

Job Outlook for Library Paraprofessionals in Colorado



How many jobs are there for paraprofessionals in public, school, and academic libraries in Colorado? What does the outlook for their employment look like for the rest of this decade? Data available from the Library Research Service (LRS) and the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) help to answer these questions.

According to the LRS's 2000 data files, all posted—or soon to be posted—at <http://www.LRS.org>:

- Colorado public libraries employ at least 307 and as many as 1,868 "paraprofessionals." This particular sector of the library community demonstrates how difficult it can be to define and count people in this category of employment. Of those with the rank or title of librarian, 307 do not have master's degrees in library science (MLS) accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). In addition, public libraries reported a total of 1,561 "other" staff. This category includes library assistants and technicians, pages and shelvers, and miscellaneous other staff. It may also include some professionals or "paraprofessionals" in other fields such as human resources, marketing, and technology. These two categories together—non-MLS librarians and other staff—total 1,868.
- The state's academic libraries reported 521 "other" staff (i.e., not librarians, contributed staff, or student assistants).
- Colorado school libraries reported 1,130 FTEs of library aides.

For 2000, therefore, between 2,000 and 3,500 "paraprofessionals" were employed in the state's public, school, and academic libraries. This figure is consistent with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment's estimates for 1998 and 2008.

Table 1 summarizes the Colorado forecast for employment in paraprofessional library jobs between now and 2008, according to CDLE's **1998-2008 Occupational Employment Outlook** report (<http://lmi.cdle.state.co.us/oeo/oeo.htm>).

**Table 1. Paraprofessionals in Colorado Libraries:
Number of Positions, 1998 and 2008, and
Average Annual Openings**

Position Title	Number of positions		Average annual openings **
	1998	2008	
Library assistants/ bookmobile drivers *	2,020	2,580	154
Library technicians	1,340	1,760	80
TOTAL	3,360	4,340	234

* Note: This unusual combination of position titles was invented by the U.S. Department of Labor.

** Includes newly created positions as well as vacancies or turnover.

The relatively small number of such positions combined with the frequent difficulty in filling them may be accounted for, at least in part, by the low salaries paid for these jobs. According to **Colorado Occupational Employment Statistics 1999-2000 Wage Survey** (<http://lmi.cdle.state.co.us/oeo/finalprojectionsbook-web.pdf>, p. 38), the average annual salary of a library assistant or technician is \$24,240 and the average entry level salary is only \$16,680. For perspective, according to **Money Income in the United States 1999** (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/income/income99/99tabled.html>), the median household income for 1999 was \$47,987.

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