Biennial Salary Survey Task Force

Final Report
October 2003

As Vice-President, Carol Avery Nicholson appointed the Biennial Salary Survey Task Force and directed it to focus its work in two areas: the review of the survey instrument and \textit{Biennial Salary Survey} and recommendations to improve the data made available via the \textit{Biennial Salary Survey} publication. The Task Force’s charge was to:

- Evaluate the current survey instrument and publication to identify data that may be ambiguous, misleading or incomplete.
- Consult with the ALL-SIS, PLL, SCC-SIS and other appropriate entities regarding the usefulness of the current survey instrument and publication.
- Determine other appropriate means for identifying member needs that are not currently being met or that may benefit from improved data collection.
- Consult with Headquarters Staff and whoever collects the data.
- Make recommendations to the Director of Publications and the Executive Director for changes to the survey instrument and publication.
- Review the resulting survey instrument and publication and report on improvements in usefulness to the Executive Board.

The Task Force met during the 2002 Annual Meeting in Orlando to begin its review of past salary surveys. Member comments were solicited from August-October 2002 via listserv postings (lawlib, SISs and chapters) and a \textit{Spectrum} announcement. An Interim Report was submitted in January 2003, summarizing issues noted in the review of prior surveys and making recommendations for the 2003 Survey. Based primarily on cost considerations, some of the desired changes could not be implemented. Staff selected Association Research, Inc. to conduct the 2003 Survey.

The survey was sent to library directors in late June. Prior to the distribution of the survey, the Task Force helped revise the “solo librarian” definition and reviewed the AALL membership database entries categorized as “other” and “independent” to make sure that the survey would be sent to all appropriate libraries, e.g., many county law libraries are categorized as “other” rather than “government”, so special arrangements had to be made to send the appropriate survey to a number of libraries.

The Task Force helped publicize the survey by preparing announcements for the June and July 2003 issues of \textit{Spectrum} as well as for \textit{Coffee Talk}, the convention newspaper at the Seattle Annual Meeting. We also posted announcements on multiple listservs. The Task Force met during the 2003 Annual Meeting to begin drafting language for consideration of inclusion in the introductory portion of the final Survey Report. These comments on how users should utilize survey data and what are relevant comparisons were prepared with the assistance of several members of the former Special Committee on Law Librarian Compensation, and the Task Force is grateful for that assistance.
The survey response date was Friday, July 25, yet only about 20% of surveys had been received by the middle of that week, so the deadline was extended to August 8. The final response rate was 35.9% for all respondents, an average from the 35% response rate from private firms, 44.6% from academic libraries, and 34% from government libraries.

The Task Force has reviewed a preliminary report of result tables and noted areas where explanation would be helpful. This report is due October 14, 2003, and as of this date, the Final Report is not yet available, so the Task Force is not able to review it.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

- No reporting date satisfies everyone, but July 1 appears to be a good one. The Task Force received only one negative comment after that date was selected.

- The lower response rate is puzzling. AALL members indicate they want this information available, but this response rate is lower than previous surveys.

- Geographic groupings continue to be of concern because many of them cover so many states that it is hard for individual members to make comparisons. The Task Force had listed further breakdowns as Desired Changes, and for future reports, strong consideration should be given to providing reports by individual states, at least by All Library Types, but preferably broken out by Library Types.

- The 2003 Survey Report provides more information than the 2001 Survey Report, e.g., there are more ranges for years of experience and levels of education. This should make the 2003 Survey Report more useful for AALL members.

- If the 2003 Survey Report is not able to include data on salaries of individuals holding both theMLS and JD degrees, this should be a priority for the 2005 Survey Report. (As of the date of this report, we do not know if this will be able to be included in the 2003 Survey Report.) This combination of degrees is likely the most prevalent among our members, and holding both of these degrees is a requirement for many positions.

The Task Force expresses deep appreciation to Headquarters Staff for assistance during our term, especially to Maya Norris and Susan Fox. As issues arose, we always received prompt and thorough responses.

Respectfully submitted,

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