

# Recruitment, education, and retention of librarians

## A response to the top issues

by Keri-Lynn Paulson

**Ed. note:** *In the November 2002 issue, W. Lee Hisle put forth the "Top issues facing academic libraries," which resulted from the work of the Focus on the Future Task Force. The following is a response to the issues.*

I love students' reactions when I tell them I'm a librarian. As a spunky 24-year old, I often defy their preconceived notions about librarianship, including the assumption that it is a profession attractive only to those who are generations older than they. While it is true that the profession is retiring faster than it's recruiting, please don't forget that there are young, energetic librarians to be found in academe and that we can be a valuable resource in addressing the recruitment issue.

Why not survey us to find out why we recently joined the ranks? Our comments may give the profession fresh ideas and renewed vigor for recruiting the next generation of librarians. Although librarianship tends to be a second or third career for many, we can make it a more visible option for young people on

the verge of entering the workforce.

As a young person, however, I can tell you that it's not easy to find an entry-level position in an academic library these days; available jobs increasingly require skills and specializations that can only come from second master's degrees or significant time in other job sectors. It does require sacrifice on the part of libraries to admit new librarians with little or no prior experience, especially in terms of the amount of time and patience needed to educate and mentor us. But we, in turn, contribute exuberance, creativity, and the ability to connect with younger generations of faculty and students (and perhaps recruit some of them to the profession!).

If academic libraries will consider young, new librarians as investments for the future of the profession, the returns will be enormous.—*Keri-Lynn Paulson is reference and instruction librarian for Eckles Library at George Washington University's Mount Vernon Campus, e-mail: klpaulson@gwu.edu*

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