

University of Alberta's School of Library and Information Studies Employment Survey of 2015 Graduates

During December 2016, the School conducted its 27th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) program at the University of Alberta. The response rate for the 2015 graduates was 71% (22 out of 31) of the MLIS graduates. This response rate is higher than those of annual surveys for the previous two years - 2014 graduates (57%); 2013 graduates (64%). Both graduates from the Spring 2015 convocation and from the Fall 2014 convocation were included as part of this Employment Survey of 2015 Graduates. So the phrase "2015 graduates" for the purposes of this report is understood to include both Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 graduates that responded. The survey was conducted approximately one year after graduation.

Summary

Twenty of the 22 respondents (91%) were employed in the library and information sector at some point since graduation. This is the highest percentage of graduates employed compared to previous years. To the extent that the survey data may be compared over time, the rate of employment in the library and information sector reflects an upward trend when compared with the responses of previous graduates from 2014 (80%) and 2013 (83%).

Note: 2015 graduates secured their first position in the field (at any level) before completing or entering the MLIS program, or employment occurred within three (3) months of MLIS program completion.

Fifty-five percent of the respondents listed Edmonton as their present location, a lower percentage compared with 2014 data (74%). The remaining 45% of graduates listed areas outside of Edmonton. The other Alberta locations mentioned included: Calgary (3), Elk Point (1), Grande Prairie (1), Lethbridge (1), St. Albert (1), and Slave Lake (1). Other locations listed outside of Alberta included: Little Current, Ontario (1) and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario (1).

Twenty of 22 (91%) reporting graduates provided the School with information on their current employment status. Twelve (60%) respondents reported that they were currently gainfully employed in full-time permanent positions, while six respondents (30%) held a combination of full-time temporary and/or contract work. Two respondents (10%) reported being currently engaged in part-time employment.

Eighteen of the respondents reported the type of organization they worked for: nine were employed at a public library, while one each was employed at a school library and a regional library. Two respondents were employed by a university library, and five were employed by "another" type of employer.

Comparing 2014 cohort data a dramatic difference is apparent. Only 29% of the 2014 cohort had placements in public libraries, while 50% of 2015 graduates had placements in public libraries.

Primary job assignments were described as Administration/Management (11%). The remaining primary job assignments identified in the areas of: Archives, Cataloguing, Collections, Government Documents, Information Literacy Instruction, Marketing, Outreach, Public Relations, Reference/Information Services, Teacher-Librarian, Youth and Children's Services and Other.

Secondary job assignments were described as follows: Administration/Management (12.5%), Collections, Database Management, Marketing, Outreach, Public Relations, Reference/Information Services, and Other had two mentions each, while Acquisitions, Indexing/Abstracting, Information Literacy Instruction and Telecommunications had one mention each.

The highest tertiary job assignments reported were Reference/Information Services (36%) followed by Cataloguing and Other and then Full Job Functions, Circulation, and Collections and Interlibrary Loans.

The median earnings for respondents holding full-time permanent positions were \$57,194, and with a mean salary of \$57,265. Of the 12 respondents who reported their annual salaries from full-time permanent positions, their salaries ranged from \$38,000 to \$77,000. Mean and median salaries for the 2015 graduate cohort are slightly less than those of the 2014 cohort, who had median earnings of \$60,000 and a mean salary of \$61,572.

Six reporting graduates with full-time contract positions reported a monthly median salary of \$3,950, ranging from \$1,575 to \$13,200 per month. Contracts were offered for periods ranging from four to 24 months. The 2014 cohort had a slightly higher median at \$4,200. Essentially, the 2015 full-time contract employees earned a median salary of \$250 per month less than the previous year's cohort.

