

# THE U.S. LABOR MARKET FOR LIBRARY WORKERS, 2002-12

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Librarian retirements are at what some believe to be an all-time high. Many in the field are also concerned about the apparent extent to which library jobs are being re-structured and, sometimes, eliminated. In this seemingly unstable climate, several questions come to mind:

- How many jobs are there for library workers generally—and librarians in particular?
- How many of those jobs will be vacated in the foreseeable future?
- How many library jobs will be created or lost?
- Are there enough people to fill the library positions that will be available?
- How well (or poorly) are these jobs compensated?

Data that can help decision-makers begin to address these questions are available in Occupational Employment, Training, and Earnings Data accessible via the Bureau of Labor Statistics website. (See <http://data.bls.gov/oep/noeted/empoptd.jsp>.)

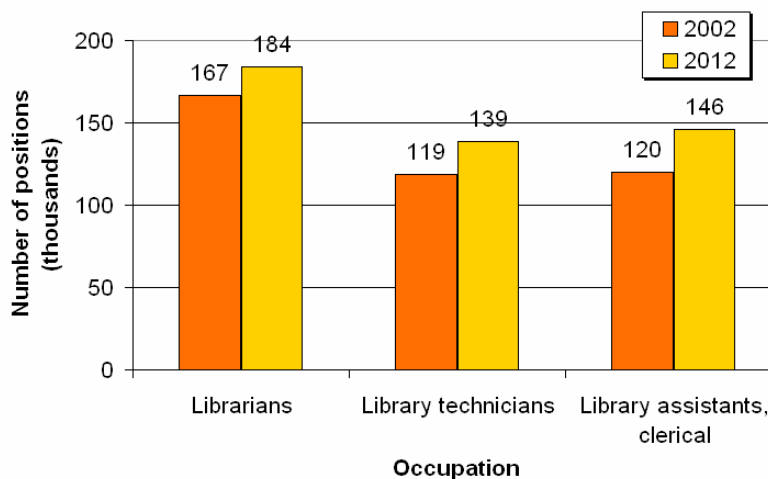
BLS defines three library occupations—librarian, library technician, and library assistant (clerical). For definitions of these occupations, see the sidebar, Standard Occupational Classification Definitions.

## Number & Types of Library Jobs

In 2002, there were 167,000 librarians, 119,000 library technicians, and 120,000 library assistants—a total of 406,000 library jobs. By 2012, it is expected that there will be 184,000 librarians, 139,000 library technicians, and 146,000 library assistants—a total of 469,000 library jobs. (See Chart 1.)

These figures indicate that the nation's libraries employ a substantial number of people. In 2002, the number of library workers—406,000—was about equal to the 2002 Census population of Sacramento, California (407,000). In 2012, the projected number of library

**Chart 1. Total Employment for Library Workers, 2000 & 2012**



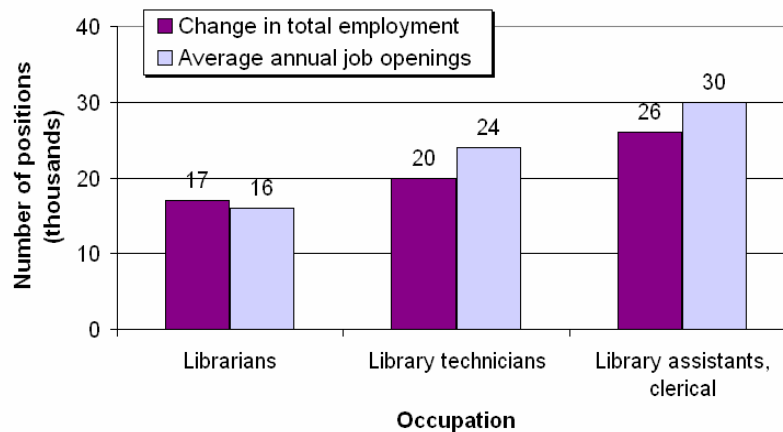
workers—469,000—will fall almost equidistant between the 2002 Census populations of Cleveland, Ohio (478,000) and Long Beach, California (462,000).

