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This research project examines employment trends of individuals who are members of the Special Libraries Association (SLA). Data were gathered using the 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 SLA membership directories. These directories reflect the membership demographics of SLA at the beginning and end of a decade. The entire population of SLA employing institutions and their subsequent employees were sorted into twenty-two different categories based on the 2003-2004 SLA Divisions.

The data were then used to determine if more job opportunities outside of traditional library settings for SLA members exist today than in past years. Although some of the literature suggests an endless increase in the amount of job opportunities for special librarians, the actual numbers show a different picture. The findings indicate an overall decline in the number of institutions employing special librarians, the total number of special librarians employed in each division, and the total number of SLA membership.

Headings:

Librarians—Careers

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Special Libraries

Special Libraries Association

THINKING OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY: EMPLOYMENT TRENDS OF SPECIAL
LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

by
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Introduction

In the past, the term “librarian” has often conjured the image of a woman sitting behind a desk in a public, academic, or school library. However, this image has been changing as more librarians—females *and* males—are moving into jobs in special library and information centers. These work environments may be found in a variety of settings (hospitals, law firms, corporations, newspapers, and more) and their librarians serve patrons particular to each setting. Furthermore, with the rapid changes in technology, special librarians are finding themselves in more unique and diverse venues, some of which are only tangentially related to libraries (library vendor firms, publishing houses, independent information brokerages, and more). These latter careers are often referred to as “alternative” careers. However, the extent to which special librarians have moved out of traditional library settings over the years has yet to be determined, although much has been written about the special nature of this type of librarianship.

As far back as the 1940s special libraries were noted for their “non-traditional” library qualities. In a 1942 informational booklet, Ruth Savord delineates special library functions from those of general reference libraries. She juxtaposes the two types of libraries and distinguishes their roles: general reference libraries primarily contain books, hold resources that are ready to be used for research, include collections of past and present materials, are “an academic institution for the scholar,” are preservative, deal largely with the past, and have a “retrospective” and “historical” view (Savord 4).

Conversely, special libraries contain various print and non-print materials, hold resources that have already been searched and assembled for information to be delivered to the end-user, include collections of materials dedicated to current issues, are “a utilitarian establishment...to serve the worker,” are creative, deal largely with the present and future, and have a visionary and “almost prophetic” view (4).

The unique role of special libraries is reflected in the tasks carried out by the equally distinctive special librarians. Savord goes on to say that the field of special librarianship

offers an outlet for the woman who might not consider the more traditional type of general library work, for the one whose primary interest is in people, in new and interesting contacts, and in books as tools; for the one with the sleuthing instinct for the obscure or the not-yet-in-print information which is demanded today by our highly competitive world. It is *not* for the one seeking a quiet atmosphere of repose; nor for the one who is interested primarily in increasing the desire to read and in fostering the cultural side of life. (3-4)

While some of the language may be dated, this description of the field is largely relevant today. The queries and tasks special librarians encounter in their diverse work settings are often anything but “the more traditional type of general library work” (3).

For special librarians, the ever-changing and evolving world of technology also provides new challenges within work settings and has even opened up new career opportunities. With more and more patrons seeking information themselves through the Internet and online databases, special librarians are feeling the necessity to adjust their image. According to Forest Woody Horton, Jr., each special librarian needs to view herself or himself as “an individual who helps others identify their information needs, then find and seek out that needed information, accessing it efficiently, obtaining delivery in a cost-effective manner, and then effectively utilizing the information” (13). Such a

portrait aptly portrays the job descriptions of many of the special librarians working in specialized settings.

In addition to the ability to perform the duties of diverse job descriptions, special librarians possess many transferable skills that allow them to work in either unconventional libraries or in “alternative” careers. In a 1979 article, Robert S. Taylor listed many of these skills:

an ability to organize data and information for people to use;
 an awareness of the totality of information resources and the strategies in
 searching for information in any specific situation;
 an awareness of and capability in the range of information technologies—
 from print to sound and image to computing;
 a sensitivity to use, uses, and users of information, allowing this
 profession, more than others, to consider the human context in the
 design of systems and services; and
 a strong tradition of service, which demands that attention be paid to client
 satisfaction. (1,873)

Mary Lee Kennedy, the director of the Knowledge Management Network Group at Microsoft, provides another viewpoint of the skills of special librarians:

“I’ve always thought of what I wanted to do...is to make sure people have the information they need to do their jobs. If you put it that way, there are just a million things you can do, from working in a physical location, to information architecture, designing tech platforms, or just making sure people communicate. Because I’ve thought of my career extremely broadly, I’ve been able to create wonderful opportunities.” (quoted in Albanese 36)

Similar to Mary Lee Kennedy, many special librarians have been successfully broadening their horizons and implementing their skills sets within new, non-traditional careers and taking on new roles within organizations.

In fact, special librarians are being urged to move out of the library setting—whether the stereotypical setting or even the physical setting as a whole—to take

advantage of new career opportunities. As Forest Woody Horton, Jr. writes, “librarians, like lawyers and other professionals, must not link their careers and their destinies exclusively to the traditional domain, but must recognize in their client organizations alternative opportunities to utilize their information management skills” (2). In addition, Robert S. Taylor believes, “the profession of librarianship must separate itself from the institution of the library..... The profession can no longer be institution-bound. Libraries are a part of a large information infrastructure” (1,871-1,872).

In response, many special librarians have been “using their skills to shape vibrant careers in today’s ever-changing organizations” (Albanese 36). Betty-Carol Sellen, the editor of many books that depict other careers in which an MLS degree may be used, offered her own personal observations in 1997: more librarians seemed to be working in non-traditional jobs than fifteen years ago, more library vendors wanted to hire librarians to sell to other libraries, and more librarians were providing services on a contract basis from outside the library (90s x). Such career moves to work environments beyond the traditional library setting have been carried out by many special librarians for a number of reasons: lack of upward mobility, difficulty in finding a library job, preference for another career, need for more independence, disdain for bureaucracy, and the desire to earn more (Albrecht and Redfield 327-339; Mount 3; Sellen, 90s x).

Library organizations have been responding to these new roles and the evolving needs of special and “alternative” librarians by creating specific groups and opportunities for them. The Special Library Association (SLA) has developed a “Non-Traditional Careers” caucus, the American Library Association (ALA) now has an “Independent Librarians Exchange” round table (ILERT), and the Association for Independent

Information Professionals (AIIP) has also been formed (Sellen, 90s 315-316). In addition, ALA will host a preconference at the ALA Annual Conference in 2004 entitled “Get Me Out of This Job! Make Lateral Career Moves with Your Transferable Skills!” (*ALA: Preconferences*).

The one organization that is entirely dedicated to special and alternative librarians is the Special Libraries Association (SLA). Founded in 1909, SLA’s vision is to be “the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners,” and its mission is to “promote and strengthen its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives” (*Special Libraries Association*). SLA’s membership has ebbed and flowed over the years as may be observed in its yearly membership directory *Who’s Who in Special Libraries*. As of March 18, 2004, the 2003-2004 directory counted 11,783 members as opposed to 14,321 members in 1993-1994. These members are grouped into twenty-two subject-specific divisions and often belong to regional chapters or informal caucuses (*Special Libraries Association*).