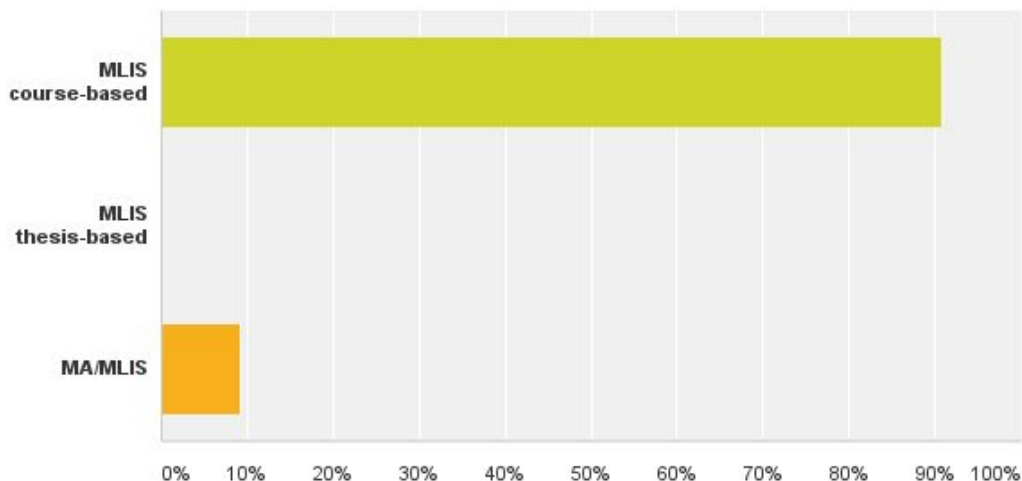
Part-time positions at the time of the survey were reported by two reporting graduates in 2015, with the number of positions stated as one by both respondents. Their hours ranged from 15 to 35 per week and wages varied from \$23 to \$28 per hour. In comparison, the data from 2013 shows that four respondents worked hours ranging from four to 20 per week, with wages ranging from \$24 to \$34 per hour. There were no part-time positions reported in 2014.

Teaching and Learning Stream

Twenty out of 22 (91%) respondents completed a course-based MLIS degree, while two respondents (9%) completed their combined MA/MLIS degrees. See Table Q1.

Q1 Which learning stream did you take as a MLIS student?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



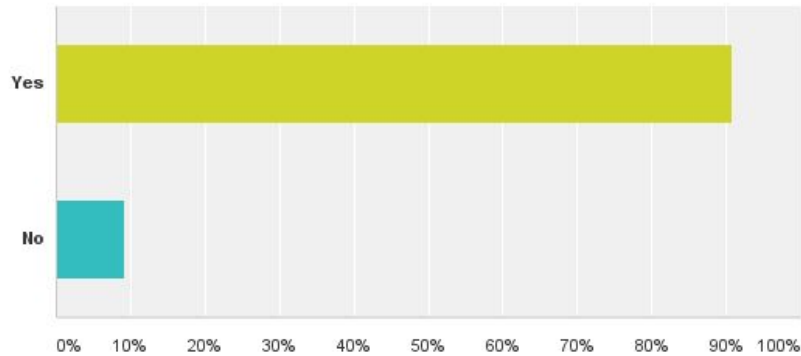
Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Employment Status

Twenty out of 22 reporting graduates (91%) were employed in the library and information sector at some point since graduation. This is the highest percentage of reporting graduates employed compared to previous years. To the extent that the survey data may be compared over time, the rate of employment in the library and information sector reflects an upward trend when compared with the survey responses of previous reporting graduates from 2014 (83%) and 2013 (83%). See Table Q8.

Q8 Since you completed the MLIS program, have you been employed or self-employed AT ANY TIME in the library and information sector, very broadly conceived?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



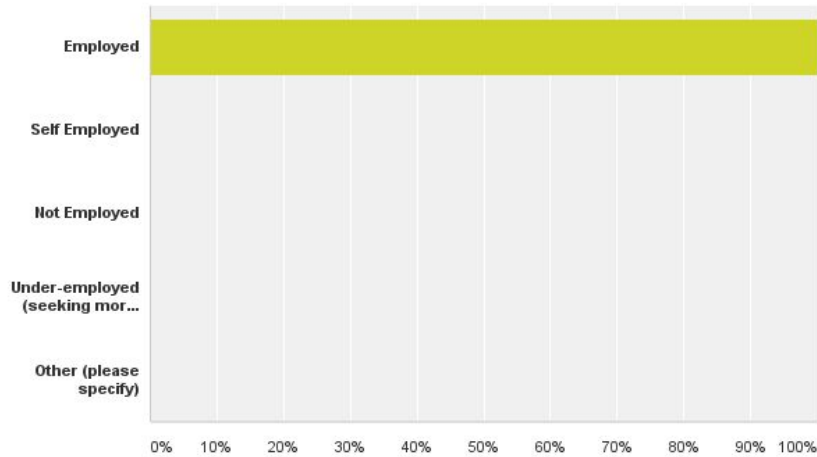
Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Additionally, 11 out of 22 respondents (50%) reported that they had held some form of MLIS-related position(s) since graduating; 11 respondents (50%) had not held a MLIS-related position, while 19 out of 22 reporting graduates (86%) noted that they had held some form of MLIS-related position during their degree and only three out of 22 graduates (14%) had not held a MLIS-related position during this period.

