

U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2009 Graduates

During April–May 2010, the School conducted its 22nd annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. The response rate was 42% (14 out of 33 MLIS graduates), lower than in previous years so some caution should be exercised in extrapolating from the survey results. The 2009 survey was conducted almost a year after the spring class convocated, with a small number of fall 2009 graduates also included.

Summary

Almost all of the 14 graduates in 2009 who responded to the annual survey had been employed in library and information services at some point since graduation, and 12 were still working at the time of the survey. However, looking at the nature of their employment, only 8 had full-time positions, while the other 4 held part-time, short-term contracts. This contrasts with the 2008 cohort, all of whom reported full-time status, and among 2007 graduates, the figure was 83%. Four of the 2009 cohort had only part-time positions at the time of the survey.

Altogether, only half of the graduates reporting in 2009 had just one placement each since graduation, while 2 had three placements and 4 had two.

Annual salaries reported by 4 graduates with full-time permanent positions ranged from \$43,000 to \$60,000, with a median of \$45,591. To the extent the survey data may be compared over time, the median salary for 20 comparable graduates in 2008 was \$55,574. Public libraries accounted for almost 60% of the placements in 2009.

All 6 responding graduates in 2009 found their first positions within three months of graduation, and among those who changed positions by the time of the survey, 3 positions took less than six months after graduation to find while 2 took longer than that. As in previous years, electronic sources accounted for the majority of placements.

Placement

All but 1 of 14 reporting graduates in 2009 (93%) said they were employed in library and information services at some point since graduation and in fact 12 of them were still working at the time of the survey, although 8 (61%) had changed positions in the interim. These placement rates are similar to previous cohorts, with 94% employed in the field since graduation among 2008 graduates and 66% having changed positions. In the six years earlier, 2007 to 2002, placements rates were 97%, 100%, 96%, 85%, 93%, and 100%, respectively. The 2009 graduate who had not worked in the field after graduation was still seeking a relevant position at the time of the survey one year later.

However, looking at the nature of employment secured at the time of the 2009 survey, only 8 of the 12 employed graduates (67%) were working full time, in either permanent or temporary positions. All of the 2008 graduates reported full-time status; among 2007 graduates, the figure was 83%. Four of the 2009 cohort had only part-time positions at the time of the survey.

Four graduates in 2009 reported having had both temporary and permanent positions at some point since graduation, including 1 who had held two temporary positions. Two graduates had one temporary position each at some point since graduation, 1 reported two temporary positions, and 1 had three. Four others reported just one permanent position since graduation. Altogether, only half of the 12 graduates reporting in 2009 had just one placement each since graduation, while 2 had three placements and 4 had two.

Of the 4 graduates in 2009 holding full-time temporary positions at the time of the survey, contracts ranged from 4 months to 11 months, with a median of 8.5 months. This is 3.5 months less than the median for graduates of the previous three years. One graduate commented, “The survey makes it look like I have been successful in finding library employment because I was hired on a succession of very short contracts. Two of these contracts lasted for 70 hours.”

Four graduates in 2009 held part-time employment at the time of the survey, one graduate reporting a permanent position and one a part-time position, and one both a permanent part-time position and a temporary part-time position.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	4	33%
Full-time temporary	4	33
Part-time status	4	33
TOTAL	12	99%

Salaries

Annual salaries reported by 4 graduates in 2009 with full-time permanent positions ranged from \$43,000 to \$60,000, with a median of \$45,591 (mean \$48,545). To the extent the survey data may be compared over time, the median salary for 20 comparable graduates in 2008 was \$55,574 (mean \$55,774).

Median earnings reported by 4 graduates in 2009 holding full-time contract positions at the time of the survey were \$3,400 per month (mean \$3,475), ranging from \$2,600 to \$4,500 monthly. Among 8 comparable graduates in 2008, median earnings were \$3,625 per month (mean \$3,919).

The 3 graduates in 2009 holding part-time positions, permanent and temporary, were paid between \$19.22 and \$33.00 per hour for placements ranging from 15 to 28 hours per week.

Employment Sector

Among 2009 graduates, 7 placements (58%) since graduation were in public libraries, 2 were in post-secondary institution libraries, 2 in government libraries, and 1 in archives. To the extent that these data can be extrapolated, they show a decrease in employment in post-secondary institution libraries from the previous three cohorts.