As SLA membership numbers and employment in special library and “alternative” careers shift and change, “it [becomes] clear that for today’s special librarians, the career path must be constantly blazed rather than simply followed” (Albanese 36). But exactly how many special librarians are blazing these career paths and into what types of institutions are details that are currently unknown. The literature prior to the mid-1990s suggests that the new career opportunities were endless, as were the numbers of special librarians who were moving into these new careers. However, the literature from the late 1990s and onward shows uncertainty in the field due, in part, to

such factors as the many mergers in corporations, the dotcom crash, the retirements of many librarians, and the lull in the economy.

The purpose of this paper is to provide answers about the availability of “non-traditional” jobs for members in the Special Libraries Association. For the purposes of this study, “special libraries” are defined as libraries outside the more traditional settings of public, academic, and school libraries (such as libraries in corporations, the government, and nonprofit organizations), and “alternative careers” are defined as careers that are tangentially related to the field of librarianship (such as working for electronic publishers, library vendors, and library cooperatives). “Special librarians” and “alternative librarians” are thus defined as librarians working in these respective settings and careers. The Special Libraries Association (SLA) membership directories for 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 will be examined to determine if there are more job opportunities outside of traditional library settings for SLA members now than there were in the past years.

Literature Review

Formal literature concerning special libraries, special librarians, and related careers has been sporadic at best. Since the Special Libraries Association changed its member publication from *Special Libraries*, a peer-reviewed journal, to *Information Outlook*, a general-interest magazine, in 1997, fewer formal studies have been conducted on this type of librarianship. Consequently, much of the information regarding special libraries, special librarians, and related careers must be gleaned from other more general studies or informal anecdotal articles. However, there are a few helpful surveys, books, and articles specifically addressing special librarianship. Taken as a whole, the literature about special librarianship and “alternative” careers outside of the traditional library setting generally falls into four categories: the establishment of projections and trends, the appearance of publications describing “non-traditional” careers, the emergence of related issues, and the study of Special Libraries Association-specific data.

Establishment of Projections and Trends

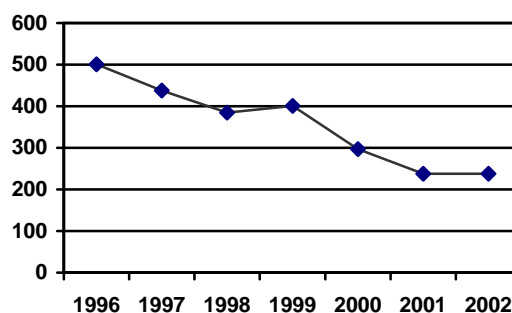
Prior to the mid-1990s, much of the literature that included information about special librarianship portrayed the field as continuously growing with no decline in sight. In his 1972 article “The Special Library Concept of Service,” Bill M. Woods noted that in the year 1953, 2,500 United States and Canadian special libraries and collections were identified compared with 8,533 in 1963, and 13,000 in 1968 (16). Similarly, a 1983

study conducted by King Research, Inc. reported a 19% increase in the number of special libraries between the years 1978 and 1982 (an average of 4% a year) from 15,600 libraries to 18,600 and projected a 19% to 27% increase in the number of libraries by 1990 to 22,000 to 24,000 special libraries (82-83). Job opportunities were also observed to be on the rise, as reported by Lawrairie Wood and Mike Head in 1996. They discovered a steady increase in the number of job positions advertised in the “private sector” for librarians and information professionals. In 1988, 16% of the total number of job postings were for private sector posts compared to 24% in 1995 (Wood and Head 529).

In response to the projected growth of special librarianship, the categories into which special libraries are subdivided have also expanded. In the 1940s, Ruth Savord reported that special libraries were divided into ten groups: biological sciences, commerce, financial, insurance, museum, newspaper, public business librarians, science technology, social science, and university and college (14). By 1994, Forest Woody Horton, Jr. identified nine economic sectors and types of areas which would benefit from special librarians’ skills: manufacturing/extractive industries, services businesses (finance, real estate, hotels, travel), government agencies and public utilities, academic and educational institutions, agricultural and food processing businesses, professional trade associations and not-for-profits, research consulting organizations, and arts and entertainment organizations (16). Horton’s divisions address the emergence of “non-traditional” jobs for librarians, such as research consulting organizations. Upon inspection of this material, it seems as though librarians and writers thought the field of special librarianship would expand endlessly.

However, the annual “Placements and Salaries” survey conducted by *Library Journal* reveals a different picture. This survey typically appears in the October 15 issue and attempts to report on where new graduates find jobs. Among the salary-specific tables in this survey is a table which groups the graduates into placements by types of organization. Such organizational types include: Public, Elementary and Secondary, College and University, Special, Government, Library Co-op./Network, Vendor, and Other. By adding together the total number of graduates in the types of organizations that would be considered “non-traditional”—Special, Government, Library Co-op./Network, Vendor, and Other—an overall idea of the employment trends may be observed. Figure 1 graphically represents these trends.

Figure 1—*Library Journal* Employment Trends in Non-Traditional Libraries



As can be seen from the figure, the number of graduates entering non-traditional jobs has mostly been on the decline with the exception of 1999, in which the number rose, and in 2002, in which the number remained the same as in 2001 (Carson 28-29; Gregory and McCook 34-35; Gregory 38-39; Gregory and Wohlmuth 32-33; Terrell and Gregory 36-37; and Maatta 30-31). Although the numbers from the surveys are not without their

flaws (such as varying response rates from year to year), they do give an overall idea of the number of people who are going into non-traditional jobs in special libraries.

Studies of graduates' job placements are also found in countries outside the United States. A 1996 study of the graduating classes of 1985/86 through 1992/93 from the University of Sheffield (U.K.) Master's in Librarianship Programme revealed more graduates entering special libraries for their first careers. For the years 1979-85, 1986-89, and 1990-93, the percentage of graduates employed in special libraries as a first job increased from 7.1% to 10% to 21%, respectively, and the percentage of graduates employed in the "emerging market" [of technology] as a first job increased from 3.3% to 10% to 14%, respectively (Loughridge et al. 108). The increasing percentages for each category were also found in respect to the graduates' second jobs (special libraries 6.1% to 10% to 17% and "emerging market" 10% to 25% to 17%) (108). The researchers noted that, "taken together, special libraries and the 'emerging market,' with increases of 110 percent and 40 percent respectively since 1989, attracted twice as many graduates as public libraries and slightly more than academic libraries" (108). It would be interesting to see if this trend continued for the Sheffield graduates.

Appearance of Publications Describing "Non-Traditional" Careers

As many of the previous surveys demonstrate, there was an increase in the number of "non-traditional" library careers, or careers that are tangentially related to the field of librarianship. This movement was reflected by books describing "alternative" library careers outside the traditional library setting. These books often contained essays written by people in alternative careers and explained how they arrived at their current

career. The essayists were grouped into categories according to the type of alternative career in which they are employed. The first of these books, *What Else You Can Do with a Library Degree* edited by Betty-Carol Sellen, appeared in 1980. Contributors to the book were chosen “because they have library school degrees and because they believe that their education or practice in librarianship has influenced what they do now” (*What Else* x). Each of the fifty-two anecdotal essays fell into one of four categories: “On Their Own,” “Information Management, Indexing, and Research;” “The Book Industry;” and “Communications, The Arts, Education, and Government.” Two appendices were also included at the end, as was an informal survey at the beginning.