Twenty respondents provided the School with information on their current employment status. See Table Q11. Of these, 20 reporting graduates (100%) reported being employed; none of the graduates reported being employed part-time, self-employed, unemployed or underemployed.

Q11 What is your current status?

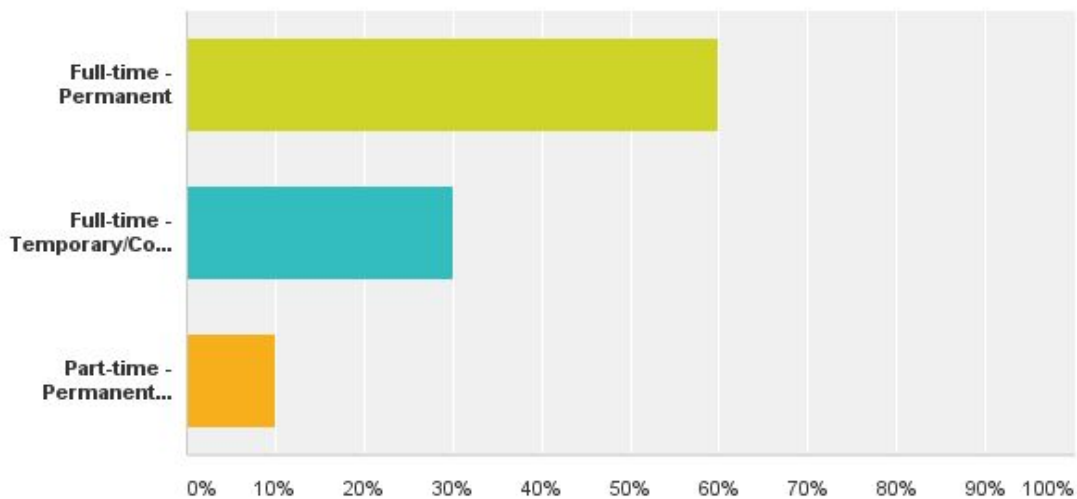
Answered: 20 Skipped: 2



Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Q15 How would you describe your current employment status?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2



Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Twelve (60%) of respondents reported to be currently gainfully employed in full-time permanent positions, while six respondents (30%) held a combination of full-time temporary and/or contract work. Two respondents (10%) reported being currently engaged in part-time employment. See Table Q15 above.

Salaries

Twelve respondents reported their annual salaries from full-time permanent positions with salaries ranging from \$38,000 to \$77,000. Their median salary was \$57,194 and had a mean salary of \$57,265. When comparing the 2014 cohort, who had median earnings of \$60,000 and a mean salary of \$61,572, the 2015 cohort mean and median salaries were slightly less.

For full-time contract positions, six reporting graduates disclosed their monthly median salary as \$3,950, ranging from \$1,575 to \$13,200 per month. Contracts offered ranged from periods from four to 24 months. In comparison to the 2014 cohort, the monthly income median was \$4,200, which is slightly higher than the 2015 cohort. The 2015 full-time contract employees earned a median salary of \$250 per month less than the previous year's cohort.

Part-time positions at the time of the survey were reported by two respondents in 2015, with the number of positions stated as one by both respondents. Their hours ranging from 15 to 35 per week and wages from \$23 to \$28 per hour. No one reported part-time positions in 2014.

Eighteen of the 2015 reporting graduates disclosed the type of organization they worked for: nine (50%) were employed at a public library, while one each was employed at a school library and a regional library. Two were employed by a university library, and five were employed by "another" type of employer.

Comparing the number of reporting graduate placements in public libraries between the 2014 cohort with the 2015 cohort, there is a notable difference. Only 5 of the 2014 respondents (29%) had placements in public libraries, while 50% of 2015 respondents had placements in public libraries.

See the table below:

All 2015 placements since graduation	Number	Percentage
Public libraries	9	50%
Regional libraries	1	6%
University libraries	2	11%
School libraries	1	6%
Other	5	27%
TOTAL	18	100%

Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

2015 respondents reported a variety of job titles including but not limited to: Business/Information Architect; Community Librarian; Community Services Librarian; Consultant; Document Control Administrator; Librarian; Library Manager; Library Technician; Media and Tech Youth Intern; Metadata Specialist; Planning Analyst; Planning, Assessment & Research Analyst; Processing Librarian/Assistant Manager; Public Services Consultant; Public Services Librarian; Records Management Analyst and Teen Services Librarian.

Primary job assignments were described as Administration/Management and all job functions had two mentions each and the "Other" job categories had five mentions. Archives, Cataloguing, Collections, Government Documents, Information Literacy Instruction, Marketing, Outreach, Public Relations, Reference/Information Services, Teacher-Librarian, Youth and Children's Services all had one mention by the 2015 respondents.

