

# Head Librarians: How Many Men? How Many Women?

*Questionnaires were sent to 660 head librarians of American colleges in an effort to determine whether or not there are significant differences between the number and kinds of libraries directed by men and those headed by women. A total of 414 were returned. Results indicated that there are approximately as many male head librarians as female, but that more of the publicly supported libraries and more of the larger libraries are supervised by men. Men seem to take on administrative positions at an earlier age than women, but women tend to change positions less frequently. Furthermore, women seem to be more successful at eliciting financial support for their libraries than their male counterparts.*

IT IS POSSIBLE that many men hesitate to enter college library work because they feel that the profession is over-feminized and that most of the administrative jobs are held by women. Conversely, it is possible that many women believe that most head librarians' positions are filled by men and that administration-minded women have few opportunities to enter this area of librarianship. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to present some data which may help to form some tentative conclusions concerning the frequency that men and women may be found serving as head librarians in various types and sizes of colleges. Therefore, the central problem may be stated in the form of this question: Is there a difference in the percentages of men and women who are head librarians of colleges, when the institutions are grouped according to the nature of their financial support and by the size of their enrollments?

In order to collect the data, 660 questionnaires were mailed to selected head librarians of colleges of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Of this number, 414 were returned. This number of returns was above average, being 62.727 per cent of the total number. Among the items included on the schedules were the following questions, which will serve as the bases for this report.

- A. How long have you been the head librarian of your institution?  
(1) 1-5 yrs.?— (2) 6-10 yrs.?—  
— (3) 11-15 yrs.?— (4) 16 or more?—
- B. Please check the total length of time that you have been a head librarian in all academic libraries with which you have been associated.  
(1) 1-5 yrs.?— (2) 6-10 yrs.?—  
— (3) 11-15 yrs.?— (4) 16 or more?—

<sup>1</sup> The term "colleges" is used in this report as it is defined in the "Standards for College Libraries," *College and Research Libraries*, XX (July 1959), 274—except that institutions were not included in the population, which: (a) do not pay their head librarians a salary, and/or (b) have enrollments exceeding five thousand students.

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- C. Is your age (1) 20-30?— (2) 31-40?— (3) 41-50?— (4) Over 50?—
- D. Sex: Male— Female—
- E. Please check the percentage of the institutional budget that is allotted to your library. Please estimate the figure if you do not know exactly.  
 (1) Under 2 per cent— (2) 2-4 per cent— (3) 4-6 per cent—  
 (4) Over 6 per cent—

The data were coded and placed upon punched cards, which were verified for accuracy by a key-punch operator, and most of the information was abstracted by use of the card sorting machine.

Of the 414 head librarians who returned the questionnaire, the number of men and women was almost equally divided. The number and per cent of male and female respondents is listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1

RESPONSES ACCORDING TO THE SEX OF COLLEGE HEAD LIBRARIANS

College Head Librarians	Number	Per Cent
Males . . . . .	201	48.55
Females . . . . .	213	51.45
TOTAL . . . . .	414	100.00

In analyzing the data by comparing the returns from men and women head librarians when their colleges are classified according to type and size, the institutions were divided into five groups, which may be described in this manner:

Group 1 consists of publicly supported colleges which have enrollments ranging from 1,501 to 5,000 students.

Group 2 consists of publicly supported colleges which have enrollments ranging from 500 to 1,500 students. One college having an enrollment of less than 500 students is included in this group.

Group 3 consists of privately support-

ed colleges which have enrollments ranging from 1,501 to 5,000 students.

Group 4 consists of privately supported colleges which have enrollments ranging from 500 to 1,500 students.

Group 5 consists of privately supported colleges which have enrollments of fewer than 500 students.

Table 2 indicates the number and per cent of the respondents according to groups in which the colleges were placed.

From the figures included in Table 2, it would appear that the majority of college head librarians are women; however, the difference is only 2.90 per cent. The figures would indicate also that men are more likely to be heads of publicly supported libraries than are women, since Table 2 indicates that from a total of 143 head librarians, 82 men (57.34 per cent) and 61 women (42.66 per cent) are the respondents which compose Groups 1 and 2. On the other hand, from the total of 271 head librarians included in Groups 3, 4, and 5, 119 men (43.91 per cent) and 152 women (56.09 per cent) are associated with privately supported colleges.

