Bias in Publishing? Gender Trends in Academic Library and Information Science Monograph Publications

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Bias in Publishing?
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Ngoc-Yen Tran and Erin Nevius*

Introduction
For academic librarians, especially those in tenure-track positions, publishing is a necessity for tenure and promotion. While librarians and other information professionals publish in a number of formats, the publication of a scholarly monograph is undoubtedly one of the highest levels of achievement and generally well regarded in the tenure and promotion process. As librarians, we understand that the monograph publication process and monograph publishers themselves can be skewed toward particular viewpoints and that these biases can limit the topics and types of items that are published, as well as who gets published. Although a lot of literature has been completed on gender biases in academic publishing, not many have examined monograph publications and none have looked specifically at library and information science (LIS) monographs. This study seeks to fill that gap through a critical look at the publication trends of academic LIS monographs, and more specifically, the gender of creators (authors and editors). The study addresses the following questions:

• Is there a gender gap in LIS scholarly monograph publishing? If so, what does it look like?
• How does gender affect co-creatorship (co-authored or co-edited works) in LIS scholarly monograph publishing?
• Does gender have an effect on the topics published in LIS scholarly monograph publishing?

Literature Review
Gender and Creatorship
Studies on the genders of creators in academic monograph publishing are extremely limited, but they all indicate that women lag behind men as creators of books. A study of edited books in political sciences indicated that of the 78 monographs published between 1995-1997, 88% of the authors in the edited works were male.1 Another study of 1,367 University of Helsinki scholars between 2002-2004 in all different disciplines found that men published an average of 1.9 times more monographs than their women colleagues.2 Further, even in a field such as English where, since 1987, more women have received PhDs than men, it was discovered that the male faculty members at the top 50 US English PhD departments published more scholarly books (authored and edited) on a per capita basis than their female peers.3

While research into academic book publishing and gender has been limited, there are a host of studies on gender and periodical articles output. Studies in the last few decades on the gender of authors in periodicals have indicated that, as in academic monograph publishing, men publish more than their female peers, even in disciplines that are not dominated by men such as natural and biological sciences, humanities and creative arts, and social and applied sciences.4 In LIS specifically, findings in studies also indicate a greater representation of male voices as

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* Ngoc-Yen Tran, Research Impact Librarian, San Jose State University, yen.tran@sjsu.edu. Erin Nevius, Content Strategist, ACRL, enevius@ala.org
authors or editors. One of the earliest studies on author gender in LIS periodicals publishing was published in the late 1970s by Ollsgard and Ollsgard, who analyzed ten-year spans of five periodicals including College & Research Libraries, Library Journal, Library Quarterly, Library Trends, and RQ. The researchers found that, although women made up 84% of the LIS profession at the time, the representation of women in the five periodicals ranged from 21.2% to 41.3%. That male librarians published more than female librarians held true even when Ollsgaard and Olsgaard examined academic librarians and library science faculty, who are often required to publish research. Other studies since have analyzed specific LIS journals and core groupings of LIS journals, and across different types of authors and publications the research continued to find that men publish more in LIS periodicals than their female colleagues. Even so, there have been findings that indicate the opposite. Adamson and Zamora found that women published more when it was topics related to special and medical libraries, and a study of 16 library periodicals of different types and topics from 1987-1989 by Buttlar indicated that a majority of authors were female.

**Gender and Collaboration**

Studies have shown that research collaborations are now a common occurrence in all disciplines. In LIS, the rising trend of academic research collaborations was demonstrated by Cline and Terry who, separately and at different times, analyzed the articles in College & Research Libraries (C&RL). Cline indicated that between 1939-1944 less than 5% of the articles in C&RL were co-authored; Terry continued Cline's study 15 years later and showed that co-authored articles continually increased to almost 60% for articles published between 1989-1994. In a more recent study, Luo and McKinney found that the majority of the articles published in The Journal of Academic Librarianship (JAL) from 2004-2013 were co-authored (54.3%). Studies of groupings of LIS journals, both academic and non-academic, also concluded that LIS research was increasingly more collaborative.