Secondary job assignments were described as follows: Administration/Management, Collections, Database Management, Marketing, Outreach, Public Relations, Reference/Information Services, and Other had two mentions each, while Acquisitions, Indexing/Abstracting, Information Literacy Instruction and Telecommunications had one mention each.

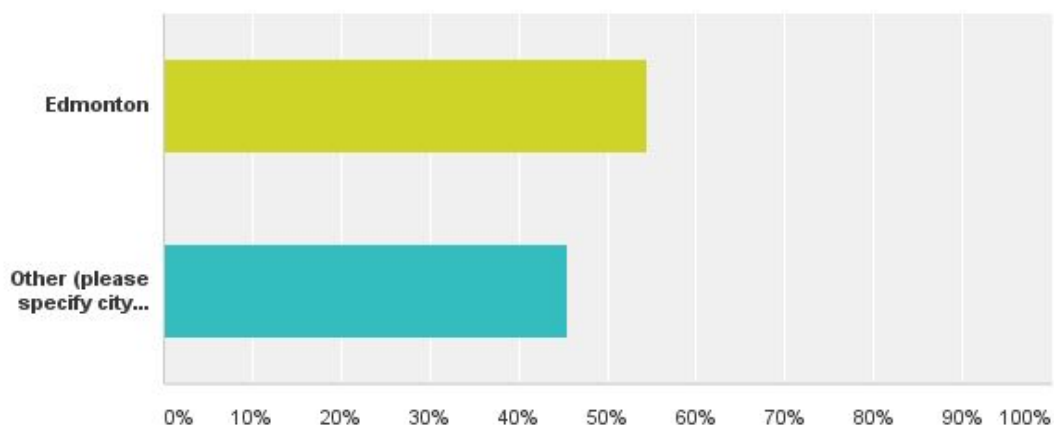
Tertiary job assignments were: Reference/Information Services (5 mentions), Cataloguing (2), and Other (2). One of each of the following job assignments, Full Job Functions, Circulation, Collections and Interlibrary Loans were reported.

Location

Fifty-five percent of the 2015 reporting graduates listed Edmonton as their present location, a lower percentage from 2014 (74%). The remaining 45% of graduates listed areas outside of Edmonton. The other Alberta locations mentioned included: Calgary (3), Elk Point (1), Grande Prairie (1), Lethbridge (1), St. Albert (1) and Slave Lake (1). Other locations listed outside of Alberta included: Little Current, Ontario (1) and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario (1). See Table Q2.

Q2 Present location?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0



Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Job Search Time Frame

The table below showcases how 20 respondents answered the question related to when they obtained their first position in the library and information sector. The response indicates that for 2015 cohort employment in their first position (at any level) in the field was secured before completing or entering the MLIS program, or employment occurred within three months of MLIS program completion.

See the table below:

Question: When did you obtain your FIRST position in the library and information sector?

Answer Choices	Responses	%
After completion, to 3 months	8	40%
After completion, 3 to 6 months	2	10%
After completion, more than 6 months	3	15%

Before entering the MLIS program	2	10%
Before completing the MLIS program	5	25%
TOTAL	20	100%

Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Of the 20 individuals who responded to this question nine (45%) reported that this was not their current job, while 11 (55%) responded yes, that this was still their current job.

When asked the timeframe for securing their current job, seven respondents out of 11 indicated they gained their current position six months or more after completing their MLIS degrees. It took two other respondents (18%) up to three months to secure their current position, and it took one respondent three to six months after completing their MLIS degree to secure their current position. One respondent obtained their current position before entering the MLIS program.

See the table below:

Question: When did you obtain your CURRENT position in library and information services?

Answer Choices	Responses	%
After completion, to 3 months	2	18%
After completion, 3 to 6 months	1	9%
After completion, more than 6 months	7	64%
Before entering the MLIS program	0	0%
Before completing the MLIS program	1	9%
TOTAL	11	100%

MLIS Program Professional Career Preparation

Respondents shared feedback on how well the MLIS program prepared them for employment in the library and information sector.

Sample feedback
“My MLIS was important and created a good theoretical framework for operating

within libraries, but, it was a fairly general program and libraries seem to be demanding specificity. That said, I can't imagine having gone into the program with a definite career path in mind and working toward it only to realize something else was more interesting to me (which is what would have happened). The profession is being assailed from so many sides with de-professionalization taking place in school libraries, rural libraries closing, and libraries reaching toward non-traditional graduates for employment (business grads, for example). There's also the massive glut of graduates from different Canadian institutions offering MLIS programs, I don't feel particularly confident that I'll be able to find employment somewhere that I want, rather I'll be settling.