The survey was not scientific but rather a gathering of facts and opinions of “some librarianship (*sic*) educated people, presently working outside the traditional library setting” (Sellen, *What Else* xvii). Of the 246 questionnaires sent, 161 were returned, and of the respondents, 77.6% (n=125) had held traditional library jobs at one point (xvii). Each of the respondents was asked to check a category that best reflected their job, and of the 161 respondents, “118 [73%] checked ‘work for...’ category, 28 [17%] checked ‘free-lance,’ and 33 [20%] indicated that they owned their own business. Some checked more than one category” (xviii). When asked about their job titles, 62% (n=100) called themselves librarians while 38% (n=61) did not, and 79% (n=127) considered themselves part of the librarianship profession while 18% (n=30) said they did not (xix). As for why the respondents did not want to work in traditional settings, 38% noted the need for “challenge” while 26% indicated they “wanted more freedom” (xxi).

Then, in 1984, Sellen and Dimity S. Berkner co-edited *New Options for Librarians: Finding a Job in a Related Field*, an updated version of Sellen’s 1980 book.

In an effort to reflect the expanding job opportunities for librarians, the editors “included careers that not only *use* the library or information science skills but also *relate* to the providing of information or library-related services and in which many job holders still feel a connection with the library/book/information industry” (Sellen and Berkner vii). Unlike the 1980 book, this one concentrated more on advising librarians about how to locate alternative careers and how to move into them. Thus, the authors of the essays were encouraged to give job descriptions, guidelines, and advice (x-xi). Following the advisory purpose of the book, the first section was dedicated to “Changing Career Directions” and the second part, “Some Career Options,” included essays about individual contributors’ jobs, such as information brokering, abstracting and indexing, public relations, and more.

Additionally, the 1984 book included a follow-up survey to the one in the 1980 book. In this updated survey, Betty-Carol Sellen and Susan J. Vaughn sent 874 questionnaires and received 487 usable responses (3). Of the respondents, 87.86% (n=424) “originally intended to work in a library;” only 26.08% (n=127) are now pursuing that intention (13).

Ellis Mount also contributed a book to this emerging area of literature. His 1993 *Opening New Doors: Alternative Careers for Librarians* offered more essays by information professionals with alternative careers. The first part of the text was dedicated to entrepreneurs who started their own businesses while the second part was comprised of employees who worked in non-traditional settings. As in the previous books, the essays were anecdotal in nature and offered a glimpse at life in alternative roles.

In 1997 Betty-Carol Sellen followed up her 1980 book with *What Else You Can Do with a Library Degree: Career Options for the 90s and Beyond*. Alternative library careers were more common at this point, and she commented that by the time she started compiling this book, she no longer needed to explain what she meant by “alternative careers:” “There had been publications about the topic, and there were at least three organizations for librarians working outside of libraries” (90s ix-x). As an outgrowth of the increased awareness of alternative careers, this updated volume included more categories into which essayists were grouped: “Publishers, Writers, Booksellers, and Reviewers;” “Products and Services for Libraries;” “Independent Librarians: On Their Own;” “Independent Librarians with Companies of Their Own;” “Association Work and Work in the Academic World;” “Librarians Employed in the Corporate World;” and “Some Librarians Who Have Traveled Farther Afield.” Unlike Sellen’s previously mentioned books, this one did not include a survey.

Emergence of Related Issues

As librarians took note of the new literature on “alternative” library careers and the increase of opportunities in special librarianship, they started writing about issues relating to these trends and projections. Following on the heels of the many books that included anecdotal essays, some librarians began to publish articles describing the jobs and career paths of librarians they perceived to have “alternative” careers. In a 1999 article entitled “Moving Outside the Library: MLIS Graduates in Non-Traditional Careers,” Britt Fagerheim profiled a handful of recent graduates as they embarked in alternative careers. Similarly, Maureen Johnson’s 2000 article “Jump in, the Water’s

Fine: *Alternative Choices for Librarians*” traced careers of librarians who had moved from the public to the private sector. Finally, Linda K. Wallace reported on the careers of eleven librarians in non-traditional jobs in her 2002 article “Places an MLS Can Take You.” Each of these articles provided snapshots of people who have been in alternative careers for a while and advertised that such positions are available, as long as job-seekers think broadly and keep an open mind.

Inspired by the many articles and books promoting “alternative” library careers, some librarians chose to publish works containing advice for switching to such careers. Articles such as Wilda W. Williams’ oft-cited “You *Can* Take Your MLS Out of the Library” published in 1994 offered both anecdotes from people in the field and encouragement for those seeking alternative jobs. Williams addressed the need to have an MLS in alternative careers, explained the job search process, and touted portable skills of librarians, among other pieces of advice. Books have also been written that offer counsel on the process of searching for alternative careers. *Careers in Other Fields for Librarians: Successful Strategies for Finding the Job* by Rhoda and Andrew Garoogian appeared in 1985. The book covered advice for transferring jobs; highlighted opportunities in fields such as business, government, education, and entrepreneurship; and discussed employment techniques such as where to look for a job, resumes and letters, and interviewing (iii). Another book, *Opportunities in Library and Information Science Careers* by Kathleen de la Pena McCook and Margaret Myers in 1997 reviewed the changing world of information professionals and then covered materials to consult when looking for special library and non-traditional jobs.

One last issue that has arisen out of the promotion of special library and “alternative” careers has been a call for library and information schools to address these trends in their curricula. Such trends seem to be overlooked, marginalized, or even ignored in some programs, as writers have been quick to discern. Betty-Carol Sellen has commented that of the fifty bulletins she scanned in 1980 about courses of study at library schools, most approached the field by type of library (public, school, academic, or special) rather than by generalized skills (*What Else* ix-x). Furthermore, Sellen included Susan Klement’s draft for “A Graduate Course on Alternatives in Librarianship” in an appendix to the 1980 *What Else You Can Do with a Library Degree*. Klement’s proposed course would be used to demonstrate the potential in the profession, *not* to encourage people to leave the field, as some might fear (317).

In addition, Forest Woody Horton, Jr. acknowledged in 1994 that, “Too few library and information science schools have addressed the broader need for training the generalist types of emerging information professionals... much less the specialist information professional” (10). He also stated that job placement and job counseling officers needed to look beyond the traditional library settings when helping graduates with job searches (10). Ellis Mount adopted a more hopeful tone in his 1993 *Opening New Doors: Alternative Careers for Librarians* when he wrote, “In time it may become taken for granted that library and information science schools prepare their graduates for a wider range of possibilities. A compilation such as this one may become difficult to prepare in the future if careers such as those described in this book become commonplace” (4-5).

Study of Special Libraries Association-Specific Data

Founded in 1909, the Special Libraries Association (SLA) represents thousands of library and informational professionals around the world who attend to the needs of specific groups of patrons. SLA has accommodated this diversified group of librarians and has acknowledged the members' movement into "alternative" careers over the years by expanding its member resources and by redefining its many divisions into which special libraries are grouped.

