

R-E-T-I-R-E-M-E-N-T (Find Out What It Means to Me)

Kathleen De Long

I can hear Aretha's voice in my head when the "R word" comes up. How many librarians across the country are trying to find out what retirement means to them?

A large number of baby boomer librarians are considering the decision to retire or have retired and are exploring the endless variants of retired life. Retirement of Canadian librarians was one of the eight human resources variables explored in the 8Rs research study, *The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries*. Our research found that the age and rate of retirement of the Canadian library workforce was an exceedingly complex issue. The best estimate, assuming a retirement age of 62 years, was that 16% of professional librarians would retire by 2009 and 39% by 2014.

These levels of retirement would not pose a critical issue to the librarian workforce but were also viewed as extremely vulnerable to personal and monetary variables. The research also found that most librarians nearing retirement age were ambivalent about their age of retirement; they could easily be tempted to stay (or constrained to stay if family economics were an issue) or might leave early if early retirement packages were an option. Given the recent downturn in the

economy, it would be interesting to know if retirement decisions have been delayed, or not, and the resultant impact upon individuals and library organizations.

The theme of this issue is Retirement and Second Careers.

Rowena Lunn writes about her decision to retire. After 28 years, she leaves a vibrant regional library system that is poised to make a number of major changes. She has made her decision to retire at a point where a new leadership can launch into the planning beyond their 2010 Vision, and she does so knowing she has made the right decision for herself and for the organization. Wendy Newman, for her part, retired a few years ago. She has found an exciting and fulfilling role as a senior fellow in the Information program at the University of Toronto and as a library consultant while still continuing her mission of advocating for libraries. She has managed to combine her passion for libraries and expertise in advocacy with teaching and mentoring of students and new professionals – Wendy is awesome in retirement!

Susan Rathbun-Grubb, meanwhile, is a researcher with the Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 1 study team at the University of North Carolina that has looked at U.S. library

workforce data comparable to the 8Rs research. Susan has done some in-depth analysis of their data to examine the post-retirement needs and plans of librarians and information professionals who are close to making the retirement transition. It will come as no surprise to learn that retirement from librarianship does not mean retirement from public service or from paid employment of various kinds, libraries included.


All of these articles point to a retirement landscape that is rich with promise and possibilities. Finally, Jean Weihs describes Ex Libris, the association for retired librarians that provides the opportunity to stay involved, to maintain relationships with colleagues and to continue to advocate for libraries and for the profession. Librarians are self-confessed association junkies and it is inspiring to see the range of involvement and the contribution that is being made by the Ex Libris community.

Retirement is a human resources issue that will continue to have an enormous impact upon the Canadian library workforce. The 8Rs Research Team will continue to study and assess how the various retirement scenarios and numbers predicted in 2005 have played out over the last five years and what we can expect in the future. We look to our

professional community to support us in our endeavours to understand the impact of these issues upon our workforce and to aid both organizations and individuals in making the best decisions possible for future planning. 🐟

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