"I wish there were courses that taught more practical entry-level job skills, such as: programming (planning library programs for different audiences), social media marketing, grant writing, managing situations (such as hiring and firing, supervising, scheduling) as well as courses that involved working with technology we would likely encounter in the library world, such as circulation software (Polaris, Workflows), instructional software, different apps for library programs, Hootsuite, etc. Sometimes it is frustrating when I see a job post that requires someone with a Library Tech degree when I am confident that I could fulfil the job requirements with my MLIS. I know Library Tech alumni feel the same frustration, especially when they've worked in a library for many years but are unable to get promoted — or even have their application looked at — because they lack a MLIS. I don't understand why they can't be blended into the same program or can't share some courses and then students can balance their professional interests with skills that make them competitive in the job market. Although I'm primarily interested in working for a public library, I've looked at quite a few academic postings, and I feel like it is nearly impossible to get employed in an academic library right out of school unless you already worked there. They require ridiculous amounts of previous experience. The practicum was very useful for hands-on experience. I think it should be mandatory. I haven't shown any employers my CAPPING project yet, but quite a few alumni exhibit their portfolios on LinkedIn."

"Having the ability to take courses from outside the department was greatly beneficial. The course Information Policy was very inspiring and incredibly useful - it pointed me to a path I hadn't considered but was relieved to find it existed. The management course was also much more useful than I gave it credit at the time."

"More information on job hunting and marketing your skills and where to look for relevant jobs in other sectors."

"I think it prepared me for the overall/general idea of working in the information sector. In my previous position, I felt comfortable taking on a records management position, due to tech courses, metadata, etc. In regards to my current position, I feel that a course specifically on accounting/library financials would have been EXTREMELY beneficial, as I am now fulfilling that role in my organization."

"The combined MA/MLIS with my chosen thesis route in Information Ethics allowed me the room to build a skill set that was unique, and so the program was valuable in that it was malleable to my direction. I learned wide and varied skills that prepared me to explore numerous options."

"Reference and Information Services, perhaps also Information Architecture."

"My first position was as a programmer, and there are no courses at SLIS related to programming."

"Because of my degree, I was able to adjust to the position easily, and have an idea of what I was doing, as well as potential places to grow in my career. I do feel like I needed more knowledge in regards to management, but at the same time, that is likely something that comes with experience."

"My involvement in student groups helped me a lot with getting my position, as it gave me leadership and 'supervisory' experience. The HR course helped prepare me for employment as my position is a supervisory position, and I am involved in the hiring process within my department, as well as for our summer students. I feel very grateful to have done the MLIS program, and I have used the knowledge I have learned in every position (work and volunteer) that I have held since starting the program."

"I am working in a non-library environment and did not feel very prepared for this role. The number of non-library but still information-related courses at SLIS is good, but I did not take them. It would have been better if I had."

Source: School of Library and Information Studies 2015 Employment Survey

Others indicated graduates could have benefited from more emphasis on coding, metadata and internet search enhancement, practical on-the-job training, work experience, job search skills, information and preparedness for roles outside of the traditional library and information studies sector and other data management skills.

This constructive feedback is similar to that provided by the 2014 and 2013 cohorts, which included comments related to a preference for a greater focus on career development and guidance, more opportunities for practical experience, and courses exploring non-traditional environments.

Demographic Profile

Of the 22 survey respondents in 2015, 17 identified as women and five identified as men, 77%, and 23%, respectively. Compared to the 24 survey respondents in 2014, 20 women, and four men, 83% and 17%, respectively.

The vast majority of 2015 reporting graduates (16) held a Bachelor of Arts degree at the time of entering the program. Other degrees included: three graduates with Bachelor of

Education degrees, two graduates with a Bachelor of Science, one graduate with Bachelor of Commerce and one graduate with a Master of Arts.

Disciplinary majors were in History (6), English (6), Anthropology (2), Elementary Education (2), Religious Studies (2), and one each in Sociology, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Nutrition and Dietetics, Linguistics, and Human Resource Management.

Future Prospects

Seven out of 20 responding graduates (35%) said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey with 13 out of 20 (65%) stating that they were not seeking more satisfying work. Eight of 20 responded to the question noting that they were seeking more satisfactory full-time permanent employment in the areas of academic libraries, public libraries, or special libraries. Annual salary expectations ranged from \$20,000 to \$70,000+.

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

February 9, 2017

Thank you to Dr. Alvin Schrader for permission to use the template which he developed.