Additionally, SLA has also conducted surveys to gather statistics about its members. One such survey is the annual salary survey. Besides the main purpose of relaying salary information, the survey may also be used to observe the growth (or decline) in the numbers of special librarians shifting into "alternative" careers. The 2003 SLA Salary Survey indicated that as many as 18% of the respondents did not work in a library or information center (*SLA Members Move Out of Libraries*). Of the respondents who did not work in traditional library settings, 5.0% worked in the electronic publishing industry, 2.5% worked in the computer systems design industry, 3.5% worked in the brokerage industry, and 2.2% worked in the consortiums and cooperative libraries industry. This growing trend among librarians to seek non-traditional careers was also corroborated by an SLA demographics comparison of the years 1991, 1996, and 2001. In 1991 organization categories such as "legal," "medical," and "broker" were all designated "non-applicable." However, by 1996 these categories were incorporated as types of organizations and accounted for percentages of places of employment for SLA members (6%, 5%, and 1%, respectively) (*SLA Membership Survey 2001*).

The only literature found similar to the study that follows was Anthony T. Kruzas' *Special Libraries and Information Centers: A Statistical Report on Special Library Resources in the United States* undertaken in the mid-1960s. He used an SLA membership directory to identify five categories of special libraries: colleges and universities, commercial and industrial firms, government agencies, public libraries, and other organizations (Kruzas 5-6). Of the more than 8,500 special libraries in these five categories, Kruzas discovered that 25% were in company libraries, 26% were in colleges and universities, 14% were in government libraries, 5% were in public libraries, and 30% were in other non-profit organizations (8).

As demonstrated throughout this literature review, the literature about special librarians, special libraries, and related careers is scattered. Much of the information about employment trends must be gleaned from surveys of graduates and not from the overall population of special librarians. The following study thus addresses this lack in research by examining the 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 SLA membership directories in order to ascertain trends in employment in the last decade.

Methodology

To determine employment trends for Special Libraries Association (SLA) members in the past ten years, two SLA membership directories were studied: *Who's Who in Special Libraries 1993/1994* and *Who's Who in Special Libraries 2003/2004*. The 1993-1994 directory was available in print form while the 2003-2004 directory was only available online from the "members only" portion of the SLA website. These particular spans of years were chosen in order to give an accurate picture of SLA at the time of the writing of this paper and then to look back ten years to discover any changes that had occurred.

In order to provide categories into which information from the membership directories could be sorted, the twenty-two SLA divisions, as existing in 2003-2004, were used. These divisions include: Advertising and Marketing; Biomedical and Life Sciences; Business and Finance; Chemistry; Education; Engineering; Environment and Resource Management; Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition; Information Technology; Insurance and Employee Benefits; Leadership and Management; Legal; Materials Research and Manufacturing; Military Librarians; Museums, Arts, and Humanities; News; Petroleum and Energy Resources; Pharmaceutical and Health Technology; Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics; Science and Technology; Social Science; and Transportation. An extra category labeled "Unknown" was also added for institutions that could not be readily identified. Each of these twenty-three categories (including the

“Unknown” category) was written at the top of a different index card. Also on the index card were columns for the institution’s name and for the number of females and males employed by each institution. Two sets of index cards were prepared in this manner, one for the 1993-1994 directory, and one for the 2003-2004 directory.

The institutions which employed the SLA members were identified in the 1993-1994 directory in the final section of the directory marked “Business Index.” In this section the institutions had been arranged in alphabetical order with the names of the SLA members listed under the name of each employing institution. Each institution and the numbers of its subsequent employees were assigned to one of the twenty-three different categories on the index cards. In the case of the online 2003-2004 directory, the columns containing the employing institutions’ names and the employees’ names were exported to an Excel spreadsheet on March 18, 2004 and sorted alphabetically by institution (this capability was provided through the SLA webpage). Each of the institutions and the employees from the institutions were then written under the appropriate category on the set of twenty-three index cards. The entire population of institutions and members were chosen for both of the directories in order to obtain as complete a picture as possible of the employment trends for SLA members.

When assigning the institutions from the directories to one of the twenty-three categories, decisions were made as to the institutions’ placement based on the name of the institution or on the author’s knowledge of the institution. Any institution that could not be readily identified was assigned to the “Unknown” category. Many of these institutions’ names were acronyms that could not be easily discerned. In addition, the vast majority of these were organizations which employed only one or two employees.

The numbers of females and males employed by each institution were also recorded on the index cards. Gender for each special librarian was established by her or his first name. For instances in which the first name could have belonged to either a female or male, the person was assigned to the gender category deemed most appropriate to the name in each case. Overall, such instances were rare.

Upon the completion of assigning each institution and each listed special librarian to a category, the two sets of index cards—one for each directory—were then arranged in chronological order in each of the twenty-three categories. The data on the cards were then added together to arrive at the total number of employing institutions, females, and males for each of the twenty-three categories for the two sets of index cards. At this point the numbers for the “Unknown” category were set aside since their contents would not shed light on the goal of the study. (The number of “Unknown” employing institutions for 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 were 1,122 and 1,010, respectively, and the number of members in this category for 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 were 1,621 and 1,531, respectively.) Once the totals for all of the categories for the two sets of index cards were ascertained, the data were placed into tables.

This classification method is not without its faults. Firstly, each of the directories appears in a different format (print versus electronic). The electronic directory may have been more susceptible to errors when it was exported from the website into the Excel spreadsheet. Secondly, errors may have been made when assigning a gender to a name that may have been either feminine or masculine. Thirdly, errors may have been made when assigning institutions to a division, especially when an institution may have easily

fit into more than one division. Fourthly, the large number of “Unknowns” does not allow for full representation for the divisional data.

Even with the above caveats, the data provide important information that was not previously available about employment trends for SLA members. There are scattered data available about graduates’ employment trends, emerging careers, and the categorization of special librarians, but there is no specific data of this kind about SLA members on the whole. This study attempts to narrow that gap in the research.

Findings

The following pages contain figures and tables that summarize the data contained in *Who's Who in Special Libraries 1993/1994* and *Who's Who in Special Libraries 2003/2004*. These two volumes included rich data about the institutions employing Special Libraries Association (SLA) members which will be described below.

The data are presented in tabular form with Table 1 illustrating the number of institutions employing SLA members, Table 2 reflecting the gender distribution of SLA members, and Tables 3-24 showing the numbers of special librarians in each of the twenty-two SLA divisions. Each of the division-specific tables is accompanied by a description of the scope or purpose of the division, percentages of the members of each division in relation to the total SLA membership, and a brief discussion of the implications of the data in the table. In addition, two figures provide visual summaries of the data for employing institutions and for the total number of SLA members in each division.

