
ALA American Library Association

Statistics and Surveys: What We Now Know About Librarians By Mary Jo Lynch

People sometimes ask ALA for basic demographic facts about librarians. What is the average age? How many are in various racial/ethnic groups? What is the gender breakdown? How much do librarians make? What is their level of education?

Inquirers often have made two assumptions:

1. that ALA collects such information about its members on a regular basis; and,
2. that all members of ALA are librarians.

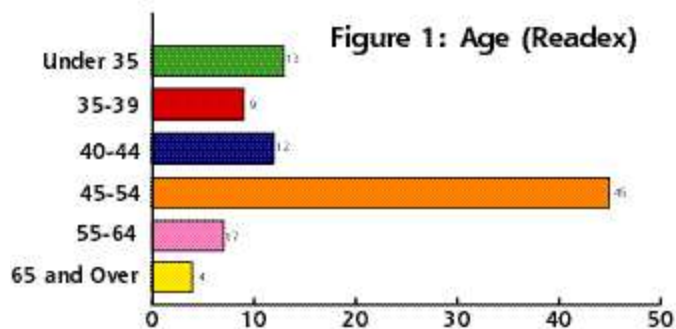
Neither of those assumptions is true. But a May 1999 member survey conducted by Readex provided a useful snapshot of demographic data about ALA members and confirmed that at least 80% of our members have the MLS from an ALA-accredited program—ALA's specification of the appropriate degree for librarians.

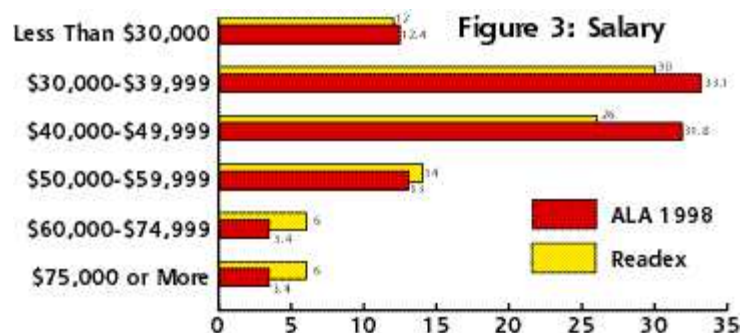
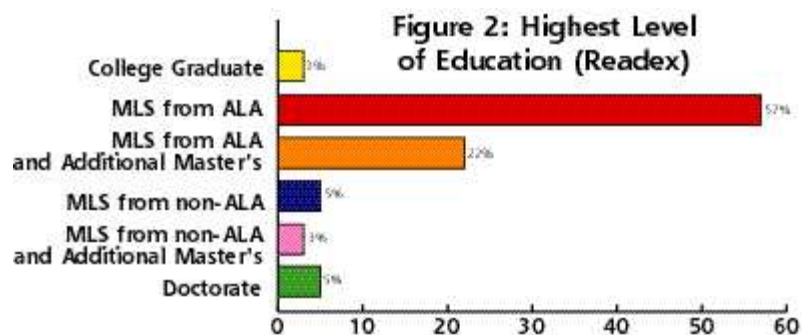
This article presents the Readex results on five demographic variables and supplements those results with data from the *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1998* (gender, racial/ethnic category) and the *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1999* (age).

It must be noted that the ALA survey of librarian salaries is sent to academic and public libraries with at least two professionals and collects data for full-time staff with master's degrees from programs in library and information studies (LIS) accredited by ALA. Thus this data comes from a more strictly defined population, but the results are not widely different from those of the Readex survey.

For gender and race or ethnicity, this article presents data on graduates from ALA-accredited programs in LIS taken from *Degrees and Certificates Awarded by U.S. Library and Information Studies Education Programs 1997–1998*, prepared by the ALA Office for Human Resource Development and Recruitment (HRDR).

This annual report is based on the most recent compilation of *Library and Information Science Education Statistics* published by the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE).





Gender

The Readex survey found that ALA's membership is 26% male and 73% female. This is consistent with earlier surveys of ALA membership. The HRDR/ALISE statistics for 1997–98 show that graduates with the ALA-accredited master's degree are 21% male and 79% female. Among practitioners the ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1998 found that the balance differs by type of library: Public librarians are 21% male and 79% female. Academic librarians are 32% male and 68% female.

Race and ethnicity

As reported to Readex, 91% of ALA members are white, 3% are black, and 1% each are Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic. Less than 1% chose "American Indian/Alaskan Native," and 4% either skipped the question or checked more than one category.

Data on 12,483 practitioners in public and academic libraries collected for the *ALA Salary Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1998* shows a slightly more diverse group with 89% white, 6% black, 3.5 % Hispanic, and 4.5% Asian/Pacific Islander. Here too the number of American Indian/Alaskan Native is less than 1%.

The HRDR/ALISE statistics on graduates in 1997–98 fall in the middle of these two sources for all five categories.

Age

Results for the Readex question on age are shown in Figure 1. The "greying" of the profession seems clear: 45% are in the 45–54 category. The same situation is revealed in the *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1999*, although it used different categories: 35% of practitioners are in the category 40–49 years and another 31.8% are in the 51–59 years bracket. Only 6.7% are under 30.

Educational level

Figure 2 shows results from the Readex survey on educational level—the only source available on the variable "highest level of education completed." This question and the next question (on gross salary in 1998) were answered only by respondents who were "employed full-time in a library or program of LIS

education.” Adding the second and third bars, we get 79% of ALA members with the accredited MLS. Since at least some of the 5% with the doctorate have the accredited MLS, we are assuming that the true figure is at least 80%.

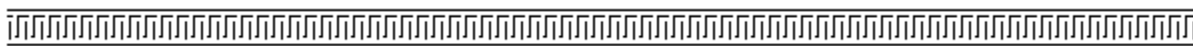
Salary

Figure 3 shows gross salary in 1998 from two sources, the 1999 Readex survey, which asked about gross salary in 1998, and actual salaries reported in the *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1998*. The respondents for two sources are somewhat different in that in the Readex survey sampled all ALA members employed in libraries plus educators, but the ALA survey covered only practitioners in academic and public libraries. In both cases, the majority of salaries are between \$30,000 and \$50,000 with very few earning \$75,000 or more.

Data on directors

The *ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1999*, asked a one-time-only question about the sex of the director. That information was provided for 95% of the salaries reported.

In academic libraries, 43% of directors are male and 57% are female. In public libraries, 35% of directors are male and 65% are female. In academic libraries, the average salary for male directors was 8% higher than the average salary of female directors. In public libraries, the average salary for male directors was 16.7% greater.



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