

U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2002 Graduates

This past year the School conducted its 15th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. In 2002, 24 students graduated with MLIS degrees, 17 of whom are represented in this survey (71%, comparable to the 2001 graduating class at 70%, but under the 89% rate for 2000 graduates). The 2002 survey was conducted in July and August 2003, just over a year after spring convocation.

Summary

All 17 of the 2002 graduates responding to the survey reported employment in library and information studies at some time since graduation, with 16 working at the time of the survey (94%). This echoes the high overall placement rates of MLIS graduates during the past decade or so, in the range of 75% to 100%.

Employment prospects, however, appeared to be somewhat less promising than for those of graduates from the previous two years, 2001 and 2000. Fewer than half of the 2002 graduates employed held full-time permanent positions, compared to 71% of the 2001 cohort and 76% of the 2000 cohort; even in earlier years the range was from 50% to 60%. Nor did salaries grow: the median annual salary was \$41,000, the same as for the 2001 cohort.

Comparison of first and current placements shows that slightly more than half of the 2002 graduates changed jobs at least once during their first year after graduation compared with 65% of graduates in the two previous years. Almost all of the 2002 graduates obtained their first position within three months of graduation, similar to earlier years, and only 5 graduates in 2002 (25%) indicated at the time of the survey that they were still seeking more satisfactory employment.

This level of job satisfaction was similar to the experience of graduates of the two previous years but in marked contrast to that of 1999 graduates, of whom half were still looking for better positions. The most common ways in which the 2002 graduates learned about their positions were word-of-mouth, the SLIS job board, and various listservs.

The most frequent employers of the 2002 graduates echoed 2001 patterns, with special libraries supplying one-third of placements. Also similar to the previous cohort, two-thirds of the 2002 graduates found employment in Alberta, with most staying in Edmonton and a few in Calgary. Emigration patterns were similar to previous years as well, with 19% of 2002 graduates going to the U.S. for work; in 2001 it was 14%.

Most of the 2002 graduates gained library or archival work experience either before or during their MLIS program, generally similar to the experience of previous cohorts, with almost all working during the program even if they had prior experience.

Placement

All 17 of the 2002 graduates represented in the survey were employed in library and information services at some time since graduation. With one graduate unemployed at the time of the survey, the placement rate for 2002 graduates was 94%, similar to graduates in the three previous years (86% to 100%).

At survey time, 13 out of 16 (81%) of the 2002 graduates in the survey reported full-time positions, comparable to 90% of the 2001 cohort and 93% of the 2000 cohort. However, only 7 out of 16

graduates (44%) held permanent placements, a rate substantially lower than for 2001 graduates (71%) and 2000 graduates (76%), and even for graduates in earlier years when rates hovered around 50% to 60%. Three of the 2002 graduates were working part time when the survey was conducted.

Nine of the 17 graduates (53%) had worked in a temporary position at some point since graduation: 6 had each held one temporary position, 1 had two, and 2 had three. Among graduates from 2001, 43% had worked in a temporary position at some point, among 2000 graduates it was 52%, and among 1999 graduates it was 60%.

Six of the 2002 graduates (37%) held full-time temporary placements at the time of the survey, ranging in duration from 6 weeks to 4 years; other periods reported were 4 months, 7 months, and 2 years (two people). Among 2001 graduates, only 19% had full-time temporary placements and among 2000 graduates it was 17%; however, among 1999 graduates, 32% were still in such positions at the time of their survey.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	7	44%
Full-time temporary	6	37%
Part-time	3	19%
TOTAL	16	100%

Employment Sector

Special libraries (including government) were the most frequent employers of 2002 graduates (37%), followed by research groups (19%). Among 2001 graduates, special libraries had been the most frequent employers (33%), while public libraries ranked second (28%) and academic libraries third (24%). Among 2000 graduates, public and regional libraries ranked first (39%), with special libraries second (21%) and academic libraries a distant third (14%). Among 1999 graduates, special and academic libraries supplied one-third each of the placements, while public and regional libraries accounted for 20%.

Current Placement Setting	Number	Percentage
Special libraries	6	37%
Research groups	3	19%
Public libraries	2	13%
School libraries	2	13%
Post-secondary libraries	1	6%
Public-college library	1	6%
Vendor	1	6%
TOTAL	16	100%

Current job titles and positions reported by the 2002 graduates were diverse: Librarian (2), Corporate Librarian, Library Coordinator, Reference Librarian, Research Librarian, Research/Reference Librarian, Adult Reference Librarian, Public Services Librarian, Adult Reference Librarian, Library and Research Coordinator, Training and Special Projects Coordinator, Liaison Librarian, Collections and Web Librarian, Metadata Librarian / Cataloguer, Digital Librarian, Intern, and Library Technician.

Primary job assignments were reference/information services (5), administration/management (1), cataloguing (1), government documents (1), indexing/abstracting (1), information literacy

instruction (1), web manager (1), new product development and project management (1), and records management (1). Three respondents indicated multiple task assignments.

Location

Similar to the work locations of 2001 graduates, Alberta provided almost two-thirds of the current placements for 2002 graduates (10 out of 16); this was higher than the pattern in 2000 at 48% and in 1999 at 58%. Three graduates in 2002 (19%) went to the United States for work, similar to the 2001 graduates (14%), 2000 graduates (17%), and 1999 graduates (20%). Another graduate went to Mexico. Other work locations reported by 2002 graduates were British Columbia (1) and Saskatchewan (1).