Employing Institutions

Table 1 illustrates the numbers of institutions employing special librarians in each of the twenty-two SLA divisions. Most of the divisions (81.82%, n=18) show a reduction in the number of employer institutions, although there are four divisions (18.18%)—Legal, Military Librarians, Pharmaceutical and Health Technology, and Physics,

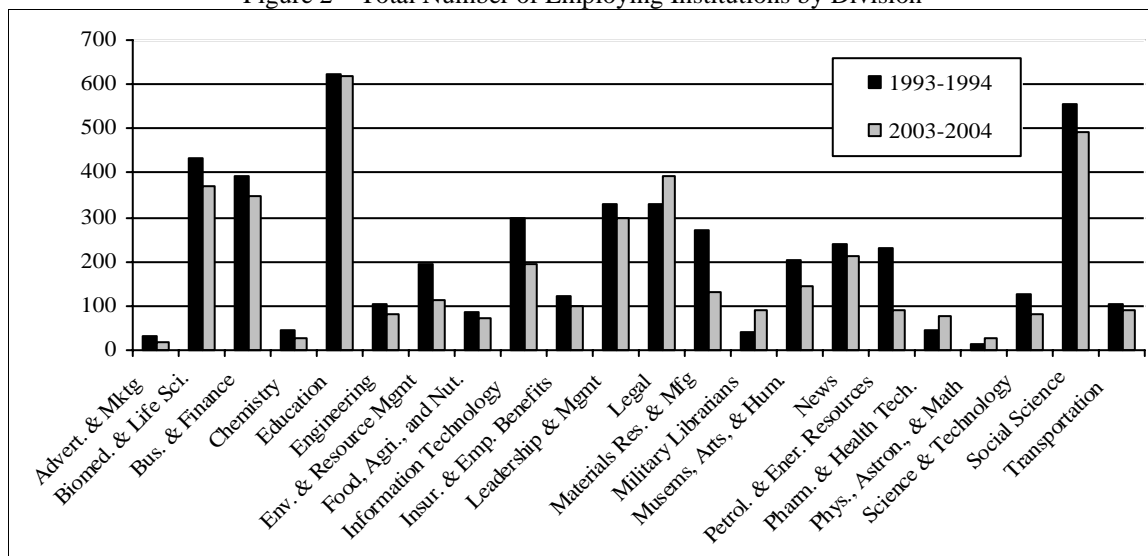
Astronomy, and Mathematics—that indicate an increase in the number of employing institutions. The overall decline may be the result of institutions merging, or it may merely reflect the smaller membership population for SLA in 2003-2004 (11,783) as compared to 1993-1994 (14,321). As for the four divisions that saw an increase in employing institutions, each one may be observed to play a part in the endeavors to protect against world threats.

Table 1

Division	Number of Institutions			
	1993-1994		2003-2004	
	%	n	%	n
Advertising and Marketing	0.62	30	0.47	19
Biomedical and Life Sciences	8.99	433	9.12	371
Business and Finance	8.17	393	8.58	349
Chemistry	0.93	45	0.61	25
Education	12.96	624	15.24	620
Engineering	2.12	102	1.97	80
Environment and Resource Management	3.99	192	2.73	111
Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition	1.81	87	1.82	74
Information Technology	6.23	300	4.79	195
Insurance and Employee Benefits	2.49	120	2.46	100
Leadership and Management	6.88	331	7.28	296
Legal	6.81	328	9.66	393
Materials Research and Manufacturing	5.65	272	3.20	130
Military Librarians	0.81	39	2.19	89
Museums, Arts, and Humanities	4.18	201	3.52	143
News	4.97	239	5.19	211
Petroleum and Energy Resources	4.82	232	2.21	90
Pharmaceutical and Health Technology	0.89	43	1.87	76
Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics	0.31	15	0.69	28
Science and Technology	2.64	127	2.04	83
Social Science	11.57	557	12.12	493
Transportation	2.14	103	2.24	91
Total	99.98	4,813	100.00	4,067

A graphic representation of this data may be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 2—Total Number of Employing Institutions by Division



Gender Distribution

As is well-known, there are more female librarians than male librarians. SLA membership reflects this gender distribution. As can be seen in Table 2, the number of females as compared to males is much greater for both sets of years, although the percentage of males has increased over the past decade.

Table 2

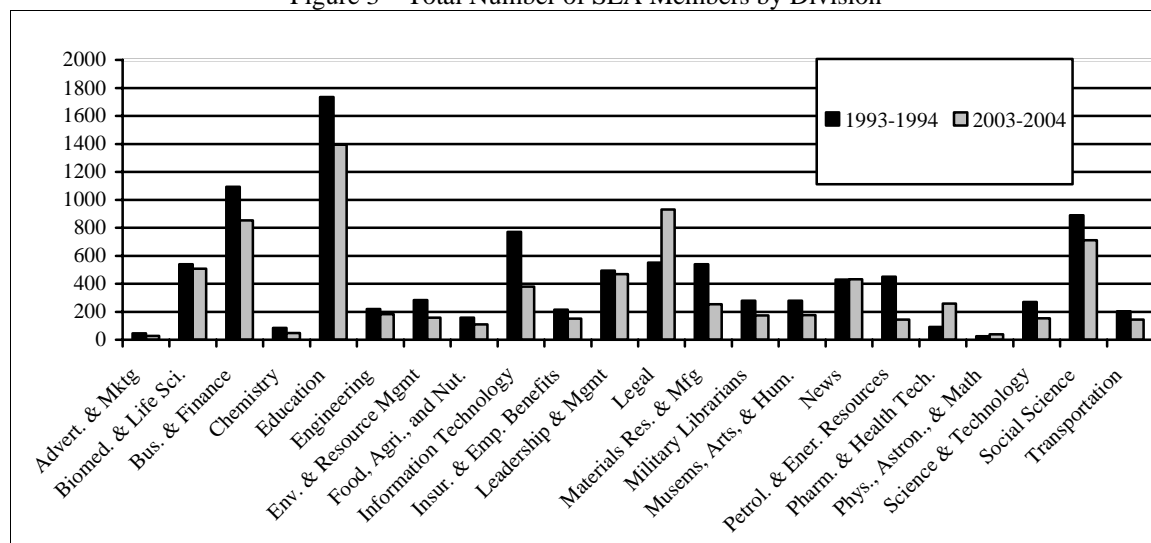
Gender Distribution of SLA Members							
1993-1994				2003-2004			
Female		Male		Female		Male	
81.62%	7,874	18.38%	1,773	78.86%	6,067	21.14%	1,626

In addition, the numbers for each gender have decreased in the past ten years, females by 22.9% and males by 8.3%. These percentages suggest that more males are joining SLA or that more females are leaving the association for other settings or careers.

SLA Divisions

Looking at the data in the two directories also shows changing numbers and percentages of SLA members in the twenty-two different divisions. Figure 2 gives a visual overview of these changes. It is obvious that most of the divisions have lost membership over the past ten years.

Figure 3—Total Number of SLA Members by Division



The next set of tables examines the SLA membership for each of the divisions.

Advertising and Marketing Division

The Advertising and Marketing Division of SLA is primarily concerned with “the collection, retrieval, and dissemination of information devoted to advertising, marketing, and related disciplines, and in the management of libraries and information centers in these areas” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Members of this division constitute approximately 0.31% of the total number of SLA members in 1993-1994, and approximately 0.23% of the total number of SLA members in 2003-2004.

Table 3

Advertising and Marketing Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
88.89%	40	11.11%	5	100%	45	77.78%	21	22.22%	6	100%	27

Table 3 shows a 40.00% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division from 1993-1994 to 2003-2004. In addition, the number of females fell nearly by half over the ten year span while the number of males increased by one over the years. The overall decline in the number of SLA members in this division may be attributed to retirements of SLA members from institutions in this division or to cuts in job benefits that would have covered membership fees to professional organizations.

Biomedical and Life Sciences Division

The Biomedical and Life Sciences Division “encompasses all aspects of the life sciences, both pure and applied . . . [and] promotes the exchange of information and ideas about trends and advances in information storage, retrieval and analysis, collection management, and dissemination in these fields to support research, education, and commercial endeavors” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Within this division is the Medical Section. The proportion of members in this division to the total number of SLA members is approximately 3.77% for 1993-1994 and approximately 4.31% for 2003-2004.