Overall, BLS predicts that library employment will increase by 15.5 percent between 2002 and 2012; but relative increases in library positions are greater as one descends the hierarchy of library jobs. Over the same period, library assistant jobs will increase by 21.7 percent; library technician jobs, by 16.8 percent; and librarian jobs by 10.2 percent.

### Ten-Year Change in Library Employment & Annual Job Openings

Projected change in total library employment between 2002 and 2012 is substantial. During that interval, the number of people working in libraries is expected to grow by an estimated 63,000, including 17,000 librarians, 20,000 library technicians, and 26,000 library assistants. (See Chart 2.)

**Chart 2. Change in Total Employment and Average Annual Job Openings for Library Workers, 2002-12**



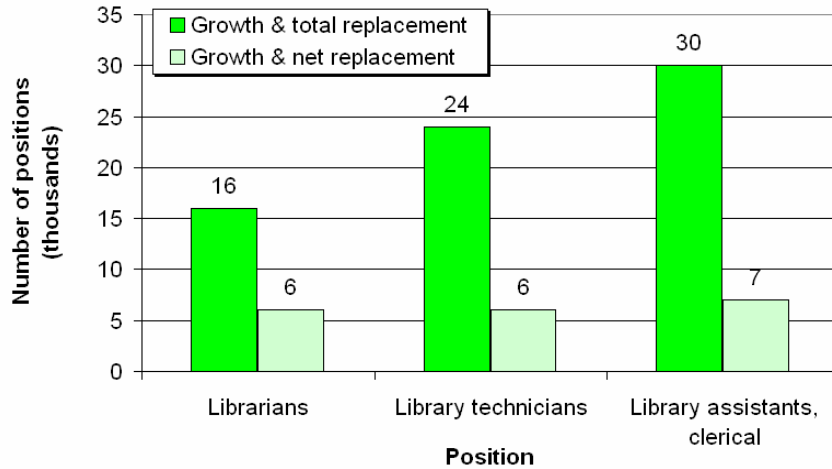
New entrants into the field will fill these newly created jobs as well as vacancies for existing positions. The average annual number of library job openings is expected to be 70,000, including 16,000 librarians, 24,000 library technicians, and 30,000 library assistants.

### Annual Library Job Openings: Growth & Replacement

BLS reports two figures related to annual job openings: growth plus total replacement and growth plus net replacement. Growth refers to the anticipated increase in library positions between 2002 and 2012. Total replacement refers to the number of workers in such jobs who must be replaced because they retire, leave their jobs for other reasons, or die. Net replacement adjusts total replacement by subtracting the anticipated number of new entrants into the field from the number who retire, leave their jobs for other reasons, or die. Thus, net replacement is always a lower figure than total replacement.



**Chart 3. Average Annual Job Openings for Library Workers, 2002-12**



Growth plus total replacement indicates the number of library positions that are expected to be open during the average year between 2002 and 2012. For the same period, growth plus net replacement indicates the average annual number of positions that will require new entrants into the field.

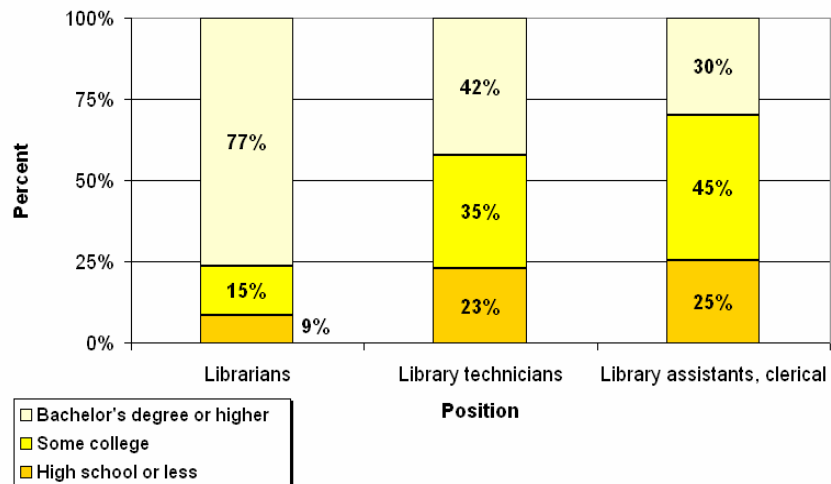
The relationship noted earlier between position rank and expected numbers of open

