

U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2013 Graduates

During July-August 2014, the School conducted its 25th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. The response rate was 64% (35 out of 55 MLIS graduates). This response rate is much higher than previous years (42% for 2009, 40% for 2010, and 48% for 2011 graduates). Due to a technical error, the Employment Survey of the 2012 class was not undertaken and thus cannot be used for comparative purposes. However, the 2011 placement survey data (11 respondents) and the 2010 placement survey data (18 respondents) are being used when and where they are appropriate. The 2013 survey was conducted approximately one year after the spring class convocated, with 12 fall 2012 graduates also included.

Summary

Twenty-nine out of thirty-five reporting graduates in 2013 (83%) said they were employed in library and information services at some point since graduation; four of the six respondents reported that they were still seeking work in LIS. However, just over two-thirds (69%) had changed positions by the time of the survey, a slightly lower proportion than the three-quarters reported by the 2010 cohort, suggesting a somewhat unstable job market. In fact, 2 graduates reported having had three placements each, 1 held four jobs, and 1 reported holding “several” positions.

Another important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. Thirteen out of 28 responding graduates (47%) said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey. This percentage is a decline from 60% of responding graduates from the 2010 survey, which indicates greater job satisfaction among the 2013 cohort. Sixteen of the 35 respondents were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey, preferably full-time employment in a wide variety of library and information settings including public and academic libraries, archives, research units, and records management. Seven respondents reported willingness to work in any sector including consulting work and areas outside of libraries. The median salary expectation for full-time work was \$60,000 and the expected hourly wage for part-time work was \$22.50.

To the extent the survey data may be compared over time, salaries of 2013 graduates have increased from those reported in the survey of 2010 graduates. Median earnings by 2013 graduates with full-time permanent positions were \$63,086 (mean \$61,835). The median earnings by 2010 graduates with full-time permanent positions were \$55,500 (mean \$53,450). The median salary for 20 comparable graduates in 2013 was \$8,086 more than the 2010 graduates earned. Sixty-nine percent of reporting graduates listed Edmonton as their current location compared to 50% of the 2010 graduates.

Almost half (49%) of the placements reported (11 out of 23) by the 2013 graduates at the time of the survey were in public libraries. Two respondents were in post-secondary institutions, 1 was in a regional library, 1 was in archives, 1 was in records management, and 1 was in a research unit. Twenty-six percent, or 6 respondents, were in other positions such as government, the corporate sector, Alberta Health, law, and university administration. This is a very different employment landscape compared to the 2011 graduates where post-secondary institution libraries accounted for 57% of placements and from the 2010 graduates where post-secondary institution libraries accounted for 28% of placements and where 2 respondents were in school libraries, and 1 was in public libraries. Most frequently mentioned job assignments among the 2013 cohort were reference/information services, followed closely by youth and children's services and administrative/management. Other job assignments included Web manager, information literacy instruction, and marketing/outreach.

Ten out of 28 respondents (36%) found their first position within three months of graduating. This is a notable change from 2010 where 12 out of 15 (80%) and 2011 where 5 out of 7 (71%) graduates found their first positions within three months of graduating. As in recent years, graduates found the majority of their positions through electronic sources.

Most of the 2013 graduates were generally positive about their MLIS program experiences. Key areas of curricular knowledge and skills acquired in the MLIS program that helped graduates most in securing their positions were subject specialization (53%), technology skills (27%), management, marketing, and communications (20%), and practicum (13%). This is a very different configuration from the 2011 graduates who ranked type of library environment, subject specialization, and technology skills as most helpful and the 2010 graduates who rated technology skills, subject specialization, and practicum as their most helpful knowledge and skills acquired. “Top of mind” reactions to their programs ranged from “a tough haul”, hectic, fluffy, and ok to diverse, worthwhile, networking, great, useful, positive, memorable, extremely rewarding, valuable, and Mackey.

Placement

Twenty-nine out of thirty-five reporting graduates in 2013 (83%) said they were employed in library and information services at some point since graduation. However, 19 of the 28 (68%) had changed positions by the time of the survey, suggesting a somewhat unstable job market. Among 2010 graduates, a slightly higher proportion (three-quarters) had also changed positions since graduation. Six respondents mentioned applying their MLIS degree outside the field in terms of securing a placement.

By the time of the survey, 9 graduates out of 29 in 2013 had worked in both permanent and temporary positions. Of the eleven respondents who did not hold a permanent position, all held at least one temporary position since graduating. One graduate reported having had two permanent and two temporary positions while another graduate reported holding four temporary positions.