A further inspection of this table reveals that men are more likely to be head librarians of the larger colleges. For example, Groups 1 and 3 are composed of 114 head librarians who are associated with colleges having enrollments ranging from 1,501 to 5,000 students. Of this number, 72 (63.16 per cent) are men and 42 (36.84 per cent) are women. Conversely, the table indicates that the majority of the head librarians of the colleges having enrollments of 500 to 1,500 students are women. Groups 2 and 4 include 228 librarians; of these, 103 (45.175 per cent) are men and 125 (54.825 per cent) are women. The percentage of women is even larger in Group 5, which includes a total of 72 head librarians, who are associated with colleges having enroll-

TABLE 2  
RESPONSES ACCORDING TO THE TYPE AND SIZE OF THE COLLEGES  
WITH WHICH THE HEAD LIBRARIANS ARE ASSOCIATED

Number of the Group	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
1 . . . . .	50	66.67	25	33.33	75
2 . . . . .	32	47.06	36	52.94	68
3 . . . . .	22	58.72	17	41.28	39
4 . . . . .	71	44.375	89	55.625	160
5 . . . . .	26	36.11	46	63.89	72
TOTAL . . . . .	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

ments of fewer than 500 students. Of the 72 head librarians, 26 (36.11 per cent) are men and 46 (63.89 per cent) are women.

From the analysis of the information reported by the head librarians the following generalizations may be derived:

There is very little difference in the percentages of men and women who serve as head librarians in colleges of the United States.

There is a considerable difference in the percentages of men and women who serve as head librarians when the colleges are divided into groups according to the nature of financial support.

There is a considerable difference in the percentages of men and women who serve as head librarians when the colleges are divided into groups according to the size of the enrollment.

In the paragraphs above, the central question of this study has been answered. Additional questions concerned with head librarians were included on the schedules, and in the following pages these data are analyzed when the respondents are grouped according to sex and (a) the length of time that they have served as head librarian in their present colleges, (b) the total length of time that they have been a head librarian in all academic libraries with which they have been associated,

TABLE 3  
LENGTH OF TIME THAT THE RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN IN THEIR  
PRESENT POSITIONS AS HEAD LIBRARIANS

Length of Time (Yrs.)	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
1-5 . . . . .	96	60.76	62	39.24	158
6-10 . . . . .	40	51.28	38	48.72	78
11-15 . . . . .	39	42.87	52	57.13	91
16+ . . . . .	25	30.49	60	69.51	82
No Answer . . . . .	1		1		2
TOTAL . . . . .	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

TABLE 4

TOTAL LENGTH OF TIME THE RESPONDENTS HAVE SERVED AS  
HEAD LIBRARIANS IN ALL INSTITUTIONS

Length of Time (Yrs.)	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
1-5 . . .	59	54.62	49	45.38	108
6-10 . . .	51	60.71	33	39.29	84
11-15 . . .	43	53.75	37	46.25	80
16+ . . .	47	34.56	89	65.44	136
No Answer .	1	. . . .	5	. . . .	6
TOTAL . .	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

(c) their approximate ages, (d) the geographical location of their colleges, and (e) the per cent of the collegiate budgets which are allotted to their libraries. The above topics will be examined in the order in which they are listed. Therefore, Table 3 indicates the tenure of the head librarians in their present positions.

From examining the data presented in Table 3 it appears that women tend to move less often than men since we notice that the number and per cent of male respondents steadily decreases as the number of years increases, whereas the opposite is true for women. When tenure is examined from the viewpoint of the total length of time that the respondents have been head librarians of

all institutions with which they have been associated, however, the results are slightly different.

Table 4 indicates that there is a rising percentage of men in the six-ten year length-of-time group and a sharp drop in the percentage of women in this same group. Perhaps marriage and/or age have something to do with this. In any case, men who have been head librarians for ten years or less number 110 (58.33 per cent) from a total of 192 respondents. On the other hand, 126 (58.33 per cent) women are found in a total of 216 head librarians who have served in that capacity for eleven years. Percentages for the other periods of service may readily be determined from inspecting the table.

