

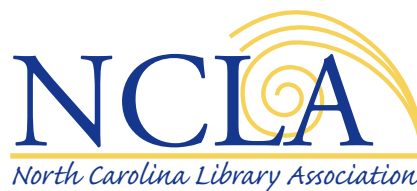
The *Forbes* Article Has a Point

In the early 1970s a group of library colleagues went over to visit the Provost to request that “librarians receive equal pay for equal work.” Their thought was that librarians were in a primarily female profession and that they deserved the same salaries that higher paid colleagues received in other departments in the university. The Provost, whom I have to admit now, was a wise old sage, did not provide the response my colleagues were wishing for. He noted that teaching was rarely the realm of large salaries and that if my colleagues were interested primarily in money they would be better advised to seek employment in other areas such as medicine, law or accounting. At least one colleague promptly applied the next year for law school and has since had, I hope, a higher paying career as a North Carolina attorney.

Flash forward, as they say to 2012, where *Forbes* reporter Jacqueline V. Smith (B.A. University of Arizona, M.A. Journalism, Hofstra) writes a series of “the Best and Worst” articles. The first deals with the “best and worst-paying sales jobs”, the second the “best and worst master’s degrees for jobs.” <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/06/08/the-best-and-worst-masters-degrees-for-jobs-2/>. Other columns deal with the “world’s most reputable companies” and the “happiest jobs in America.” For those of you not familiar with the article, Smith basically suggests that “the low pay and estimated growth rank make library and information science the worst master’s degree for jobs right now.” We join English, music, education, biology, history and chemistry in the low ranks for job success and pay with a master’s degree. Not surprising, degrees in fields such as nursing and computer science have brighter prospects. It looks to me like not much has changed in some forty odd years.

Maureen Sullivan writing in a recent issue of *American Libraries* counters: “While it is true that for some individuals these factors are the principle

focus (referencing here the Smith article), for librarians the primary motivation is job satisfaction derived from the opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of others.” Very few people join the Peace Corp to make lots of money. The same can be said for many other professions. In short the old Provost was right, if lots of money is your game, then becoming a librarian is probably not the first route you should choose. Are accountants, doctors and lawyers the happiest professions? Not according to Smith in her other article <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2012/03/23/the-happiest-jobs-in-america/>. The happiest jobs (rated by something called Career Bliss) are: software engineer, executive chef, property manager, bank teller, and warehouse manager! Now I don’t know if you have been a property manager or not, but I have, and I can tell you that the various tenants I have had to deal with would in no way contribute to my bliss. Some were very nice of course, but many were late pay, slow pay, no pay, or simply vanished into the night leaving their life behind. Librarianship on the other hand enables me to make that difference in others people’s lives that Sullivan is talking about. I recall fondly the patrons who over the years have brought tokens of appreciation for a job well done (you have never lived until you have had a happy/grateful library patron bring your staff a gallon of ice cream at 8PM in a very hot non-air-conditioned library during a summer heat wave!) Listening to Clint Eastwood’s (insert your favorite word here) address at the 2012 Republican National Convention in Tampa made me think of the Dirty Harry phrase “Go Ahead, Make my Day.” Librarians do truly make many happy days for our users and I think it’s a great profession for all of us.



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