

**COLORADO PUBLIC LIBRARY PARAPROFESSIONALS EXPERIENCED, WELL-EDUCATED  
GOOD CANDIDATES FOR FUTURE LEADERSHIP, BUT THEY NEED INCENTIVES**

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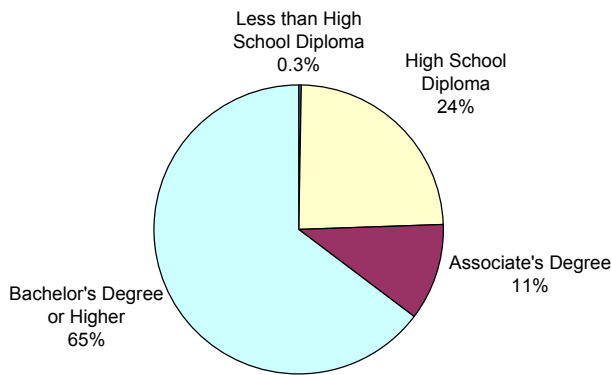
February 11, 2005

Colorado's public libraries boast a wealth of experienced, educated paraprofessionals, according to responses to *Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment: The Future of Librarianship in Colorado*, a study recently released by the Library Research Service. Many of them could be in line for credentialed librarian leadership positions in the near future.

For the purpose of consistency in the study, public library paraprofessionals were defined as individuals without an MLIS or library media endorsement who are working in a library.

Surprisingly high levels of education and experience were reported by those who are neither planning on retiring in the next five years nor currently enrolled in an MLIS program.

**Chart 1: Educational Level of Paraprofessionals**

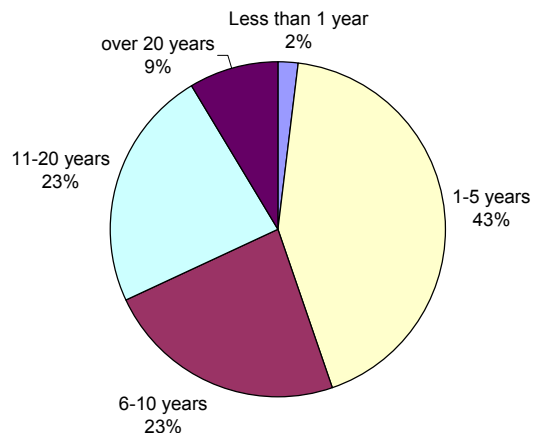


In public libraries throughout the state, paraprofessionals prove to be very well-educated. Nearly all of those who responded to the survey (99.7%) have at least a high school education.

Additionally, nearly two-thirds of them (65%) have at least a bachelor's degree, and three-quarters (76%) have an associate's degree or higher (see chart 1).

Equally important as this high educational level is the amount of practical library experience these paraprofessionals bring to the public they serve. More than half of survey respondents (55%) have five or more years of library experience and nearly a third (32%) have over ten years of experience (see chart 2).

**Chart 2: Years of Experience for Library Paraprofessionals**



As our public libraries prepare for a potential dearth of credentialed librarians due to retirements, these experienced, educated paraprofessionals are a likely

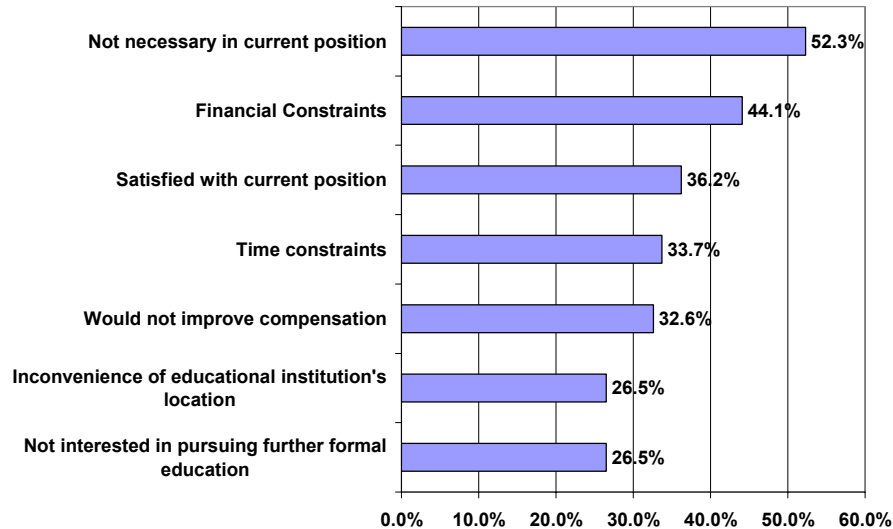


direction in which to look for replacements. However, only about a quarter (26%) of those responding to the survey said that they were even considering an MLIS.

The dominant factors cited for not pursuing an MLIS suggested the perception that a further degree was not worth the effort. More than half of those choosing not to pursue further education (52.3%) stated that it was not necessary in their current position and 32.6 percent did not believe the degree would improve their financial compensation. In addition, financial and time constraints also serve to deter paraprofessionals from getting a degree (see Chart 3).

Paraprofessionals play an important role in Colorado's public libraries, and we are lucky to have such a capable group to perform in this capacity. In addition, they seem an obvious pool from which to draw tomorrow's leaders. However, if we are going to lure this experienced, well-educated group into leadership positions, we need to make it worth their while.

**Chart 3: Reasons for not pursuing an MLS**



Source

*Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment: The Future of Librarianship in Colorado.* Available online at: <http://www.lrs.org>.

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