TABLE 5

## APPROXIMATE AGES OF THE HEAD LIBRARIANS

Ages of the Head Librarians	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
20-30 yrs. .	8	72.73	3	27.27	11
31-40 yrs. .	57	77.03	17	22.97	74
41-50 yrs. .	76	55.88	60	44.12	136
50+ yrs. . .	60	31.58	130	68.42	190
No Answer .	0	. . . .	3	. . . .	3
TOTAL . .	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

From an inspection of Table 5, it would seem that men become heads of college libraries at a younger age than do women, since the number and percentage of women who are head librarians rises sharply after they reach forty years of age.

It was noted earlier that women tend to remain in a position for longer periods than men. Thus, it may be true that some women inherit the job of head librarian by virtue of a combination of capability and seniority rather than by actively seeking the position.

It seems to be well known in the library profession that if one wishes to become a supervisory or administrative librarian more quickly than might otherwise be the case, he must move. Thus, since women apparently do not change

jobs as often as men, they do not become heads of libraries as quickly as men.

Table 6 is a more detailed presentation of the data. In this table, the respondents are grouped: (1) by the total length of time that they have been college head librarians, (2) by approximate ages, and (3) by sex.

In almost every age group there is a steady rise in the percentage of women head librarians; however, the correlation between men and women does not appear to be a perfect -1.00. For instance, in the 16+ years group, the percentage of men head librarians is 50 per cent, whereas in the 50+ years group, the percentage drops to 32.1 per cent. It is true that there is a great deal of difference in the actual numbers of head librar-

TABLE 6

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF HEAD LIBRARIANS WHEN GROUPED BY TOTAL LENGTH OF TIME SERVED AS HEAD LIBRARIAN, SEX, AND AGE

Total Length of Time as Head Librarians (Yrs.)	Ages of the Head Librarians	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
1-5	20-30 years	7	70.0	3	30.0	10
	31-40 years	28	73.6	10	26.4	38
	41-50 years	19	47.5	21	59.5	40
	50+ years	5	27.8	13	62.2	18
	Total	59		47		106
6-10	20-30 years	0	00.0	0	00.0	0
	31-40 years	25	86.2	4	23.8	29
	41-50 years	17	63.0	10	37.0	27
	50+ years	8	29.7	19	70.3	27
	Total	50		33		83
11-15	20-30 years	0	00.0	0	00.0	0
	31-40 years	4	66.7	2	33.3	6
	41-50 years	26	61.9	16	39.1	42
	50+ years	13	41.9	18	58.1	31
	Total	43		36		79
16+	20-30 years	0	00.0	0	00.0	0
	31-40 years	0	00.0	0	00.0	0
	41-50 years	13	50.0	13	50.0	26
	50+ years	35	32.1	74	67.9	109
	Total	48		87		135
No Answer		1		10		11
Total		201		213		414

TABLE 7  
 RESPONSES FROM MEN AND WOMEN HEAD LIBRARIANS ACCORDING TO  
 THE LOCATION OF THE COLLEGE

Accrediting Body of the College	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
North Central	87	52.09	80	47.91	167
Southern	52	45.61	62	54.39	114
Middle States	32	45.07	39	54.93	71
New England	14	53.85	12	46.15	26
Northwest	9	50.00	9	50.00	18
Western	7	38.89	11	61.11	18
TOTAL	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

ians in the two age groups, but nevertheless the drop in percentage seems to be a sharp one.

What happens to these men? Do they tend to retire earlier than women? Do some of them leave college libraries to become associated with university libraries? Presumably, the life span of men and women engaged in library work does not vary from the national norm; therefore, is it possible that this is the cause for the lowered percentage of men in this age bracket? These are interesting questions, but these data cannot answer them.

In most age groups, however, within the four total length-of-service divisions of the table, there is a drop in the percentage of men who are librarians, which, as was mentioned previously, may indicate that men become head librarians at earlier ages than women.

It is also interesting to note the curve that is formed by the "Total Length of Time as Head Librarian" groups. The 1-5 years group includes 106 head librarians; the 6-10 years group includes 83 head librarians; the 11-15 years group includes 79 head librarians; and the 16+ years group includes 135 of the total of 414 head librarians.