Altogether, 24% (7 of 29) reported just one placement each (permanent or temporary), while 72% had two or more placements by the time of the survey, with 16 reporting two placements each, 2 reporting three, 2 reporting four, and 1 reporting more than four.

Twenty-three of the 27 placements at the time of the survey were full time, 14 of which were permanent positions and 9 were contracts ranging in time from 4 to 24 months with a median of 12 months. Four graduates had part-time placements, both permanent and contract arrangements.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	14	52%
Full-time temporary	9	33
Part-time	4	15
TOTAL	27	100%

Salaries

The median earnings for 2013 graduates holding full time permanent positions were \$63,086 and the mean was \$61,836. Of the fourteen respondents who reported their annual salaries from full-time permanent positions, salaries ranged from \$42,000 to \$77,000. The mean and median of salaries for the 2013 graduates is approximately \$8,000 more than median earnings of \$55,500

(mean \$53,450) for 10 graduates in 2010 holding full-time permanent positions. In 2010 graduates reported a greater range in salaries as well from \$28,000 to \$72,000 per year.

Eight graduates with full-time contract positions reported a monthly median salary of \$4,640, ranging from \$3,300 to \$5,700 per month. Contracts were for 4 to 24 months. Part-time positions at the time of the survey were reported by 4 graduates in 2013, with hours ranging from 4 to 20 per week and wages from \$24 to \$34 per hour. For the 3 reporting graduates in 2010, the hourly wage ranged from \$12 to \$50 per hour.

Employment Sector

Eleven of the 23 (48%) 2013 graduates who reported the type of organization they worked for had placements in public libraries at the time of the survey, 2 each were in post-secondary libraries, and 1 each were in a regional library, in archives, in records management, in a research unit, special library, policy analysis, law, government, Alberta Health Services, and university administration. This is a dramatic change from the 2010 graduates where 28% (five graduates) had placements in post-secondary libraries.

All Placements since Graduation	Number	Percentage
Public libraries	11	48%
Post-secondary libraries	2	9
Regional library	1	4
Special libraries	1	4
Archives	1	4
Research unit	1	4
Policy analysis	1	4
Law library	1	4
Alberta Health Services	1	4
University administration	1	4
Government	1	4
Records management	1	4
TOTAL	23	97%

* The total percentage of placements do not equal 100% because the percentage of 1 placement is 4.35%

Graduates in 2013 reported a variety of job titles, with 3 reporting Youth Services Librarian, 2 mentions each of Research Assistant, 2 mentions each of Reference Librarian including 1 mention of Head of Reference, and 1 mention each of Assistant Director, Research Administrative Assistant, Digital Literacy Coordinator, Document Management Coordinator, Systems Analyst, Policy Analyst, Human Resources, Director of Library Services, Special Projects Archivist, and Information Services Librarian.

Job assignments, both primary and secondary, were described as mainly reference/information services (6 mentions), administrative/management (6), information literacy instruction (3), collections (2), youth and children's services (2), and all functions (2). Mentioned once were acquisitions, Web manager, cataloguing, marketing, outreach, public relations, interlibrary loans, and archives.

Location

Sixty-nine percent of the 2013 reporting graduates listed Edmonton as their present location—a much higher percentage than the 2010 and 2009 surveys. Other Alberta locations in 2013 were

Calgary (1 graduate), Red Deer (1), Devon (1), Stony Plain (1), and Drumheller (1). Altogether, 83% or 29 graduates stayed in Alberta. Other work locations reported among 2013 graduates were 3 in Vancouver, 2 in Kamloops and 1 in Kelowna.

Job Search Time Frame

Twenty-eight respondents answered the question about their first position whereas 18 responded to the query about their current position. Thus, the total number of first positions and current positions reported are different. Ten out of 28 respondents (36%) found their first position within three months of graduating. This is a drastic change from 2010 where 12 out of 15 (80%) and 2011 where 5 out of 7 (71%) graduates found their first positions within three months of graduating.

Just two respondents (11%) found their current positions within three months of graduating. Sixty-one percent of respondents (11 out of 18) took more than six months to secure their current position. Sixty-eight percent of graduates surveyed have changed positions from their first position whereas 29% are currently in their first position.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	5	18%	1	5.5%
Before graduation	6	21	3	17
Within 3 months of graduation	10	36	2	11
3 to 6 months after graduation	4	14	1	5.5
More than 6 months after graduation	3	11	11	61
TOTAL	28	100%	18	100%

**if different from first*

Job Search Sources

Graduates in 2013 found half of their positions, whether first or current, through electronic sources and personal contacts.