It is likely that the rise of collaborative works has contributed to the continual increase of literature created by women. Women have shown a tendency to collaborate with others, especially with other women. Mathews and Andersen's study of edited political science books found that, when there was a female editor or co-editor, 48% of the authors were also female, as opposed to only 15% when none of the editors were female. In LIS, Terry's analysis of College & Research Libraries articles from 1989-1994 showed that of the 243 co-authors, 55% of the co-authors were female. Additionally, of the co-authored titles, 56% had at least one male and one female author, and 26% had all female co-authors.

**Gender and Research Topics**

Studies on what female academics choose to pursue have indicated that research topics are gendered and that men and women publish on, or are more interested in researching, topics stereotypically associated with their gender or gender attributes. Studies generally indicate that topics categorized as "feminine" are those that deal more with people and relationships, while "masculine" topics are associated with things. The gender of librarians and the topics that they investigate in LIS literature has not been explored deeply, but there is at least one example. Buttlar's study of 16 journals found that women wrote mostly about children's and young adults' services (90.91%) and bibliographic information/information literacy (83.67%), and men wrote on document retrieval (100%), library history (83.33%), and international librarianship (75.76%). In addition, some conclusions about gender and topic selection can be made based on publishing trends in specific journals. Research indicated that even as more men were publishing LIS articles, women authors were the majority in journals such as the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association and School Library Media Quarterly. All of these findings indicate that female librarians are writing on topics that are more stereotypically aligned to their gender.
Methodology
We began our study by identifying the major LIS academic monograph publishers; one of the researchers works in LIS publishing and is familiar with the LIS publishing industry. The eight monograph publishers were: ACRL, ALA Editions, Chandos, Facet, Libraries Unlimited, Library Juice, McFarland, and Rowman & Littlefield. To help us identify changes in recent trends over time, we collected information on titles published from 2015-2017 on topics that would be of interest to academic librarians. We narrowed the titles to those written in English.

The data collection was evenly divided between the two researchers, four publishers each for all three years of the study. We agreed that we would compile our list of monographs by reviewing publisher catalogs (if available) and websites for the years of the study. For publishers with catalogs, some titles may not have been released until after the printing of their 2017 catalog, so we also examined 2018 catalogs to make sure all titles published in 2017 were recorded. All of the relevant titles that fit the criteria of our study were collected in a Google Sheet and available to both researchers at any time.

To ensure uniformity in data collection between the two researchers, each data point had a corresponding explanation or process; we have included only the relevant data points for this paper in Table 1. For example, to determine the correct author gender as identified by the author themselves, we examined author biographies or conducted web searches to look for pronouns. For data points that necessitated a selection from a list of options, definitions were provided (Table 2). Both the process and definitions were available in the Google Sheet for quick referral.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data points collected and explanation or process for collection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics (primary and secondary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of monograph</td>
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<th>TABLE 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitions for topic designation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Point</td>
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</table>
| Topics (primary and secondary) | **Research Support (includes subject liaison):** Materials relating to aspects of research support except for teaching, reference, or collection development. Can also be materials supporting subject liaison librarians.  
**Teaching/Instruction/Education:** Materials relating to aspects of teaching, instruction, or education in general. Can include topics such as consultations or one-shots of subject liaisons.  
**Reference:** Materials relating to the act of providing reference services by librarians or library staff.  
**Collection Development:** Materials relating to the act of developing a collection for the library (includes print and online); includes cataloging and deselection of materials  
**Leadership/Management/Administration:** Materials relating to the administration and management of libraries. Can also include materials on leadership or taking a lead. |
Once we collected all monograph titles that fit our criteria for inclusion, we checked each other’s lists against holdings in Worldcat (https://www.worldcat.org/) and Amazon (https://www.amazon.com/) by searching for publishers and limiting to monographs published between 2015-2017. In analyzing the collected data, we downloaded the Google Sheet into an Excel Spreadsheet and used Microsoft Excel.

