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Analyzing the Academic Library Job Pool: What Recent LIS Graduates Are Bringing to the Table

Ashley Rosener, *Grand Valley State University*
Max Eckard, *Grand Valley State University*
Lindy Scripps-Hoekstra, *Grand Valley State University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/maxeckard/3/
ANALYZING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY JOB POOL

What Recent LIS Graduates Are Bringing to the Table

Ashley Rosener, Max Eckard & Lindy Scripps-Hoekstra
Outline

1. Who Would You Hire?
2. Literature Review
3. Methods
4. Survey Results
5. Analysis of Findings
6. Advice for Search Committees
WHO WOULD YOU HIRE?
Candidate A

WITH internships and relevant coursework

Candidate B

WITHOUT internships and relevant coursework
Candidate A

- WITH previous work experience in a library
- WITHOUT involvement in state or national professional organizations

Candidate B

- WITHOUT previous work experience in a library
- WITH involvement in state or national professional organizations
Candidate A

- Librarianship as SECOND career
- WITHOUT internships and relevant coursework

Candidate B

- Librarianship as FIRST career
- WITH internships and relevant coursework
Candidate A
• WITH committee work
• HAS NOT published

Candidate B
• WITHOUT committee work
• HAS published
Candidate A

- ONLINE program
- TOP 10 LIS School Ranking

Candidate B

- IN-PERSON program
- LOW LIS School Ranking
WHY
LIT REVIEW
Background Research

• Job Application / Job Market Analysis
  • Asking for broader range of skills
  • Fewer entry-level jobs and more applicants

• Search Committee Point of View
  • Soft skills
  • In a 2008 survey of faculty search committee members, over 90% of the 243 survey respondents said potential fit is very or extremely important (Wang).
Our Research

• Looks at
  • Current data from our survey
  • A recent graduate’s perspective
  • Trends in LIS students’ graduate school involvement
  • Correlations between student involvement in graduate school and success in finding a job
METHODS
Recent LIS Graduates

240
167
85

Survey Methodology

Institutions

33

Mean Graduation Year

2011

among them...

North Carolina Central University
Dominican University
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
We asked them about...

Professional Effectiveness
Technological Competency
Scholarship
Service
Previous career(s)
Other work/life experiences
RESULTS
167 out of 240
Academic Library Coursework

88.1%
Academic Library Employment

69.7%
Academic Library
Internship/Practicum

56.8%
Volunteer Work

61.5%
Study Abroad Experience

4.5%
Technological competency

71%
Workshops and seminars

72.6%
Join Associations

88.3%
Librarianship as a second career

51.9%
Please describe your previous career(s).
3-5 years in previous career

38.9%
Helpful previous careers

62.1%
FINDINGS/ANALYSIS
85 out of 167
Findings

How many months prior to graduation did you start applying for jobs?
- >7 Months
- 4-6 Months
- 2-3 Mo.

How many jobs did you apply for?
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-25
- 26-50

How long did it take after graduation to find a job?
- Before Graduation
- 1-3 Months
- 4-6 Months

Was your search limited to a specific geographic location?
- Yes
- No
Findings

- Joined library associations?
  - Yes
  - No

- Participated in library conferences?
  - Yes
  - No

- Participated in library workshops/seminars?
  - Yes
  - No
Comparisons

### Upon graduation, did you find a library job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Library Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Upon graduation, did you find a library job? (Internship/Practicum)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Library Internship/Practicum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upon graduation, did you find a library job?</th>
<th>What was the format of your program?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>On line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upon graduation, did you find a library job?</th>
<th>Were you limited to a specific geographic area when applying for library jobs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
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</table>
### Publications Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upon graduation, did you find a library job?</th>
<th>Published while in graduate school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADVICE FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES
Themes/codes

69 respondents

- Job Experience
- Candidate Abilities
- Hiring Process
Job Experience

“Look for people who made an effort to get practical experience while they were in school.”
Job Experience

“Make entry-level jobs available. New grads can have fresh ideas, be hard workers, but it can be very difficult to find entry-level positions. Most library positions ask for previous experience and so how can a new grad get experience if no one gives them a chance?”
“Think outside the box with previous experience… I was lucky that someone on my committee pushed for me and I hope that hiring committees… try to take the time to consider why alternate experience might be valuable.”
Candidate Abilities

“…don’t worry about so much about the skill set coming in. Think instead about the best fit for your workplace and who has the propensity to learn the necessary skills.”
Candidate Abilities

“Worry less about concrete skills and experience, and more about innate enthusiasm, intelligence and curiosity. Anyone can learn to teach a class or use an ILS, but you can’t teach someone to be passionate about their work.”
Candidate Abilities

“Look for some facility with online services and resources. Even if the position is not a ‘technology librarian’ position, you will want a candidate who is a quick study in new interfaces/technologies.”
Candidate Abilities

“Please give extra consideration to older candidates. We are more stable and bring a wealth of experience to your library.”
“Make job requirements clear and make them things you can actually speak to in a job letter rather than vague unmeasurable qualities. Don’t require two years of experience for what is really a beginning position; you do have a responsibility to train new employees.”
Hiring Process

“Do include an on-site visit as a part of the interview process. Assign presentation topics rather than, ‘Whatever interests you about your field.’ Consider splitting up the interview activities over two half days (e.g. afternoon of day 1 and morning of day 2) rather than a full day.”
“Quit looking for purple squirrels or pink unicorns. You will not find people with 20 years experience, two masters degrees, fluency in three languages, and the ability to reprogram your entire computer system. If people could do all that, they would not be filling out your stupid online applications—they would be working way over your head making more money than you are willing to pay.”
CONCLUSION
Recap

• When searching for a librarian, you can expect recent graduates to have:
  • various work experiences in an academic library
  • involvement in student, state, or national organizations
  • technological competence
  • started applying up to 7 months prior to graduation

• Soft skills matter!
  • Individuals who found and did not find jobs were nearly identical

• What did not appear to matter?
  • Program format
  • Enrollment status
  • # of jobs applied for
  • Coursework
Questions for Future Research

- Did successful job applicants have job search coaching or training?
- Do electronic portfolios and LinkedIn accounts help in the job search?
- In what types of academic libraries did people land jobs?
Sources


Q & A
Questions for you!

• When did you get your MLS/MLIS?
• Would you recommend someone to go into debt to get their degree?
• Do you prefer candidates from online or in-person graduate programs?
• Does school ranking matter to you?
• What do you look for in candidates?