Job Search Sources*	Number of Sources	Percentage
Listserves and job sites	18	78%
Libraryjobs.ca	1	
Workopolis	1	
listserv	6	
Library partnership site	1	
Company / library website	6	
Search engine	3	
Word of mouth and personal contacts	5	22
Library colleagues	2	
SLIS classmates	1	
Employed as a student	1	
Notified by human resources of another position	1	
TOTAL	23	100%

** first and current positions*

Library Work Experience

By graduation in 2013, 28 out of the 35 responding cohort (80%) had gained experience in libraries, archives, or other information-related positions. This percentage is slightly lower than percentages in the previous decade, which ranged from 82% to 100%. Sixteen of 35 graduates in 2013 reported relevant experience both before and during their MLIS programs.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS - before (18) - during (28)	14	40%
Both before and during MLIS	16	46
Neither	5	14
TOTAL	35	100%

* excludes for-credit field placements and practicums

MLIS Program Professional Career Preparation

A key area of curricular knowledge and skills acquired in the MLIS program that 2013 graduates thought helped them most in securing their positions, both first and current, was subject specialization (8 mentions), technology skills (4 mentions), followed by 3 management, marketing, communication skills, 2 mentions of practicum, and 1 mention of type of library environment. Also reported were 2 mentions of research, and 1 mention of work experience.

Many respondents thought that the MLIS program had prepared them well for the workforce, and for a diverse number of positions. “The skills I learned were so varied that it allowed me to be considered for a variety of positions outside of traditional library roles,” “I feel well prepared and versatile,” “The encouragement to meet people and take part in extra-curricular professional development opportunities was also incredibly useful,” and “I acquired many valuable skills thanks to the MLIS program.”

Conversely, those that provided a critique tended to focus on career development and guidance, more opportunities for practical experience, and courses exploring non-traditional environments. “Needs more opportunities for practical experience,” “It provided me with skills, but the MLIS program needs more ‘survival’ lessons such as ‘what to do if you can’t find a library job’ or what other fields LIS students can apply,” “the program focused too heavily on the library side of LIS,” and “More than one practicum should be permitted per student.”

When they were asked to describe their MLIS program experience “in a word,” top of mind reactions ranged from worthwhile, fluffy, diverse, hectic, valuable, very positive, useful, networking, ok, memorable, extremely rewarding, and positive!

Demographic Profile

Of the 35 survey respondents in 2013, 32 were women and 3 were men, 91% and 9%, respectively. The 2011 ratio was 82% women and 18% men and in the 2010 survey 61% of respondents were women and 39% were men.

The average age at graduation for the class of 2013 was 30 years, also comparable to the range in ages of the previous three decades or so, 29 to 35 years old.

Graduates in 2013 held a diverse range of previous academic degrees: 23 (66%) BAs, 4 (11%) BScs, 1 (3%) BEd, 1 (3%) BCom, 4 (11%) MAs, 1 (3%) MFA, and 2 (6%) PhDs. Disciplinary majors were English (11 graduates), History (4), Psychology (3), Linguistics (3), Religious Studies (2), Economics (2), and one each in Agriculture, Anthropology, Art History, Classical Languages, Comparative Literature, Film and Television Studies, Finance, Foreign Languages, Geography, Human Ecology, Latin American Studies, Music, Natural Sciences, Philosophy, Sociology, and Women's Studies.

Future Prospects

An important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. Thirteen of the 28 responding graduates in 2013 (47%) said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey. In contrast, 60% of 2010 reporting graduates said they were seeking more satisfactory employment. Fifteen out of sixteen respondents wanted full-time positions, but one respondent commented that "The job market is extremely competitive in LIS. I am currently considering employment options outside the scope of my MLIS."

Sector preferences indicated by 2013 graduates looking for more satisfactory full-time positions were public libraries (6), anything (4), academic libraries (3), and one said "not a library-management/research unit" and one said archives. Annual salary expectations ranged from \$30,000 to \$80,000, with a median of \$60,000. This in alignment with the 2010 cohort who said they were still looking, salary expectations had ranged from \$30,000 to \$70,000, with a median of \$58,000.

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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