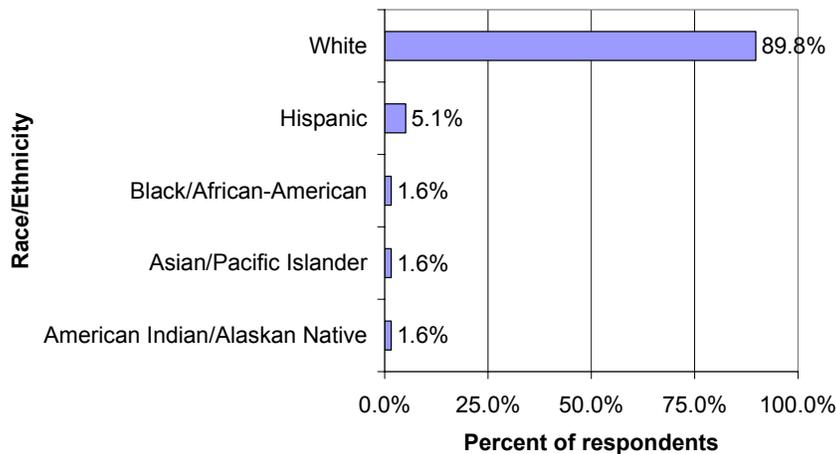


DIVERSITY OF COLORADO LIBRARY WORKERS: PROFESSIONAL SELF-PERCEPTIONS AND PORTENTS FOR THE FUTURE

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March 11, 2005

Chart 1. Respondents to the 3Rs Survey by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2003

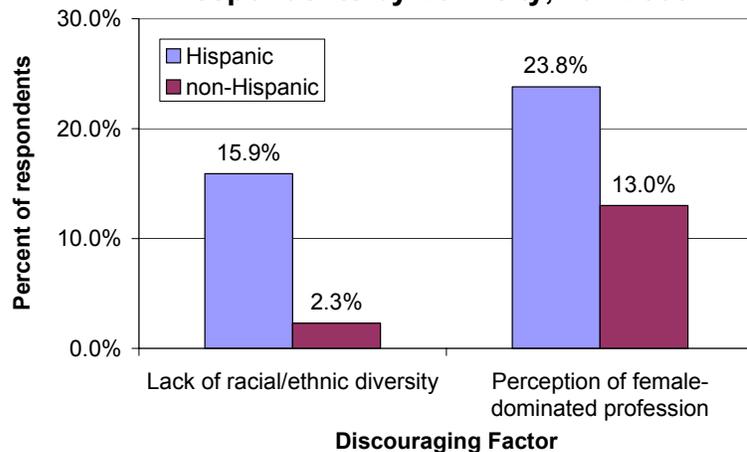


Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment: The Future of Librarianship in Colorado—a recent LRS study—was based on a survey of over 1,200 library workers statewide in Fall 2003. While the sample for this study could not be obtained randomly, their answers to questions about

how library workers themselves perceive librarianship as a profession are intriguing. The ethnicity and gender demographics of these respondents also offer some hope that, in the near future, Colorado librarians will become more diverse, like the patrons they will serve.

Predictably, nine out of ten respondents to the library worker survey were White (89.8%) and female (90.3%). Each of the other three major racial groups—American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black/African-American—represented less than two percent of the respondents. Hispanic respondents (who could be of any race) constituted over five percent (5.1%) of the total survey response. (See Chart 1.) Suffice it to say, that there is little diversity in gender or ethnicity among Colorado library workers.

Chart 2. Factors Perceived to Discourage Pursuing Librarianship as a Profession by 3Rs Respondents by Ethnicity, Fall 2003

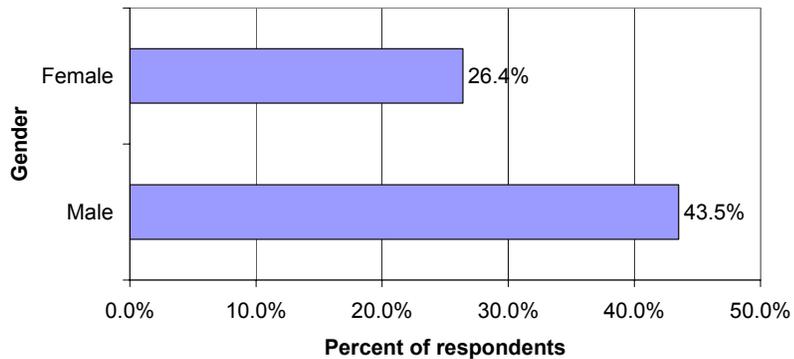


Why is this? One of the questions asked in the survey helps to answer this question. Respondents were asked to identify factors that they perceive to be discouraging of the pursuit



