring was ranked most highly in importance for career success and attaining the director position. Kirkland also asked women librarians to identify anti-mentoring or deprivation behavior, which can be defined as experiences that discourage women from achieving administrative positions. Deprivation or discouraging behaviors can occur in the areas of responsibility, information, recognition and approval, and solidarity (pitting women against one another). Deprivation behavior, which Kirkland defined as a subtle form of gender bias, discourages female ambition and supports the glass ceiling many women experience in their career progression.

Moran, Leonard, and Zellers (2009), who analyzed the academic library workforce, concluded parity between men and women administrators had not been accomplished, but women holding directorships increased from 2% in 1972 to almost 61% in 2004. They attributed the change to the high turnover of director positions over the period between 1994 and 2004 and the number of women who replaced men as they vacated the director role. Encouraging as these results are, they noted that this trend can still be improved if women are to be as proportionally represented in academic administrator positions as they are in the profession. This highlighting of the issue of parity is in response to the question posed by Deyrup (2004) when she asked "Is the revolution over?" (p. 249). Deyrup, noting the impressive gain in top administrator positions women had

made over the past thirty years, determined that both salary and professional parity had been achieved. However, she also acknowledged that these gains must be maintained and women must be encouraged to enter and then be supported in senior positions.

In Canada, a 2005 study by the 8Rs Research Team looked at variables of recruitment, remuneration, retention, retirement, reaccreditation, rejuvenation, repatriation, and restructuring throughout the Canadian library workforce. Although the study did not look specifically at career advancement of women or men, demographic and position data were gathered for all librarians who reported in the practitioner's survey – over 4,697 individuals. As a follow up to the study, Sorensen (2012) reanalyzed these data to provide further insights into the demographics of almost 600 senior administrators in Canadian libraries, including 151 chief librarians or directors in academic libraries. While noting that very little research attention had been paid to senior positions, she concluded that

Notably, however, females comprise a smaller portion of CARL, other academic, and CULC senior administrators, while other public, government, non-profit, and school senior administrators are slightly more likely to be female than their professional librarian counterparts. Hence, while female representation is higher in the library sector than in most other occupations at all career levels, women are less likely to be found heading up the largest libraries in the country. (Sorensen, 2012, p. 53)

In examining sources, primarily from the 1930s to the 2000s on the career advancement of women librarians in academic libraries, the evidence shows the number of women in senior leadership roles has increased, despite the personal characteristics and professional qualifications such as mobility, career interruptions, and lack of advanced degrees that

were traditionally identified as limitations to career growth. However, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in academic libraries and this picture should also be viewed within the larger sociocultural context of women's advancement in the workplace. While the pace of career advancement for all women accelerated, particularly during the 1970s to 1990s, there is some suspicion that it might now be slowing. For example, in 2007 Eagly and Carli reminded readers that women still cannot assume that they will find gender equality in the workplace:

Contemporary women still face many challenges, especially in relation to male-dominated leadership roles. They must be brave, resourceful, creative, and smart to be successful, because they can face the most elaborate of labyrinths on their path to leadership. (p. 199)

In the same article, Eagly and Carli also discuss how the march towards equality now shows a much slower pace. Women who aspire to leadership positions in libraries should be aware that the pace of change and acceptance of women in leadership roles continues to be slow, perhaps even slackening, and they will continue to find barriers and obstacles to surmount in attaining the careers and leadership roles that they desire.

Writing about Women Library Leaders

Writing about women's lives, the female experience, has received a lot of attention from scholars over the past quarter century. Seminal works by Heilbrun (1988) and Bateson (1990) discussed the discordance between the published or public life and the private lives of women, and how most women have not written openly about themselves or their accomplishments. Similarly, biographies often describe women's lives in ways that are not based on female truth or experiences, but contrive to be in keeping with the societal norms of the day.

Works that describe women's lives as librarians can be found in the professional literature. Many of these are biographies, interviews or brief descriptions of women's professional lives that were compiled so that names and achievements would not be lost once the memory of an individual or an institution had faded. Grotzinger (1983b) examined a number of biographical studies of librarians to find that biographies of male librarians far outnumber the biographies of female librarians. She concluded that this dearth of writing about women librarians is recognition denied and "removes the evidence that would permit a solid assessment of their roles and contributions" (p. 373). This evidence is critical to decide whether their contribution was notable, and if women can be determined to be leaders in their times. Grotzinger (1983a) also maintained that one of the perils of biographical studies of women librarians is the lack of apparent methodological rigor and critical analysis, as a great many of these biographical works fall into the classification of non-scholarly tributes. She examined these works as well as theses, dissertations, and collective scholarly biographies, and concluded there are a number of critical flaws in biographical works about women, some of them due to lack of primary source materials and failure to cite sources.

Hildenbrand (1992) examined library history (defined as the body of published historical writing) and women's place in history to reveal: "From their leadership positions men have shaped not only the profession but also the writing of its history" (p. 19). She refers to the difficulty of understanding the experiences of early women librarians as they "left fewer personal records than any other similarly educated women of the period" (p. 24). Hildenbrand decries that histories of librarianship that omit women are still being published and points to the work of Grotzinger (1983a) as critical to understanding what the lives of women librarians were like and the centrality of their contribution to library development. As Hildenbrand (1996) pointed

out, it is only through gendered history or an understanding of the position of women librarians in relation to their male counterparts that one can approach larger questions such as inequality in the workplace. And, women's individual and collective biographies must not only attempt to redress the paucity of writing about women librarians but should "present an invaluable picture of early library women as active agents, choosing their work and making valuable contributions in the face of enormous obstacles" (p. 14). One such contemporary work is Fitzpatrick's *Mrs. Magavero: A History Based on the Life of an Academic Librarian* (2007). The work on Magavero, who was the first female librarian at a Maritime college, is set firmly within the professional writings and events of her time (1949-2003). Her experience of working within a male-dominated organization for low pay and marginal status is described in her own voice:

