

Women in Archives: A Summary Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession

MABEL E. DEUTRICH, *Chairwoman*

WHAT IS THE SITUATION of women in the archival profession? How do women archivists compare in rank, salary, and professional commitment and expectations with male archivists? Do women get an even break or have they been the victims of sex discrimination? To obtain the answers to these and related questions, the Society of American Archivists established an ad hoc committee in the fall of 1972 and directed it to investigate the situation and report on its findings. The committee prepared two questionnaires, one directed to individuals and the other to heads of selected archival institutions. Its report is based upon an analysis of 672 individual and 147 institutional replies.¹

The difference between the findings from the two sources is significant. Responses from institutions pertain to *all* professional and paraprofessional employees at those institutions, although many of these employees probably did not complete individual questionnaires. Most individual respondents were SAA members, though many of the lower-paid employees on whom information would have been included in the institutional questionnaire are not members of the Society. Finally, some individual respondents may be from archival agencies not included in the institutional survey.

What are some of the significant data contained in the report? With respect to education, the survey data reveal that men who are archivists are generally better educated than their female colleagues. Nineteen percent of the men have Ph.D.'s, but less than 7 percent of the women. Almost 81 percent of the men have the master's degree or higher, as do 62 percent of the women. About 10 percent of the women had less than a bachelor's degree compared to less than 4 percent of the men.

The average years of total archival experience for full-time employees was 9 for men and 7.5 for women. At the Ph.D. level, however, women averaged 12.6 years of archival experience compared with 9.9 for men. At the opposite end of the educational scale, men with less

¹ Copies of the entire report are available for \$2.00 from the Executive Director, Society of American Archivists, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Box 8198, Chicago, Ill. 60680.

than a bachelor's degree had an average of 13.7 years of experience compared with 8.4 for women.

No doubt the most telling statistics were those related to salaries. Whether viewed in terms of comparable educational qualifications, years of service at their institutions, or total years of archival experience, salaries of women, on the average, are less than for men.

The percentage of women in the lower salary levels is consistently higher than that for men. Sixty percent of the women were earning less than \$12,000 annually compared with 31 percent of the men. As the average annual salary increases, women consistently fare less well than their male counterparts. For example, less than 6 percent of the women earn more than \$20,000 and of this percentage less than 2 percent earn more than \$24,000. In contrast, almost 22 percent of the men earn more than \$20,000 and 9 percent more than \$24,000. In the under-thirty age group, no woman earns more than \$16,000. Only 7 percent of the women between the ages of thirty and fifty and 9 percent of those over fifty years of age earn more than \$16,000. Only four women were reported in the \$24,000-and-over salary range. The statistics for their male counterparts show 1 percent of the men under thirty earning more than \$16,000, 23 percent of those between thirty and fifty, and 15 percent of those over 50. Twenty-eight men were reported in the \$24,000-and-over salary range. The disparity in average salaries is evident not only in the current salary data but also in beginning salaries at the institutions. The beginning and present average salaries of men were 28 and 30 percent higher, respectively, than for women.

Nor did this disparity change at comparable levels of education. Present average salaries for men exceeded those for women in every education level as well as in total. The salaries for men ranged from 14 to 46 percent higher than for their female counterparts at comparable educational levels. In total, they were approximately 30 percent higher. Only at the Ph.D. level was the difference between present salaries of men and women appreciably narrowed. In the two lowest educational levels (equivalent to bachelor's degree or less), where women outnumbered men almost two to one, the disparity in average salaries was even greater than at the higher levels where women were in the minority. In the two lowest levels, average annual earnings for men were 30 and 46 percent higher, respectively, than for their female counterparts.

The argument that the salary differential between men and women is due to the women's shorter work experience is not supportable by the survey data. It is true that men at the lowest educational level, i.e., less than a bachelor's degree, had twice the years of service at their institutions compared with women. At all other levels, however, as well as in total, women had equal or longer service. In the case of Ph.D.'s, women had an average of 50 percent more years of service at their institutions than did the men (12.8 years versus 8.3 years). In total, although the average number of years with their present em-

ployers was approximately the same, salary increases for women lagged behind those of men at an average of 25 percent annually.

The second most significant statistics are probably those relating to the assignment of administrative duties. The contention that more men than women spend a major part of their time on administrative duties is corroborated by the survey data. One hundred seventeen men (35 percent) and 69 women (22 percent) indicated that they spent a major part of their time on administrative duties. This corroboration is evident at all educational levels as well as in total. At the Ph.D. level, for example, almost 41 percent of the males devoted a major portion of their time to administrative duties, as compared with 35 percent of the females.

A tabulation of the present average salaries of men and women who spend a major portion of their time on administrative duties indicates that men consistently receive higher salaries in total as well as at comparable educational levels. Thus, even when duties are roughly parallel and educational levels are comparable, the same type of inequity exists as was evident in the comparison of total average salaries.

Based on the survey data, one must conclude that women hold proportionately fewer positions of major administrative responsibility even at comparable educational levels or comparable years of experience at their institutions. Both men and women receive higher salaries in positions involving major administrative duties than for most other responsibilities. Because fewer women have attained positions with major administrative responsibilities, the effect on salaries has been detrimental to them.

Survey data relating to publications indicated that women are less prolific writers than their male colleagues. The full report tabulates statistical findings relating to various types of publication efforts by both men and women in the several educational categories. In brief, the survey disclosed that 52 percent of women had no publication of any kind; 38 percent of men had none. Fifty-five percent of women reported they had published no articles; 40 percent of men reported none. As might be expected, a proportionately higher number of both men and women at the Ph.D. level reported publications as compared with those at the other educational levels.

Analyzing these data with respect to age suggests some interesting conclusions. For both men and women, the under-thirty group reported the smallest number of publications of any kind. In the remaining age groups, the number of men with publications was fairly equally distributed. In contrast, women in the fifty-and-over group accounted for almost half (48 percent) of the total number of women with one or more publications to their credit. Women in the thirty to thirty-nine age group accounted for an additional 25 percent of women with one or more publications. Significantly, men and women under forty, the probably future leaders of the profession, are publishing at approximately the same rate despite the fact that women in this age group earn substantially lower salaries than their male counterparts

and hold disproportionately fewer administrative positions where publishing is often encouraged, or indeed expected, as part of the job.

The individual questionnaire asked whether there was sex discrimination in certain specified areas in the respondent's archival institution or manuscript repository. Almost two-thirds of the responses from men indicated that there was no discrimination, or at least its existence was not perceived. In contrast, 58 percent of the female and 34 percent of the male respondents indicated that sex discrimination did exist in one or more areas. The strongest perception of discrimination was manifested by men and women in the under-forty age group. For both male and female respondents, the number one area of perceived discrimination was in promotional opportunities. The next most frequently cited areas of discrimination, in order, were salaries, assignment of duties, hiring, and opportunities for advanced training.

To the 66 percent of the men and the 42 percent of the women who reported no discrimination, the committee report should be an eye-opener. To the women, it should be clear that they do not compare favorably with men in educational levels and in the production of publications. It should be evident to the women that they, through their own efforts, can tip the scale in the opposite direction in both of these areas. Of the 147 institutions included in the survey analysis, 118, or 80 percent, indicated that they had an affirmative action/equal-employment program. To the administrators of these programs, it must be obvious that, insofar as women are concerned, they have not been effective.