Table 4

Biomedical and Life Sciences Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
88.15%	476	11.85%	64	100%	540	86.02%	437	13.98%	71	100%	508

As depicted in Table 4, the number of females slightly decreased while the number of males slightly increased. Furthermore, there has been a 5.93% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004. This decline percentage is among the smallest for all of the divisions and is possibly explained by the fairly stable number of hospitals and medical centers over the years.

Business and Finance Division

Made up of two divisions that merged in 1958, the Business and Finance Division is one of the larger SLA divisions and “encompasses all aspects of business and financial libraries, including planning, collection building, design of services and operations, personnel education, and the development of new business information sources” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Within this division is the College and University Business Libraries Section. Of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994, this division accounts for approximately 7.63%, and of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004, this division accounts for approximately 7.23%. These fairly consistent percentages over the years indicate that the proportion of members in the Business and Finance Division to the overall SLA membership has remained steady, even though the number of females dropped by nearly one third and the number of males increased slightly, as seen in Table 5.

Table 5

Business and Finance Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
83.06%	907	16.94%	185	100%	1,092	76.41%	651	23.59%	201	100%	852

The table also shows that there has been a 21.98% decrease in the number of SLA members in the division. This decrease could be explained by the number of bank mergers that have occurred over the years, a trend that was reflected in the number of employing organizations. There were more small banks listed in the 1993-1994 than in the 2003-2004 directory.

Chemistry Division

The Chemistry Division is one of the smaller SLA membership divisions. It “is concerned with chemistry and chemical technology, and the economics, educational advances, and information handling of developments in the field of chemistry and related subjects” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Members of this division constitute approximately 0.59% of the total number of SLA members in 1993-1994, and approximately 0.41% of the total number of SLA members in 2003-2004.

Table 6

Chemistry Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
81.18%	69	18.82%	16	100%	85	56.25%	27	43.75%	21	100%	48

Table 6 indicates a 43.53% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division, with the number of females falling by more than half and the number of males increasing by

approximately one fourth. The large decrease in members in this division may be accounted for by the decreasing number of special libraries in organizations relating to the chemical industry.

Education Division

Of all the divisions, the Education Division has the largest amount of members. This division's objective is to "serve as a forum for the exchange of information and knowledge among individuals and organizations interested in the collection, dissemination, and retrieval of materials in the fields of education, library education, and special librarianship" (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). In relation to the total number of SLA members, the Education Division makes up approximately 12.12% of total membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 11.83% of total membership in 2003-2004.

Table 7

Education Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
76.56%	1,329	23.44%	407	100%	1,736	75.97%	1,059	24.03%	335	100%	1,394

As reflected in Table 7, there has been a 19.70% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the last decade, with the numbers of females and males both dropping over the years. This general decline is perhaps the result of the closing of many small, technical schools and the merging of job positions in large colleges and universities.

Engineering Division

The Engineering Division “encompasses diverse subjects that represent the interests of the various disciplines of engineering and is concerned with the broad spectrum of technical knowledge pertinent to industry, engineers, and engineering education” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Included in this division is the Aerospace Section. The members in this division account for approximately 1.54% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 1.55% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004. These very similar percentages suggest that the proportion of members in this division to the overall SLA membership has remained steady.

Table 8

Engineering Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
84.09%	185	15.91%	35	100%	220	84.15%	154	15.85%	29	100%	183

Similarly, Table 8 shows only a 16.82% decrease in SLA members in this division over the years, one of the smaller declines among the divisions. The numbers of females and males also reflect small declines. Such comparatively small reductions in numbers in the past decade likely reflect the general decrease in SLA membership over the years.

Environment and Resource Management Division

Composed of two divisions that merged in 1989 and including a Forestry Section, the Environment and Resource Management Division “is committed to the creation, dissemination and informed use of information to support researchers and practitioners in the fields of natural resources management and environmental studies” (*Divisions:*

Special Libraries Association). Members in this division account for approximately 1.98% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 1.33% of total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 9

Environment and Resource Management Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
84.86%	241	15.14%	43	100%	284	80.25%	126	19.75%	31	100%	157

As demonstrated in Table 9, there has been a 44.72% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the years. Even more drastic is the sharp reduction of females by almost half and the decline in males by almost one fourth. Such changes perhaps reflect the de-emphasis of environmental issues by the federal government since the year 2000.

Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Division

The Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Division “is concerned with all aspects of foods, food technology, and the related fields of nutrition and agricultural production” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). It is another small division; its members comprise approximately 1.10% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 0.93% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 10

Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
82.91%	131	17.09%	27	100%	158	80.91%	89	19.09%	21	100%	110

A 30.38% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the past decade is represented in Table 10, as is a reduction in the numbers of females and males. As became apparent in looking at the employing organizations, far fewer food companies (such as Quaker Oats Company) had listings in the 2003-2004 directory than in the 1993-1994 directory. This decrease in the number of organizations is reflected in the decrease of members in the division.

Information and Technology Division

Encompassed in the Information Technology Division are many subsections: Communications, Digital Content, Government Information, Information Systems, Technical Services, Virtual, and Webmaster Sections. The scope of this division and its subsections includes the “planning, development, and practical application of existing and new technologies and systems for the processing and control of information, in any subject discipline and in any form, for its eventual retrieval and use convenient to the requester” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Members in this division constitute approximately 5.38% of total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 3.22% of total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 11

Information Technology Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
78.83%	607	21.17%	163	100%	770	75.46%	286	24.54%	93	100%	379

Table 11 depicts a 50.78% drop in the number of SLA members in this division over the past decade, including reductions in both female and male members. These overall reductions may be a product of mergers and bankruptcies of many software and technology-based companies over the years.

Insurance and Employee Benefits Division

The Insurance and Employee Benefits Division's scope covers all facets of insurance, including, but not limited to: "all types of private, social, and government insurance, employee benefits, financial and estate planning, financial retirement plans, risk theory and management, legal implications of insurance, managed care organizations and reinsurance" (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). In this division, members make up approximately 1.51% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 1.27% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 12

Insurance and Employee Benefits Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
87.96%	190	12.04%	26	100%	216	80.67%	121	19.33%	29	100%	150

Reflected in Table 12 is a 30.56% reduction in the number of SLA members in this division in the past decade, along with a decrease in the number of females and a slight increase in the number of males. Such fluctuations may be an outgrowth of diminished job positions and duties resulting from the merger of many large insurance companies.

Leadership and Management Division

Many subsections may be found in the Leadership and Management Division such as Consulting, Knowledge Management, and Marketing Sections. This division and its subsections serve as a “forum for the exchange of information and knowledge on the theory and application of management and leadership techniques to special libraries, focusing on issues such as planning, organization, budget and cost control, communication, performance, and the impact of technology on libraries, in order to develop and enhance the managerial skills of its members” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994, approximately 3.45% are from this division, and in 2003-2004, approximately 3.97% are from this division.