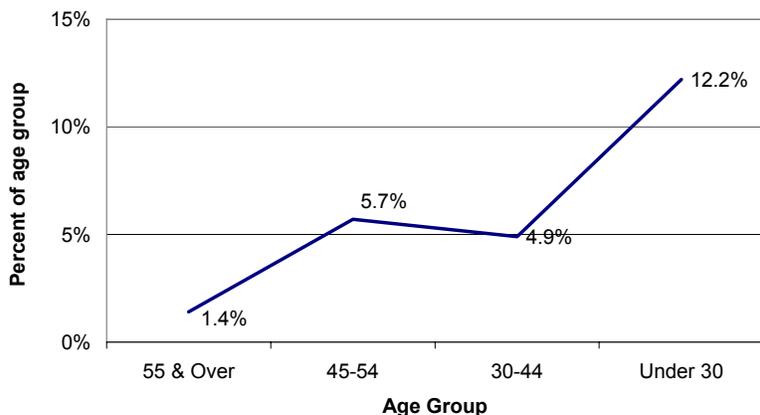
of librarianship as a profession. Three of those factors elicited different responses based on ethnicity and gender. Hispanics were almost seven times as likely as non-Hispanics to identify the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among library workers as a discouraging factor. In addition, Hispanics were almost twice as likely to perceive that librarianship being a female-dominated profession discourages choosing it as a career. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 3. Perception that Low Prestige Discourages Pursuit of Librarianship as a Profession by 3Rs Respondents by Gender, Fall 2003



Interestingly, only one factor discouraging librarianship as a career choice was more likely to be identified by one gender than the other. Men were more than half again as likely to identify the low prestige of librarians as a problem. (See Chart 3.)

Chart 4. Hispanic 3Rs Respondents by Age Group, Fall 2003

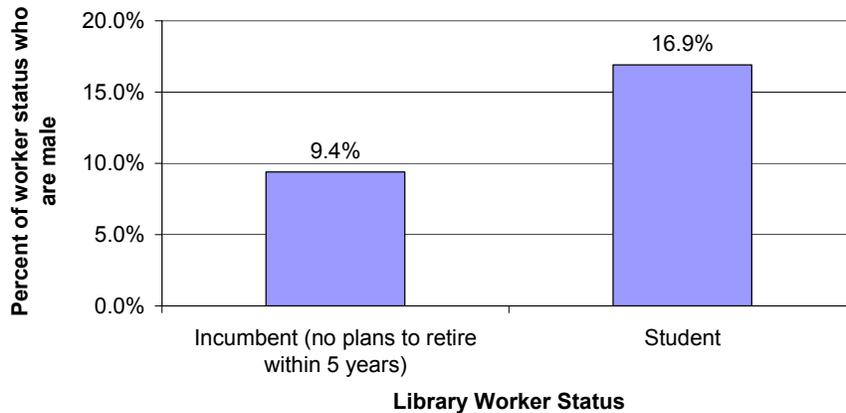


What progress may be being made in raising the prestige of librarians is debatable, but further evidence from this study indicates that librarianship in Colorado is becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender. The percentage of respondents who identified themselves as Hispanics increased dramatically by age group. Only 1.4% of respondents age 55 and over were Hispanic, compared with 12.2% of those under 30. (See Chart 4.) These

findings suggest that there is at least the potential for a dramatic increase in the percentage of Hispanics in library jobs in the state. From other data, however, we know that one of the major obstacles to Hispanics becoming librarians is obtaining a master's degree. For this potential to be realized, obstacles to Hispanics pursuing graduate studies will have to be removed.



Chart 5. Incumbent Library Workers & LIS Students Who Responded to 3Rs Survey & Who Are Male, Fall 2003



Likewise, when the gender distribution of incumbent library workers (i.e., those without plans to retire within the next five years) is compared to that for library and information science graduate students, there are signs that Colorado librarianship may be on its way to becoming a less “pink-collar” profession. The percentage of LIS

students who are male (almost 17%) is nearly twice the percentage for incumbent library workers (about 9%). (See Chart 5.)

There is no denying that, at present, there is little diversity among Colorado library workers. But, if the respondents to the 3Rs survey represent library workers generally, there are hopeful signs that, particularly as new library workers replace those who are retiring, greater diversity is a likely consequence.



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