positions, both vacated and new, focused on growth plus total replacement. Growth plus net replacement figures indicate that the numbers of new entrants required annually to occupy foreseen library jobs is at least 19,000. That number includes 6,000 librarians, 6,000 library technicians, and 7,000 library assistants. (See Chart 3.)

### Educational Attainment of Library Workers

The fact that most librarian jobs require higher educational qualifications than library technician and library assistant jobs—usually a master’s degree from a program of library and information science accredited by the American Library Association—is reflected by the self-reported educational attainment levels of library workers. More than three out of four

**Chart 4. Educational Attainment of Library Workers Ages 25 to 44, 2002**

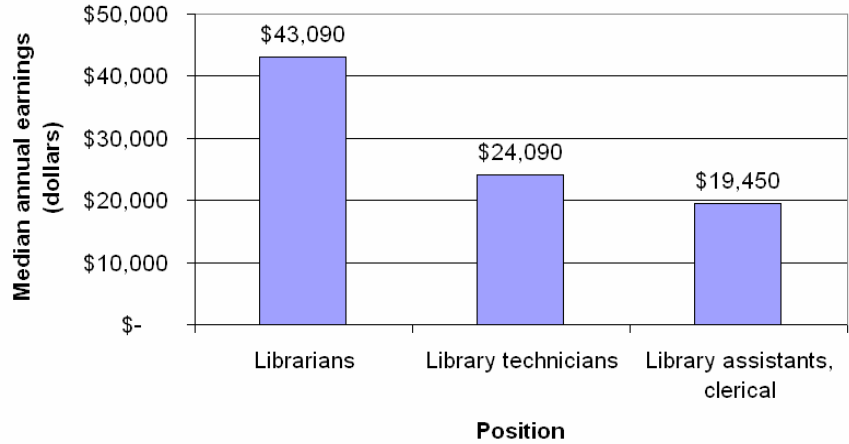


librarians (77 percent) report having a bachelor’s or higher degree. Only two out of five library technicians (42 percent) and less than one out of three library assistants (30%) report having such a degree. (See Chart 4.)



Curiously, the lowest BLS category for which educational attainment is reported is “high school or less.” It is somewhat unusual to lump together those who graduated from high school with those who did not. That said, fewer than one in ten librarians were reported in this category, compared with about one out of four library technicians (23 percent) and library assistants (25 percent).

**Chart 5. Median Annual Earnings for Library Workers, 2002**

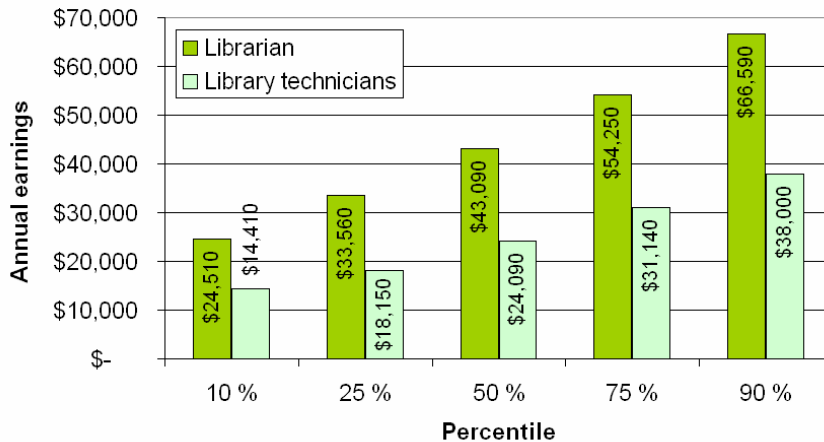


**Median Annual Earnings of Library Workers**

BLS reports median annual earnings for library, museum, and related workers for 2002. It is no surprise that the typical librarian earnings—over \$43,000—are very substantially higher than typical earnings of library technicians—over \$24,000—and library assistants—less than \$20,000. (See Chart 5.)