Table 13

Leadership and Management Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
83.20%	411	16.80%	83	100%	494	79.06%	370	29.94%	98	100%	468

Table 13 shows only a 5.26% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the past decade. Of the total members, the number of females fell while the number of males rose. Since many of the institutions in this division seem to be independent consultants with their own name reflected in their company’s name (i.e. Harmon Enterprises with Carol Harmon as the special librarian listed), any fluctuation in numbers over the years may be attributed to the founding and closing of such independent businesses, among other possibilities.

Legal Division

The Legal Division “serves as a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and knowledge among law and regulatory affairs librarians. Particular emphasis is given to the concerns unique to librarians practicing in private law firms, businesses, and government libraries” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Members in this division compose approximately 3.84% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994, and approximately 7.90% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004, which is slightly more than double the latter percentage.

Table 14

Legal Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
85.82%	472	14.18%	78	100%	550	80.24%	747	19.76%	184	100%	931

This division has enjoyed a large increase in membership over the past decade, as seen in Table 14. Between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004, there has been a 69.27% increase in the number of SLA members in this division with the number of females rising dramatically and the number of males more than doubling. These upward trends signal a growth in the field of law and the expansion of government regulation which echo the current state of world affairs.

Materials Research and Manufacturing Division

In the Materials Research and Manufacturing Division, members “share information concerning all phases of metals and materials procurement, production, properties, applications and handling by means of educational activities, cooperative

programs, publications, and division-sponsored events at annual conferences” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). This division’s members account for approximately 3.76% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 2.16% of total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 15

Materials Research and Manufacturing Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
86.09%	464	13.91%	75	100%	539	83.86%	213	16.14%	41	100%	254

Table 15 reflects a fairly dramatic 52.88% reduction in SLA members in this division in the past ten years, as well as a sharp drop in females by more than half and a decrease in males by just under one half. Such sharp declines may reflect the closings of many textile and manufacturing institutions over the past ten years.

Military Librarians Division

A multi-functional approach is adopted in the Military Librarians Division which is a “forum for the exchange of ideas and information on military librarianship; it conceives and carries out projects that assist members in improving services to their constituencies; it works to promote the professional advancement of its members and to enhance understanding of the importance of libraries to a successful national defense” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). Of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994, this division’s members comprise approximately 1.96% and approximately 1.47% of the 2003-2004 total SLA membership.

Table 16

Military Librarians Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
78.93%	221	21.07%	59	100%	280	80.92%	140	19.08%	33	100%	173

A 38.21% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the past decade is represented in Table 16 in addition to a decline in the numbers of females and males. These reductions most likely reflect the closing of military bases and military schools both in the United States and abroad in recent years.

Museums, Arts, and Humanities Division

Established in 1971, the Museums, Arts, and Humanities Division

encompasses librarians and information specialists from all types of museums; from historical societies, institutions, and other organizations having special departments or special collections devoted to the arts, architecture and humanities, and from both public and private organizations having libraries or subject collections devoted to the creative arts and/or other branches of the humanities. The division also provides a forum for librarians and information specialists with an interest in all aspects of the publishing process. (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*)

In 1993-1994 members in this division made up approximately 1.96% of the total SLA membership, and approximately 1.50% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 17

Museums, Arts, and Humanities Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
78.57%	220	21.43%	60	100%	280	79.66%	141	20.34%	36	100%	177

Table 17 depicts a 36.79% decline in the number of SLA members in this division between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 as well as a reduction in the numbers for both

females and males, with the latter seeing an almost 50% drop. These declining numbers may be a result of a declining number of independent publishing institutions, a trend that was reflected in the number of employing institutions listed in the directories used for this study.

News Division

Objectives in the News Division pertain to news and media libraries:

to encourage and promote the utilization of knowledge through the collection, organization, and dissemination of information to its members; to develop usefulness and efficiency of news media libraries; to publish and stimulate research; to promote high professional standards; to facilitate communication and cooperation among its members and with organizations that have similar allied interests. (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*)

Members in this division make up approximately 3.00% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 3.67% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 18

News Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
75.29%	323	24.71%	106	100%	429	77.83%	337	22.17%	96	100%	433

A very slight increase of SLA members (0.93%) in this division over the years may be seen in Table 18. The number of females has also increased slightly while the number of males has dropped a bit. These changes may reflect a counterbalance created by the founding of additional news and multi-media institutions (i.e. AOL) which in turn bought out older institutions.

Petroleum and Energy Resources Division

The Petroleum and Energy Resources Division “encompasses all energy resources and industries, including petroleum, natural gas, electric, coal, and other forms of depletable and renewable energy. The division is concerned with all aspects of the utilization and conservation of these energy resources....” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). In relation to the total number of SLA membership, this division comprises approximately 3.15% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 1.22% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 19

Petroleum and Energy Resources Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female	Male	Total				Female	Male	Total			
85.37%	385	14.63%	66	100%	451	84.03%	121	15.97%	23	100%	144

Table 19 illustrates a severe 68.07% drop in SLA members in this division over the past ten years which is equaled by the similar plunges in numbers of females and males. This division had the greatest percentage of decline of all the SLA divisions over the past ten years. Such a sharp decline is perhaps attributed to many retirements of SLA members from institutions in this division or from the numerous mergers and acquisitions of large employing institutions within this division.

Pharmaceutical and Health Technology Division

Given division status in 1966, the Pharmaceutical and Health Technology Division “provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among individuals interested in the collection, storage, retrieval, analysis, and dissemination of information

in all aspects of the pharmaceutical, biomedical, biotechnical, cosmetic, medical device, and other health care fields, including education, research, business, and marketing” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). In 1993-1994 this division accounted for approximately 0.64% of the total SLA membership, and in 2003-2004 for approximately 2.19% of the total SLA membership.

Table 20

Pharmaceutical and Health Technology Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
86.81%	79	13.19%	12	100%	91	83.72%	216	16.28%	42	100%	258

A huge 183.52% increase of SLA members in this division over the past decade is observed in Table 20, the largest increase of all the divisions. Similarly, the number of females almost tripled and the number of males almost quadrupled. These significant increases may have been caused by the growing importance of the pharmaceutical industry, due to its role in the attempts to find cures or vaccines for cancer and AIDS, in additions to the growing importance of drugs in the treatment of diseases of all types.

Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics Division

Containing the smallest numbers of SLA members of all the divisions, the Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics Division emphasizes “all aspects of librarianship in the fields of physics, astronomy, and mathematics. Particular emphasis is given to the control, dissemination, and retrieval of knowledge and information in these areas” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). The members in this division constitute

approximately 0.17% of the total SLA membership for 1993-1994 and approximately 0.34% of the total SLA membership for 2003-2004.

Table 21

Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
84.00%	21	16.00%	4	100%	25	75.00%	30	25.00%	10	100%	40

Besides being the smallest division in terms of numbers, this division is one of the few to post an increase in SLA membership (60.00%) over the past decade, as seen in Table 21. The numbers of males and females have also risen in this division, suggesting a renewed interest in these fields.

Science and Technology Division

Within the Science and Technology Division the objectives are

to draw together members having an interest in the role of library and information science as applied to the recording, retrieval, and dissemination of information in all areas of science and technology and to promote and improve the communication, dissemination, and use of such information to the benefit of libraries and their users. (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*)

In 1993-1994 members in this division accounted for approximately 1.89% of the total SLA membership and approximately 1.31% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 22

Science and Technology Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
84.07%	227	15.93%	43	100%	270	74.68%	115	25.32%	39	100%	154

Table 22 shows a 42.96% decline in the number of SLA members in this division in the past decade along with a decrease in females by almost half and a slight decrease in males. Reductions such as these are perhaps an outgrowth of retirements of SLA members in this division, or they could be the result of mergers in the fields.

