

U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2003 Graduates

This past year the School conducted its 16th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. In 2003, 40 students graduated with MLIS degrees, 28 of whom are represented in this survey (70%). The 2003 survey was conducted in July and August 2004, just over a year after spring convocation.

Summary

Almost all of the 2003 graduates responding to the survey said they had been employed in library and information studies at some point since graduation, echoing high placement rates during the past decade or so, on the order of 75% to 100%. Almost all of the 2003 graduates obtained their first position within three months of graduation, similar to 2002. The most common ways in which 2003 graduates learned about their positions echoed earlier years – word-of-mouth, the SLIS job board, and various websites and listservs.

The median salary reported by 2003 graduates with full-time positions was \$43,900, an increase of \$2,900 over the previous year. The range was \$32,000 to \$62,000 per year. The most frequent employers of 2003 graduates were post-secondary libraries, public and regional libraries, and special libraries.

Similar to the previous year, 61% of the 2003 graduates remained in Edmonton, with several more finding positions in Calgary and elsewhere in Alberta. Unlike earlier years when an average of 18% of new graduates found work in the United States, no one in the 2003 survey went there.

Some employment indicators bear further watching in coming years. It appears as if 2000 and 2001 were exceptional years, and the 2002 and 2003 figures resemble more closely the employment patterns of the 1990s. One survey indicator to bear in mind is the number of full-time permanent placements. In 2003, only 58% of full-time placements were permanent, similar to the previous year (54%) but contrasting with 71% in 2001 and 76% in 2000. Another employment indicator is the number of graduates holding temporary positions at some point since graduation – in 2003 it was just over half, with most of those reporting two or more temporary placements, some as many as four. A third important indicator is the number of graduates, working or not, who are looking for better job prospects. More than half of the 2003 graduates said they were still seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey, in contrast to the year before when only 29% were in that situation; in 2001 and 2000 the rates were lower, 25% and 14% respectively.

Placement

Of the 28 graduates represented in the 2003 survey, 26 or 93% had been employed in library and information services at some time since graduation. In the previous graduating class, all respondents had worked since graduation. More important as an employment indicator are the types of positions held. Of the 24 graduates in 2003 reporting placement details, 19 were full time and 5 part time, but only 11 of the full-time placements were permanent (58%). This was similar to 2002 when 54% of the full-time placements were permanent, but contrasts with 71% in 2001 and 76% in 2000.

Of the 8 graduates in 2003 reporting full-time temporary placements at the time of the survey, contracts ranged from 3 months to one year in length, with possible renewal options in some cases; 4 of the 7 positions were one-year contracts.

Another indicator of employment trends is the number of graduates holding temporary rather than permanent positions. Just over half of the graduates in 2003 (14 out of 26 or 54%) were in one or more temporary positions at some point since graduation. While this was similar to 2002 graduates, it was in marked contrast to earlier years – 19% in 2001, 17% in 2000, and 32% in 1999. Among 2003 graduates

reporting temporary positions since graduation, 4 had been in one such position, 6 had two each, 2 had three each, and 2 had four each. Among 2002 graduates, far fewer of those with temporary placements reported two or more such positions.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	11	46%
Full-time temporary	8	33%
Part-time	5	21%
TOTAL	24	100%

Of the 5 graduates with part-time placements in 2003, 4 were permanent positions; 2 of them also held a second part-time position.

Salaries

Annual salaries reported by 11 graduates in 2003 with full-time permanent positions ranged from \$32,000 to \$62,000, with a median of \$43,900 and a mean of \$43,500. These figures reveal an average increase in remuneration of \$2,900 over the median salary reported the year before. Eight graduates in 2003 with full-time temporary positions reported median earnings of \$3,610 per month (mean \$3,470), a decrease of \$590 per month from 2002 median earnings.

Part-time positions paid between \$11.70 and \$23.78 per hour (averaging \$17.40). These rates appear to be static: part-time positions held by 2002 graduates paid between \$18.00 and \$23.00 per hour. The 2003 part-time placements ranged from 8 to 28 per week, averaging just under 21 hours per week.

Employment Sector

Most frequent employers of 2003 graduates were post-secondary libraries (12 placements or 35%), followed by public and regional libraries (33%), special libraries including two government library placements (9%), and school libraries (6%). Single placements were reported in an academic archives, a publishing company, a management consulting company, a technology company, an international task force, and self-employed.

Placement Setting	Number	Percentage
Post-secondary libraries	12	35%
Public libraries	8	24%
Regional libraries	3	9%
Special libraries	3	9%
School libraries	2	6%
Other	6	17%
TOTAL	34	100%

Most frequent job titles and positions reported by 2003 graduates were librarian (7), public services librarian (4), and reference librarian (3). All others were mentioned once only: information services librarian, information specialist, business services librarian, children's programmer, outreach librarian, acquisitions librarian, serial librarian, project librarian, research librarian, automation services librarian, Web librarian, assistant regional director, library director, researcher, research assistant, curator, copy editor/indexer, library technical assistant, ILL/reference technician, and children's clerk.