Results and Discussion
For the years 2015-2017, we identified 431 titles on all topics of interest to academic librarians across the eight major LIS publishers. There was a total of 678 creators (a general term we used for authors and editors). Distribution of the number of titles and creators by year and the total for the three years can be found in Table 3.

| TABLE 3 |
| Distribution of titles and creators |
| Count of Titles | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Year Total |
| Count of Creators | 213 | 231 | 234 | 678 |

Gender and Creatorship
Unlike some of the previous research indicating that, in both male-dominated and non-male-dominated disciplines, the majority of scholarly publications are by men, our study found that in the female-dominated profession of librarianship, the majority of scholarly monographs have been created or co-created by women. An aggregate of all three years showed that female creators made up 63% of all creators (Table 4). This percentage was similar when we analyzed first listed creators, where 60.8% were female (Table 5). An examination of the distribution of creators, total number as well as first listed creators, showed that in both situations, women’s contributions to LIS books increased year over year while men’s contributions decreased year over year (Table 4 and Table 5).
We compared the percentages of LIS monograph creators to national percentages of gender in librarianship and found that, even though there were more women monograph creators than men, there was a gender gap and men were more heavily represented in LIS academic monograph literature than they were in the profession. Definitive demographic data of academic librarians is sparse, but unpublished data from the 2015 and 2018 ACRL membership surveys indicated that the female academic librarian population was steady at 77% of survey respondents for both years. When compared with our data, assuming that ACRL membership numbers stay at around 77% female from 2015-2017, there is at least a 9% gender gap where male voices were more represented in LIS monographs. Broader demographic data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that women made up 79-83% of librarians, showing a 10-27% gender gap depending on year (Figure 1). Our findings suggest that this gender gap is closing and monograph works created by women are becoming more aligned with the total population of female librarians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5</th>
<th>Distribution of first creators by gender</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015 n=139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016 n=146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017 n=146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015–2017 n=431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female First Creator</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male First Creator</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender and Collaborations**

Of the 183 collaboratively created works, there were 250 collaborators total; 168 (67.2%) were women, indicating that a large number of women collaborated on LIS monograph publishing projects. Women's willingness to collaborate was seen most prominently when a woman was leading the collaboration. 122 titles listed the first creator as a woman, and these women chose to collaborate with another person or entity, regardless of gender, 46.6% of the time (Table 6). Women listed as the first creator worked with 167 collaborators over 122 titles, mak-
ing an average of 1.37 contributors per title; men worked with 83 collaborators over 61 titles, an average of 1.36 contributors per title. Yearly trends comparing co-created monograph works by the gender of the first creator showed that women were increasingly leading collaborative book projects, while there was a decrease in men leading collaborative book projects (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 6</th>
<th>Single and co-created titles and gender of first or solo author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Created Titles</td>
<td>Co-Created Titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>140 (53.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>108 (83.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Gender</td>
<td>248 (57.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 2**
Comparison of co-created works by gender of first creator

Besides being more likely to collaborate as first creators, women also tended to work with other women. Of the 183 co-created titles, more than half (54.1% or 99 titles) were created solely by two or more women creators (Table 7). Of the 122 titles where the first creator was a woman, the second creator was also a woman 72.7% of the time (Table 8). For men, when they collaborated, a woman was their second creator 57.3% of the time, and male-only created titles attributed for only 11.5% of all co-created titles (Table 8).

Although research collaborations in LIS periodicals literature are common, co-created LIS monographs are less common at 42.5%; both men and women tended to individually create titles. Nevertheless, these findings on gender and collaborations mirror some aspects of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7</th>
<th>Majority or one-gender-only titles, all three years of study</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-Created Titles (n=183)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women-only Titles</td>
<td>84 titles (45.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men-only Titles</td>
<td>21 titles (11.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Majority Titles</td>
<td>99 titles* (54.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Majority Titles</td>
<td>32 titles* (17.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Women and Men Titles</td>
<td>49 titles** (26.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total includes women-only/male-only titles
**Total excludes titles where there is a creator with no gender denoted
studies on periodicals publishing: Women are more likely to lead a collaborative LIS book publishing project, work with slightly more collaborators when they do, and lean toward working with other women.\textsuperscript{45,46,47} Mathews and Andersen’s study of edited political science books and gender speculated that contributions for edited works were often based on connections among scholars; this may also be the case in selection of monograph contributions and collaborators.

