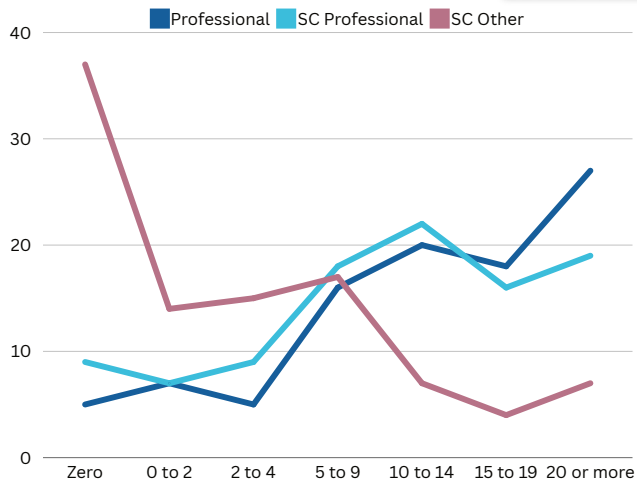# Moving Forward: Membership

Rebecca Bramlett, MIT Libraries;
Eric Friede, Yale University;

Our Members

Professional **SC Professional** **SC Other**

(x-axis: Zero, 0 to 2, 2 to 4, 5 to 9, 10 to 14, 15 to 19, 20 or more)

Our Years of Service

Over **75%** of respondents reported working in professional special collections position 5 or more years. Compared to 2015 results there was a **10%** increase in the responses for 10+ years.

Our Gender and Race/Ethnic Identities

The most common choices for gender (male or female) and race/ethnic identity (white) slightly decreased since 2015. **No Answer** doubled as a response in gender and decreased by two-thirds in race. Respondents selected multiple answers in race twice as often in 2023 as in 2015.

2015 **2023**

(x-axis: Under 25, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 and older)
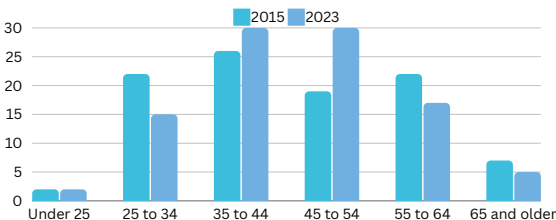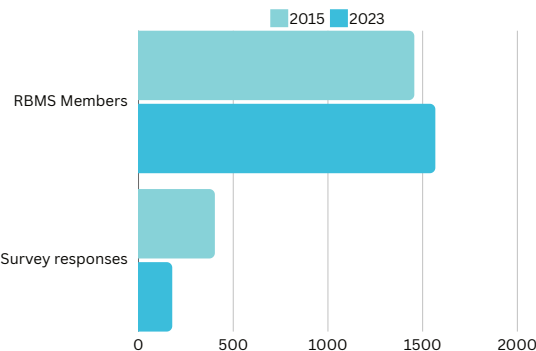
Our Ages

60% of respondents reported being between 35 and 54. Compared to 2015 results there were decreases in both younger and older respondents.

Survey Administration

Survey Response Rate

2015 **2023**

(categories: RBMS Members, Survey responses)

2015: 28% response rate
2023: 6.4% response rate

The 2023 survey was administered to members through Qualtrics via the ALA Connect RBMS Community and promoted on RBMS social media.

The 2015 survey was administered to members through Qualtrics via the RBMS list-serv

The purpose of the survey is to gauge the interests, goals, regional hubs, and priorities of RBMS' membership.
The results of the survey will help RBMS Executive Committee shape task forces and committees, plan conferences and professional development offerings, and identify areas where outreach has succeeded (and failed) and can be expanded.