Primary job assignments were reference/information services (15), administration/management (3), web manager (3), collections (2), database management (2), interlibrary loans (2), marketing/outreach/public relations (2), youth and children's services (2), research (2), and one each in information literacy instruction, circulation, government documents, indexing/abstracting, systems/network manager, and school librarian. Three respondents indicated multiple task assignments (including one person who checked off eight categories).

Location

Edmonton continues to be the location of choice for graduates: 6 in 10 in 2003 and 2002, and 7 in 10 in 2001. Four of the 2003 placements were in Calgary. Generally speaking Alberta provided 82% of current locations for 2003 graduates, higher than the 60% for 2002 graduates. Other work locations reported by 2003 graduates were Saskatchewan (3) and Ontario (2). None of the responding graduates was working in the United States, unlike the previous four years when 18% on average went there to work.

Job Searching

Almost half of the 2003 graduates obtained their first position before graduation, and another 42% within 3 months. Only 12% took longer than 3 months to find a position. This pattern was similar to the year before, when 29% found their first position before graduation and another 59% within three months of graduation. However, 5 graduates in 2003 took more than 6 months to find the position they were holding at the time of the survey.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	6	23%	---	---
Before graduation	6	23%	2	18%
Within 3 months of graduation	11	42%	2	18%
3 to 6 months after graduation	2	8%	2	18%
More than 6 months after graduation	1	4%	5	45%
TOTAL	26	100%	11	99%

**if different from first*

One out of 5 graduates in 2003 found their positions through word-of-mouth (7 mentions), followed by the FLA jobline website (4), newspapers (4), the SLIS job board (3), and the JEROME-L listserv (3).

Source of Job Information	Number of Sources (1st & current positions)	Percentage
word-of-mouth	7	19%
FLA jobline website	4	11%
newspaper	4	11%
SLIS job board	3	8%
JEROME-L listserv	3	8%
listserv	3	8%
employer	2	5%
job posting	2	5%
other	9	24%
TOTAL	37	100%

Other sources of job information were unspecified listservs, employers, job postings, U of A Campus Recruiting, the EPL website, the Saskatchewan Library Association website, the Saskatchewan Library Association annual conference, the U of T FIS job website, and other unspecified sources – an internal posting, a library association website, a government bulletin, and a government ad. One graduate mentioned applying for a position and being offered a different one after their interview.

Library Work Experience and Demographics

As in previous years, most of the 2003 graduates gained library work experience either before or during their MLIS program (89%), with almost all working during the program even if they had prior experience. In the previous four years, work experience was reported by 82% in 2002, 86% in 2001, 97% in 2000, and 90% in 1999.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS - before (15 out of 28 – 54%) - during (24 out of 28 – 86%)	25	89%
Neither	3	11%
TOTAL	28	100%

** excludes for-credit field placements and practicums*

Also similar to previous years was the very high proportion of 2003 graduates who worked part-time during their MLIS program (86%): 88% in 2002, 86% in 2001, 94% in 2000, and 83% in 1999.

Of the 28 graduates represented in the survey, 23 were females and 5 were male, 82% and 18% respectively, very similar to the full class of 40 with 83% females. The average age for the graduating class of 2003 was 34 years at graduation, within the range of the last two decades, 29 to 34 years of age. Academic patterns for degrees earned prior to the MLIS for 2003 graduates represented in the survey were as follows: 19 held the BA, 3 the BSc, 2 the BEd, 1 the BFA, 1 the MA, 1 the MSc, and 1 with doctoral coursework completed. Top disciplines reported by students were 7 degrees in history (or art history) and an equal number in English literature (or Writing).

Future Prospects

An important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. All survey respondents were asked about this, whether working or not.

More than half of the 2003 graduates said they were seeking more satisfactory employment (15 out of 28 or 54%). In contrast, only 29% of the 2002 graduates were still looking, and among 2001 and 2000 graduates it was 25% and 14% respectively. The current year's pattern harkens back to graduates in pre-2000 years, when 48% of 1999 graduates and 43% of 1998 graduates were still looking. Two of the 2003 graduates wanted temporary or part-time positions if full-time were not available, and one was looking for part-time work.

Preferences among 2003 graduates were varied across the four main sectors – academic, public, special, government, and school, with many mentioning more than one type. Those seeking full-time work indicated annual salary goals ranging from \$35,000 to \$50,000+, averaging out at a median of \$40,000 per year. Part-time hourly earnings indicated were \$18 to \$20.

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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