Differences in compensation among as well as between librarian and library technician jobs are further illustrated by examining selected percentile statistics. Half of librarians earn between about \$33,500 and \$43,000. The top ten percent of librarians earn over about \$66,500, but the bottom ten percent earn less than approximately \$24,500.

**Chart 6. Percentiles for Annual Earnings of Librarians and Library Technicians, 2002**



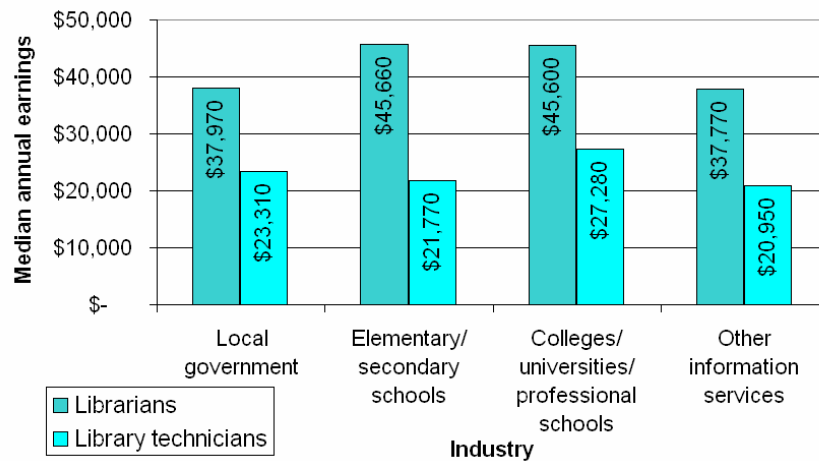
Similar differences are seen for library technicians. Half in those positions earn between about \$18,000 and \$31,000. The top ten percent of library technicians earn over \$38,000, but the bottom ten percent earn less than approximately \$14,500. (See Chart 6.)

BLS also reports median annual earnings of librarians and library technicians by industry.



In 2002, the sectors that reported the highest median annual earnings for librarians were school and academic libraries. Similarly, librarians employed by local governments (mostly public librarians) and those employed in “other information services” (i.e., special librarians and what are sometimes called “information brokers”) were almost tied with median earnings of approximately \$38,000 a year. Library technicians were best paid by academic libraries—at more than \$27,000 annually—and lowest paid by other information services—less than \$21,000 annually. (See Chart 7.)

**Chart 7. Median Annual Earnings for Librarians and Library Technicians by Industry, 2002**



The professional literature on library retirement, retention, and recruitment issues is a relatively new, but rapidly growing one. In late 2004, the Library Research Service of the Colorado State Library and the University of Denver released a report titled Retirement, Retention, and Recruitment (the 3 Rs): the Future of Librarianship in Colorado. The product of a Fall 2003 survey of library workers and LIS students, this is believed to be the first comprehensive statewide study examining the interaction of these three sets of issues. The report on this study also includes a comprehensive review of the literature to date. (See <http://www.LRS.org>.)

In 2005, the biennial update of the BLS data reported herein can be expected in the November issue of the Monthly Labor Review. That update will cover the period from 2004 to 2014. (See <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/mlrhome.htm>.) Those projections will also be included in a future edition of the Occupational Outlook Handbook. (See <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>.)

In late 2006, watch for reports from a two-year study examining the future of librarians in the workforce (2006-16). This study is being conducted at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and was funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

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