Changes to 2023 survey

Changes to the 2023 survey include removing:
- a section on previous jobs
- questions about current institution (including number of staff, size of collection)
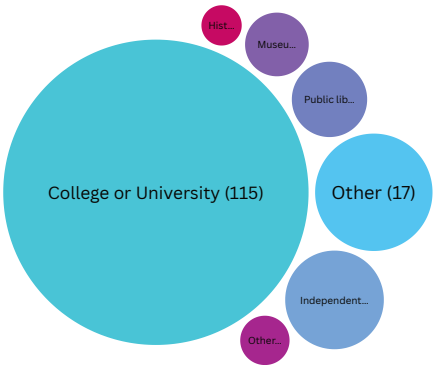- questions on ALA and ACRL conference attendance

* A version of this infographic was presented by the authors, under the same title, as part of the RBMS 2023 conference.

and the Future of RBMS*

Sophia Dahab, Free Library of Philadelphia;
and Michael Seminara, Johns Hopkins University

Our Careers

The top 5 most common job titles have not changed significantly since 2015, though the rankings have shifted slightly and the number of catalogers has increased

College or University (115)
Hist.
Museu...
Public lib...
Other (17)
Independent...
Other...

Legend (pie chart):
- Director or Assoc./Assist. Director Level
- Department Head or Assoc./Assist. Department Head
- Special Collections Librarian
- Outreach and/or Instruction
- Cataloger (all formats)
- Curator (all formats)
- Bookdealer
- Archivist
- Other

Bar chart legend: 2023 (n=161), 2015 (n=369), 1997 (n=185)
*the top salary option in the 1997 survey was "$80,000 and over"

X-axis: Under $30,000; $30-$39,999; $40-$49,999; $50-$59,999; $60-$69,999; $70-$79,999; $80-$89,999; $90-$99,999; $100,000+; N/A

Our Institutions

Over 71% of respondents reported working in a college or university library. Of those who chose "other," the write-in fields included non-profits, government libraries, LIS programs, and institutions that fit into more than one of the options provided.
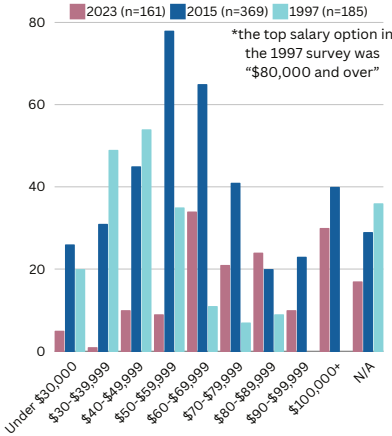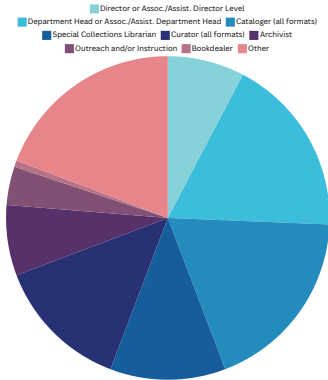
Our Salaries

The average reported salary in 2023 was $77,290, a **22%** increase over the 2015 average, $63,205. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports an inflation rate of **29%** over that same period.

Our Involvement in RBMS

Conferences

59% of respondents have attended the RBMS Conference in the last two years (19% increase from the 2015 survey)

Committees

35% of respondents have held at least one RBMS Committee or Task Force appointment (unchanged from the 2015 survey)

Where RBMS can improve

Diversity of membership **20%**
Expense **16%**
Communication **12%**
Relationship with ACRL and ALA **12%**

"Inclusivity and diversity, the conference does a great job of addressing these issues but in practice, the industry is not as progressive"

Which new or expanded initiatives would you like to see RBMS pursue?

"Digital preservation; collaboration between repositories (academic, non-academic; specialized; private; historical societies; other cultural heritage organizations) to engage in new ways of making special collections and archives relevant and accessible to all communities"

What are the most critical issues facing our profession?

1. Building diverse collections
2. Salaries
3. Institutional support for conferences
4. Funds for collection development
5. Burnout

Would you like to be more active in RBMS ?

48% YES   52% NO
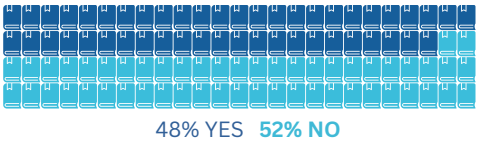
"Building more diverse and inclusive collections and a more diverse and inclusive profession; continuing to build interest in and demonstrate the value of consulting primary sources…"