All Placements since Graduation	Number	Percentage
Public libraries	7	58%
Post-secondary libraries	2	17
Special (Government) libraries	2	17
Archives	1	8
TOTAL	12	100%

Titles and positions of all positions held since graduation by 2009 graduates were two each as Librarian or Reference Librarian, and one each as Community Librarian, Adult/Young Adult Librarian, Youth Services Librarian, Law Librarian, Cataloguer, Archives Researcher, and Library Assistant for Adult and Teen Services.

Graduates in 2009 described their job assignments, both primary and secondary, as mainly reference/information services, cataloguing, circulation, collections, information literacy instruction, youth and children's services, materials processing, community outreach, project leader/developer, web content developer, current awareness, and collections work.

Location

Half of the 2009 graduates listed Edmonton as home, generally echoing previous cohorts from 2008 back to 2003. Other Alberta locations in 2009 were Calgary (3 graduates) and Grande Prairie (1 graduate).

Altogether, 79% or 11 graduates stayed in Alberta, also generally echoing previous cohorts. Other work locations reported by 2009 graduates were 1 each in Saskatoon, Toronto, and Victoria.

Job Search Time Frame

All 6 responding graduates in 2009 found their first positions within three months of graduation. Among those who changed positions by the time of the survey, 3 positions took less than six months after graduation to find, while 2 took longer than that.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	1	17%	---	
Before graduation	2	33	---	
Within 3 months of graduation	3	50	2	40%
3 to 6 months after graduation	---		1	20
More than 6 months after graduation	---		2	40
TOTAL	6	100%	5	100%

**if different from first*

Job Search Sources

Graduates in 2009 found more than half of their positions, whether first or current, through electronic sources, while word of mouth accounted for 1 in 3 sources. Two other positions were identified through internal library postings.

Job Search Sources*	Number of Sources	Percentage
Listservs and job sites	8	57%
listserv	2	
JEROME-L	2	
FLA job line	1	
Partnership website	1	
Alberta government job site	1	
library website	1	
Word of mouth	4	29
SLIS faculty	2	
SLIS classmates	1	
Library colleagues	1	
Internal posting	2	14
TOTAL	14	100%

** first and current positions*

Library Work Experience

By graduation in 2009, all 14 of the responding cohort had gained work experience in libraries, archives, or other information-related positions.

This pattern paralleled cohorts in the previous nine years 2008 to 2000, ranging from 82% to 100%. All of the 2009 graduates were employed in such positions during their MLIS program, and 8 had also gained previous relevant experience.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS - before (8) - during (14)	6	43%
Both before and during MLIS	8	57
Neither	---	
TOTAL	14	100%

* *excludes for-credit field placements and practicums*

MLIS Program Professional Career Preparation

Two key areas of curricular knowledge and skills acquired in the MLIS program that 2009 graduates thought helped them most in securing their positions, both first and currently held, were subject specialization (5 mentions) and practicum (5 mentions), followed by 3 mentions of management, marketing, and communication skills, 2 mentions of type of library environment, and 1 mention of technology skills. Also reported were language skills and “directed study work and papers customized to explore the emerging field of community development librarianship.”

General reaction by 2009 graduates to their MLIS program experience was somewhat mixed, with several commenting that more practical application was needed. When they were asked to describe their program experience “in a word,” responses ranged from useless, tiring, or political to alright, good, challenging, enjoyable, and life-changing. One graduate said students received a solid background in theory, concepts, and ethics but that technology training was poor. Another wrote, “I enjoyed the content of most, not all, courses and the camaraderie among students. I enjoyed the staff, too.”

Demographic Profile

Of the 14 survey respondents among the 2009 class, 11 were women and 3 were men, 79% and 21%, respectively. This was very similar to the 2008 and 2007 cohorts. The average age at graduation for the class of 2009 was 33 years, also comparable to the range in ages of the previous three decades or so, 29 to 35 years old.

Graduates in 2009 reported academic degree patterns similar to those of previous years. There were 7 BAs, 1 BEd, 1 BComm, 1 MA, 2 MScs, and 2 PhDs. Disciplinary majors were English (3 graduates), History (2), and one each in Biological Sciences (Secondary Education), Biology, Business, Business and Latin American Studies, Classical Studies, Comparative Literature, History of Art and Design, Languages and Linguistics, Literature, and Religious Studies.

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

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