Social Science Division

Included in the Social Science Division are many subsections: Geography and Map, International Relations, Nonprofit Sector, and Public Policy Sections. This division and its subsections “serve as a forum for the exchange of information for special librarians having a social science subject interest. The purpose of the division is to enhance the skills of its members in dealing with the collection, organization, dissemination, and retrieval of material, and to encourage research in the broad field of the social sciences” (*Divisions: Special Libraries Association*). In comparison to the total SLA membership, this division comprises approximately 6.21% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 6.03% of the total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 23

Social Science Division											
1993-1994						2003-2004					
Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
79.98%	711	20.02%	178	100%	889	78.31%	556	21.69%	154	100%	710

As illustrated in Table 23, there has been a 20.13% decline in the SLA members in this division between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004 with a reduction in the numbers of females and males as well. These decreasing numbers most likely reflect the general trend of

shrinking SLA membership over the years since the division has remained fairly constant in terms of the percentage of members over the past decade.

Transportation Division

The Transportation Division “promotes the exchange of knowledge and information among individuals and organizations interested in the development, control, and use of information resources in transportation both in general or in one of its many subdivisions; these include air, highway, rail, urban and water transport, and multimodal transportation” (*Division: Special Libraries Association*). Members in this division constitute approximately 1.42% of the total SLA membership in 1993-1994 and approximately 1.12% of total SLA membership in 2003-2004.

Table 24

Transportation Division										
1993-1994						2003-2004				
Female	Male	Total				Female	Male	Total		
81.28%	165	18.72%	38	100%	203	76.92%	110	23.08%	33	100% 143

Table 24 shows a 29.56% decrease in the number of SLA members in this division over the past decade as well as a decline in the numbers for both females and males. Such reductions possibly suggest a merging of job positions or the retirement of SLA members from institutions in this division.

Summary

Overall, the findings show that in almost every division the number of jobs available is smaller now than it was in previous years. The reason for these changes and

the implications for SLA members and librarians in general will be covered in the next section.

Conclusion

The findings of this study depict a different picture from much of the literature about special librarians and “alternative” careers. The literature that predates the mid-1990s portrays an endlessly increasing job market for librarians. Surveys observed more graduates were taking special library positions in their first jobs, books appeared describing new and exciting “alternative” careers for librarians, and writers jumped on the bandwagon by profiling librarians with non-traditional careers, advising special librarians about career moves, and insisting library and information schools incorporate these trends into classes. Special librarians were being told to “think outside the library” (Horton 2; Taylor 1,871-1,872), and it seemed as though increasing amounts of special librarians were doing just that. However, the *Library Journal* “Placements and Salary Surveys” as depicted earlier in Figure 1 are more closely aligned with this study’s results.

Summary of Findings

This study set out to determine if there are more job opportunities outside of traditional library settings for SLA members now than there were in the past years. The answer: there are fewer jobs today just as there are fewer special librarians. As Table 1 shows, only four of the twenty-two divisions saw an increase in the number of employing institutions over the past decade: Legal, Military Librarians, Pharmaceutical and Health Technology, and Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics. Similarly, only four of the

twenty-two divisions demonstrated a rise in the number of special librarians in the past ten years: Legal, News, Pharmaceutical and Health Technology, and Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics (Tables 14, 18, 20, and 21, respectively). In addition, the total SLA membership fell by 17.72% from 14,321 in 1993-1994 to 11,783 in 2003-2004 (as of March 18, 2004).

The overall decline in the number of special librarians, of special librarians within the divisions, and of the employing institutions in the divisions may have been influenced by a number of factors in the intervening ten years, including personal, business, and global factors. There is a growing concern in librarianship in general over the large numbers of projected retirements in the upcoming years. An estimated 58% of the total number of librarians will reach retirement age—65—by the year 2019 (quoted in Lenzini 88). Although there are no specific projections for the number of retiring special librarians, such a forecast has implications for every type of librarianship.

In addition to retirements, special librarians are also being laid off as institutions merge and restructure, as in the case of large banks, publishing houses, and telecommunications companies buying out independent businesses. The slump in the economy in recent years has also impacted special librarians. Many smaller institutions have folded or declared bankruptcy, and in the case of struggling businesses, the library is often the target for budget cuts (Helfer par.7). If the library is not the target, then employee benefits are often cut, such as those that cover membership fees for professional organizations. Special librarians may not be able to afford the fees on their own and thus may not join or renew their membership to SLA.

Furthermore, many institutions are hoping to save money by outsourcing operations, another trend which affects employment opportunities for special librarians (and librarians in general) (Helfer pars. 18-22). To counteract this trend, some special librarians are choosing to enter the consulting field and form independent businesses. Although many such businesses may be found in the two membership directories examined for this study, a percentage of independent consultants may not be members of SLA.

Global factors may also account for a decline in the membership in SLA. The unsettled nature of the world today—both in terms of economics and security—may be making it more difficult for institutions to keep special librarians on the payroll. World events have also had an influence on the job market for special librarians as evidenced in the four divisions whose members have increased in the past decade: Legal, News, Pharmaceutical and Health Technology, and Physics, Astronomy, and Mathematics. Each of these divisions may be observed to play a major role in today's world in which high-profile court trials are the norm, national and global news is a necessity, terrorists are threatening to unleash hazardous disease, and Mars is being explored for signs of inhabitable conditions.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should include studies of directories for the intervening years between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004. A closer examination of the institutions labeled "Unknown" for this study would also be in order to determine if the institutions are distributed evenly among the divisions or if they fall primarily into a few of the divisions.

For a more specific look at each of the divisions, a random sample of institutions within each division might be surveyed or interviewed to uncover their views of special librarians and the changing employment trends. In addition, well-known companies could be chosen and then tracked through various years to discover the changing numbers of employed librarians and to see if there is a year(s) in which the companies do not appear.

Another course of future study could involve examining the types of special libraries that have closed over the years to determine the cause of the closings. The special librarians who were cut from the jobs might also be contacted to discover in what type of institution they found their next job. Similarly, librarians entering special librarianship after a job in a more traditional setting could be interviewed to find out why they chose special librarianship and what they expect from their new jobs. In addition, special librarians joining SLA as new members might be interviewed to discover what they hope to gain from their membership in the organization.

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Although there is much research that could still be undertaken on the topic, this study has provided an overview of the employment trends for Special Libraries Association (SLA) members. Even though the findings show an overall decrease in employment opportunities for SLA members, special librarians and MLS graduates should not necessarily abandon attempts to find jobs in this type of librarianship. Readers of the many “alternative” career books and other literature should be wary of the

publications' optimism, but the readers should not become totally discouraged. Special library jobs and "alternative" careers are still available; however, it may take longer to find job openings. Ruth Savord's positive attitude, although recorded in the 1940s, should be acknowledged here: "There is a potential opening for such specialized service [of special librarians]...in every field of human activity" (5). It is up to today's special librarians to use their skills and creativity to discover the openings that do exist, to market their importance to the institution to keep the job positions active, and then to teach MLS graduates about these positions in order to bolster SLA membership in the future.

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