**Gender and topic of research**

Our research divided LIS books published for a primarily academic audience into 10 main general topics: Research Support; Teaching/Instruction/Education; Reference; Collection Development; Leadership/Management/Administration; Data/Technology; Museums/Archives; Scholarly Communication; Outreach/Partnerships/Collaborations; and Professional Development. We found that the topics of leadership and library administration/management (111 titles), data and technology (91 titles), and teaching, instruction, or education (70 titles) made up more than \(\frac{2}{3}\) of the primary topics published (Figure 3).

Female creators and co-creators made up the majority of authors and editors for all topic categories we identified. Of the three highest represented topics, the greatest gender gap was seen in monographs on teaching, instruction, or education (Figure 4).

While women are more likely to be the primary creator of LIS books on all topics, they are much more likely to be the primary creator of works on Professional Development (76.92%), Reference (75%), and Teaching/Instruction/Education (72.86%). Museums/Archives (58.33%), Leadership/Management/Administration (55.86%), Scholarly Communication (52.94%), and Data/Technology (52.75%) are closer to having an equal number of female and male primary creators (Figure 5).

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Male First Creator} & \textbf{Female Second Creator} & \textbf{Male Second Creator} \\
\hline
122 titles & 88 titles (72.7\%) & 34 titles (27.3\%) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3}
\caption{Distribution of topics for all titles published in 2015-2017}
\end{figure}
Our data indicates that gender could impact the published topics in LIS books. By the number of titles published, the top two topic areas from 2015 through 2017 were Leadership/Management/Administration (111 titles) and Data/Technology (91 titles). 202 of 431 LIS monographs for academic librarians, or 46.87%, fell under these topics, which both have a close to equal number of female and male primary creators. Judging the impact of gender on the topics of published LIS monographs is complicated by the publisher’s concern for the marketplace: Published monographs represent both what the authors want to write about as well as what topics the publishers think will sell.

Limitations of Study
We acknowledge the limited years of the study which may make it difficult to determine long-term trends, but believe that even with this limitation, the study fills in a research gap in understanding LIS monograph publishing.

Conclusion
Our study aimed to answer questions related to gender and creatorship, gender and collaborations, and gender and research topics in LIS monograph publishing. The data we collected showed that in the female-dominated profession of librarianship, the majority of scholarly monograph works have been created or co-created by women. Even so, there is an overrepresentation of publications by men when compared to the overall demographics of librarianship. The data also showed that women are more likely to lead a collaborative LIS book publishing project, work with slightly more collaborators when they do, and lean toward working with other women. Additionally, women and men publish on different topics, and data indicates that gender could impact the published topics in LIS books.

We recognize that there are social and economic forces that encourage and motivate librarians to publish a monograph, and that the same forces are considerations for publishers when determining whether or not to accept a monograph for publication. Therefore, more work is needed in understanding LIS monograph publications. One area of future investigation includes the potential of LIS monograph publishing bias against historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups; gender or sexual identities and expressions; nationality or language; those who experience socio-economic barriers; and people geographically isolated. Another area of investigation could look at the correspondence of changing trends in LIS publishing to trends in the profession of librarianship.

Endnotes
6. Olsgaard and Olsgaard, 50-51.
15. Cline, 214.
16. Terry, 381.
25. Mathews and Andersen, 146.
26. Terry, 380-381.
27. Terry, 380-381.
28. Mathews and Andersen, 146.
33. Su et al, 865.
34. Knobloch-Westerwick, Glynn, and Huge, 608.
36. Buttlar, 48-49.
37. Adamson and Zamora, 237.
38. Buttlar, 50.
40. Lubienski, Miller, and Saclarides, 80.
43. Terry, 381.
44. Luo and McKinney, 125.
45. Terry, 381.
46. Matthews and Andersen, 146.
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