The punched cards representing each

college were coded according to type, size, and regional accrediting body. Therefore, when it was decided to determine the number of the respondents reporting from various geographical locations, it was a simple matter to do so. Table 7 contains this information.

Because of the wide range in numbers (although the percentage of returns according to regional accrediting associations did not vary excessively), it is difficult to make assumptions from these data. One observation that might be made is that since the South has many of the smaller private colleges, and since women are more likely to be head librarians in such colleges, this might account for the higher percentage of women in this group. No attempt will be made, however, to explain the difference in the percentages of men and women head librarians in the New England and Middle States, respectively, other than to say that, perhaps, the number of respondents may not be large enough to present a true picture.

Since one of the more important duties of a head librarian is getting an appropriation large enough so that a "quality" library may be provided to aid the college in achieving its educational objectives, the respondents were also

grouped according to the percentages of the institutional budgets which were allotted to their libraries.

It would appear that the ladies are slightly better at getting the money than are the men. One hundred and twenty-seven (53.37 per cent) of the 238 colleges which report receiving over 4 per cent of the institutional budget are headed by women. Conversely, 87 (56.86 per cent) of the 153 colleges which receive less than 4 per cent of the total college budget are headed by men. On the other hand, twenty of the women did not know, or did not have access to information concerning the amount of the college budget; whereas, only three men lacked this information.

Some of the more obvious generalizations, which according to the data appear to have a factual basis are summarized below:

1. *There are opportunities for administration minded people of either sex in librarianship.* Responses to 660 questionnaires totaled 414. Of this number, 201 (48.55 per cent) of the head librarians were men and 213 (51.45 per cent) were women.

2. *Men are more likely to be head librarians of publicly supported colleges.* Even though the percentage of head librarians of colleges is nearly equal, men are more likely to be head librarians of

tax-supported colleges. There are 143 head librarians in the study that are associated with these institutions, and 82 (57.34 per cent) of this number are men.

3. *Men are more likely to be head librarians of larger colleges.* Included in this study are 114 head librarians associated with colleges having enrollments ranging from 1,500 to 5,000 students. Of these librarians, 72 (63.16 per cent) are men. The percentage of men head librarians decreases as the enrollments of the colleges decrease.

4. *Women head librarians tend to change positions less often than men.* Of 173 head librarians, who had been in their present positions for over ten years, 112 (64.80 per cent) were women. Of the 82 librarians, who had been in their present positions for over sixteen years, 60 (73.17 per cent) were women.

5. *Men tend to become head librarians at an earlier age than women.* Of the 85 librarians in the study who are under forty years of age, 65 (76.46 per cent) are men. If the age limit is raised to fifty, of 221 head librarians who range from twenty to fifty years of age, 141 (63.80 per cent) are men.

6. *Women appear equally as capable, as if not more capable than, men in getting funds for the library.* Two hundred and forty colleges reported receiving over 4 per cent of the institutional budg-

TABLE 8

PER CENT OF INSTITUTIONAL BUDGETS ALLOTTED TO THE LIBRARIES

Per Cent of Institutional Budget	Number of Male Head Librarians	Per Cent of Male Head Librarians	Number of Female Head Librarians	Per Cent of Female Head Librarians	Total Number of Head Librarians
Under 2 per cent	9	60.00	6	40.00	15
2-4 per cent . . .	78	56.52	60	43.48	138
4-6 per cent . . .	92	45.87	109	54.13	201
Over 6 per cent .	19	51.35	18	48.65	37
No Answer . . .	3		20		23
TOTAL . . .	201	48.55	213	51.45	414

et as the library appropriation, and of this number 127 (52.92 per cent) were colleges which had libraries headed by women. This is a very small difference, but it does raise the question: Are women more adept at getting library appropriations than men? Equally important, however, is the fact that 153 (36.96 per cent) of the 414 college libraries receive less than 4 per cent of the institu-

tional budget for the library and that 23 (5.5 per cent) of the respondents cannot ascertain the amount of the institutional budget.

Perhaps the chief value of this report lies in its indication that there are opportunities for both men and women, who want to be administrators, to be appointed as head librarians of colleges in the United States. ■■