Now in those days, Fort Schuyler was really a male bastion, and I was coming on as the only professional woman. They had women as clerks, but I was the only professional woman. And the library was manned by the director, Mr. Hoverter, and I was the only other professional person in the library at the time. (p. 66)

She continues:

And here I am, with much more education, and I was hired as a clerk. Now I questioned that of the librarian at the time, you know. I thought, "Why should I be in the clerical line?" He said, "Well there's nothing I could do, you know this is the way it is," and you know I accepted it. (p. 67)

It was not until 1961 or 1962 that Mrs. Magavero was put into a professional position. As Fitzpatrick (2007) concludes, "The library world has come a long way since 1949, but still has a long way to go" (p. 60).

The stories that people tell about themselves or are told by others are powerful because they not only situate the individual in time and within context or situation but also speak to the manner in which individuals develop understanding or make meaning of their experience. Mrs. Magavero reflected upon her experience in terms of striving for acceptance and seeking recognition of her competency in an organization that was dominated by men in positions of power and influence. Her story is compelling for the reader because it offers a firsthand account of the struggle that many women have faced in making and advancing a career in academic libraries.

Discussion

Research into the lives of women library leaders is important because women traditionally represent 75-80% of library professionals and yet the story of their career advancement and leadership within librarianship is bounded by characteristics – real or perceived – that affect their career progression. Analysis of the works reviewed shows that the research and writing that exists pertains primarily to the United States, although a few Canadian studies are noted and they show findings similar to those of U.S. studies. Few studies of women's career advancement in libraries exist outside of the U.S. and Canada.

Clearly, additional research is needed. Today there is a generation of women library directors who came up through the ranks of academic libraries and were overwhelmingly led by male librarians, and who may have been perceived as less "desirable" than their male colleagues for promotion into senior positions (Kronus & Grimm, 1971). Nonetheless, these women attained senior roles and account in some part for the reversal in the number of males and females in administrative positions in major libraries. The current generation of women directors is likely to have learned important lessons about the effect that being female has had on their careers. These women are also

likely to retire within the next 5 to 10 years, with little documentation of the issues and challenges that shaped their experience. As positions as director or chief librarian become vacant, female candidates will be interested and competitive in recruitment into these positions, and it is likely that they can learn from the experiences of their predecessors. It is also very likely that women who aspire to senior administrative and leadership roles in academic libraries will encounter some of the same issues and obstacles to career advancement and leadership development as the current generation of women academic library directors did in the past. Just as Lerner (1997) advocated for all women and their history, female librarians should have the opportunity to understand the historical role of women in librarianship and celebrate the accomplishments of these women as a prelude to defining their own futures as library leaders.

Looking specifically at the Canadian scene, few research studies provide a baseline of data upon which further studies of career progression or leadership development in academic libraries can be grounded. Future research in Canada should focus on collecting current data about career advancement of women in academic libraries. Additionally, few biographical works about women librarians exist, and the contributions of women in building Canadian libraries should be documented and acknowledged.

The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries by the 8Rs Research Team is the sole comprehensive source of general demographic and human resources data for Canadian libraries. However, other than the percentage of senior administrators by sex and by library sector, the original 8Rs data were not comprehensive or exhaustive enough to provide a more detailed profile for males and females in Canadian academic libraries. Ideally, the 8Rs data should be updated on a regular basis, with particular attention paid to analyzing data by sex and potentially by the other three groups

identified in Canadian equity legislation. This would provide a firm foundation of demographic data on which to base further study of women in academic libraries and of all sectors.

Limitations of this review include inclusion of only studies that dealt specifically with career advancement as well as writing about women in libraries. In doing so, many studies and much writing about the sociocultural forces that were shaping the lives of women in the workforce in the 1960s to the 1980s have not been acknowledged or represented, and yet these forces have influenced the choices that women in libraries have made about their careers. Neither does the literature review capture any studies reporting changes to the operating environment of libraries and the internal changes, such as unionization, that were bred in the tumult of social change. Libraries as organizations have not been immune from societal change and influences, and any resulting legislation or policy, as well as the changing role and status of women within library organizations, has been the subject of debate and question by both administrators and library staff. Although over time established attitudes and behaviors regarding women librarians no longer seemed appropriate, in some instances the career aspirations and advancement of women was still met with ignorance, discrimination, and opposition. And, as Eagly and Carli (2007) remind us, this can still happen today; gender equality in the workplace cannot be assumed. Additionally, the review does not include research about career development of women in general, career aspirations, or the development of skills or competencies that support leadership growth of the individual. All of these elements are useful in understanding the context for career advancement and writing about women in libraries, but this review was not designed to be comprehensive enough to reflect overall context.

Conclusions

A review of the literature regarding career advancement and writing about women revealed that overall women have gained in terms of the number of senior positions in academic libraries in the U.S and Canada, although they are still not proportionately represented. Noteworthy studies described the demographic profiles and professional characteristics and qualifications of women librarians and their significance and change over time. The dearth of writing about women librarians is highlighted to emphasize that the professional lives of women librarians are largely unknown as is the importance of their contribution to the development of libraries and librarianship, whether or not they achieved senior administrative positions. Future research focusing on collecting current data about career advancement of women in academic libraries as well as the contributions of women to development of libraries is suggested.

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