Most of the Alberta placements were in Edmonton (6 out of 10 graduates or 60%), while for 2001 it was 71%, for 2000 it was 86%, and for 1999 it was 79%. Three of the 2002 placements were in Calgary.

Salaries

Annual salaries reported by 2002 graduates with full-time permanent positions in Canada ranged from \$34,000 to \$51,500, with a median of \$41,000 and a mean of \$41,900. Among the 2001 graduates with similar positions in Canada, the median salary was \$41,000 and the mean was \$39,350, suggesting little if any gain for 2002 graduates. For 2001 graduates, in contrast, remuneration increased by \$3,000 over the median salary from the year before.

The median salary reported by 2002 graduates with full-time permanent positions in the United States was \$36,000 US, the same as among 2001 graduates; 2001 graduates earned \$1,000 more than the year before.

Five graduates in 2002 holding full-time temporary positions in Canada reported earnings of \$3,300 to \$5,500 per month (median and mean \$4,200 per month), a \$1,000 increase over 2001 graduates, a \$1,030 increase over 2000 graduates, and a \$1,850 increase over 1999 graduates. Part-time positions paid between \$18.00 and \$23.00 per hour; among 2001 graduates the range was \$16.00 to \$23.00 per hour.

Job Searching

Some 29% of 2002 graduates found their first position before graduation (5 out of 17), and 88% within three months of graduation. This was very similar to the 2001 graduates, 30% of whom had found their first position before graduation and 80% within three months of graduation. However, far more 2000 graduates had positions before graduating (76%), while 90% had found their first position within three months of graduation; 1999 graduates were similar to 2000 graduates, with 77% having found their first position before graduation and 81% within three months of graduation.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	3	17%	---	---
Before graduation	2	12%	2	29%
Within 3 months of graduation	10	59%	1	14%
3 to 6 months after graduation	1	6%	---	---
More than 6 months after graduation	1	6%	4	57%
TOTAL	17	100%	7	100%

*if different from first

Survey data also show that 9 of the 17 graduates represented in the 2002 survey (53%) changed jobs at least once during their first year after graduation. This was somewhat similar to the experience of graduates in 2001 (65%) and in the two years prior.

One-quarter of the 2002 graduates found their positions through word-of-mouth (5 mentions) that included friends, relatives, and co-workers from previous jobs. Other information sources included: the SLIS job board at the University of Alberta (3 mentions); listservs (3 mentions); the FLA jobline (2 mentions); and job postings (2 mentions).

Source of Job Information	Number of Sources (1st& current positions)	Percentage
word-of-mouth	5	24%
SLIS job board	3	14%
listserv	3	14%
FLA jobline Web site	2	9%
job posting	2	9%
ALA conference	1	5%
conference networking	1	5%
internal information	1	5%
JEROME-L listserv	1	5%
library association Web site	1	5%
unsolicited letter	1	5%
TOTAL	21	100%

Among 2001 graduates, the FLA jobline was the most frequent source of information (6 mentions), followed by word-of-mouth (4 mentions), the U of A SLIS job board (3 mentions), newspaper advertisements (3 mentions), and the JEROME-L listserv (2 mentions). Among 2000 graduates, three-quarters mentioned word-of-mouth, the SLIS job board, the FLA job line, JEROME-L, and the ALA annual conference job fair. Graduates from 1999 mentioned word-of-mouth and the U of A SLIS job board as their most frequent sources of information.

Future Prospects

All survey respondents were asked about job satisfaction with their current work situation. Five graduates in 2002 (29%) indicated they were still seeking more satisfactory employment; among 2001 graduates it was 25% and among 2000 graduates it was 14%. These patterns are in marked contrast with graduates in prior years: 48% of 1999 graduates and 43% of 1998 graduates reported to be still looking for better positions at the time of the annual survey. Among the 2002 graduates, three were seeking full-time permanent positions, one a part-time position, and another either arrangement. Preferences were for academic libraries, public libraries, or special libraries, and one graduate indicated a medical/nursing library.

Library Work Experience

Fourteen of the 17 graduates in 2002 (82%) obtained library or archival experience either before or during their MLIS program. This was generally similar to the work experience of graduates in the three previous years: 86% in 2001, 97% in 2000, and 90% in 1999.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS - before (9 out of 17 or 53%) - during (15 out of 17 or 88%)	14	82%
Neither	1	6%
No response	2	12%
TOTAL	17	100%

** excludes for-credit field placements and practicums*

Also similar to previous years was the very high proportion of 2002 graduates who working during their MLIS program, 88%, compared with 86% in 2001, 94% in 2000, and 83% in 1999.

Demographics

Of the 17 graduates represented in the survey, 16 were females and 1 was male, 94% and 6% respectively, a ratio somewhat similar to the full 2002 graduating class of 24 students consisting of 88% females and 12% males; among the 30 graduates in 2001, 93% were females and 7% males.

The average age for the graduating class of 2002 was 34 years at graduation, comparable to the norm over the last decade or so which has ranged between 29 and 34 years of age.

Academic patterns for degrees earned prior to the MLIS for 2002 graduates represented in the survey were as follows: 11 held the BA, 1 the BSc, 1 the BEd, 1 the MA, and 1 the MBA.

Thanks to all who responded to the annual survey and trusted us with personal data, particularly salary and wage information, for this aggregate analysis that preserves individual privacy.

*Alvin M. Schrader
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