

## **U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2004 Graduates**

This past year the School conducted its 17<sup>th</sup> annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. In 2004, 37 students graduated with MLIS degrees, 20 of whom are represented in this survey (54%, compared to 70% of 2003 graduates). The 2004 survey was conducted in July and August 2005, just over a year after spring convocation. Caution is advised in interpreting patterns and trends from relatively low response rates in 2004.

### **Summary**

Some 85% of the 2004 graduates responding to the survey said they had been employed in library and information studies at one time or another since graduation, echoing high placement rates during the past decade or so, on the order of 75% to 100%. While 65% obtained their first position within three months of graduation, this was somewhat longer than reported by either the 2003 or the 2002 graduates. The most common way in which 2004 graduates learned about their positions was through websites and listservs, a shift from earlier years when "word-of-mouth" and newspapers were the more frequently mentioned sources.

The median salary reported by 2004 graduates with full-time positions was \$47,100, an increase of \$3,200 or 7% over the previous year. The range was \$36,000 to \$62,000 per year. Employment sector patterns were similar to those of the previous year: post-secondary libraries, public and regional libraries, and special libraries.

Also similar to the previous year were the residency patterns of 2004 graduates, with the majority remaining in Edmonton, and none emigrating to the United States. Both 2004 and 2003 graduates were in contrast to those between 1999 and 2002, when an average of 18% of new graduates found positions south of the border.

Some survey indicators bear further attention in future years to discern trends that would appear to signal a return to patterns characterizing the 1990s rather than the gains reported by graduates in 2001 and 2000. For example, 64% of full-time placements in 2004 were permanent, similar to the previous two years (58% in 2003 and 54% in 2002); but in 2001 the rate was 71% and in 2000 it was 76%. Another employment indicator to watch is the number of graduates reporting temporary rather than permanent positions at some point since graduation. In 2004 it was 41%, similar to 2003 and 2002 graduates, but contrasting with only 20% of graduates in 2001 and the same in 2000. A third important indicator is the number of graduates (working or not) who reported they were still looking for more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey. One out of three graduates in 2004 said they were in this situation; the year before it was 54%. Rates for both years were considerably higher than those for previous cohorts: 29% in 2002, 25% in 2001, and 14% in 2000.

### **Placement**

Of the 20 graduates represented in the 2004 survey, 17 or 85% had been employed in library and information services at some time since graduation. The other three graduates were still seeking positions in library and information services. In the previous graduating class, almost all respondents (93%) had worked in the profession since graduation, and among 2002 graduates it was 100%.

More important as an employment indicator are the types of positions held. Of the 17 graduates in 2004 reporting placement details, 14 had full-time positions at the time of the survey and 3 part-time, but only 9 of the 14 full-time placements were permanent (64%). This was somewhat similar to both 2003 and

2002 when 58% and 54% respectively of the full-time placements were permanent; the rates were 71% in 2001 and 76% in 2000.

Of the 5 graduates in 2004 reporting full-time temporary status at the time of the survey, contracts ranged from 8 months to two years in length, with possible renewal options in some cases; 3 of the 5 positions were initially one-year contracts, one was for 8 months, and one was open.

Another indicator of employment trends is the number of graduates holding temporary positions at any time since graduation. Some 41% of the graduates in 2004 (7 out of 17) were in one or more temporary positions at some point since graduation. While this was similar to 2003 and 2002 graduates, it was in marked contrast to earlier years, at 19% in 2001, 17% in 2000, and 32% in 1999. Among 2004 graduates reporting temporary positions since graduation, 3 had been in one such position and 4 in two each. In contrast, more 2003 graduates reported multiple part-time placements: while 4 had one each, 6 had two each, 2 had three each, and 2 had four each.

<b>Current Placement Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Full-time permanent	9	53%
Full-time temporary	5	29%
Part-time	3	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

Of the 3 graduates in 2004 holding part-time positions at the time of survey, 1 had two permanent positions and the other 2 had one each.

### **Salaries**

Annual salaries reported by 9 graduates in 2004 with full-time permanent positions ranged from \$36,000 to \$62,000, with a median of \$47,100 (mean \$47,400). These figures reveal an average 7% increase in remuneration of \$3,200 over the median salary reported the year before. Five graduates in 2004 with full-time temporary positions reported median earnings of \$4,000 per month (mean \$4,500), an increase of \$390 per month over 2003 median earnings or almost 11%.

The 3 graduates in 2004 holding four part-time positions at the time of the survey were paid between \$12.50 and \$26.38 per hour (averaging \$18.50), an increase of \$1.10 or 6% over hourly wages reported by 2003 graduates of similar status. The 2004 part-time placements ranged from 7 to 22.5 hours per week. These numbers and rates are too few to regard as indicative.

### **Employment Sector**

The most frequently mentioned employers of 2004 graduates were post-secondary libraries (5 placements or 25%), followed by public and regional libraries (20%), special libraries (20%), and school libraries (10%). Single placements were reported in university settings, a health research centre, a medical research program, and a bookstore.

<b>All Placements Since Graduation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Post-secondary libraries	5	25%
Public libraries	3	15%
Regional libraries	1	5%
Special libraries	4	20%
School libraries	2	10%
Other	5	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most frequent titles and positions reported by 2004 graduates were librarian (4) and teacher-librarian (2). All others were mentioned once only: public services librarian, youth services librarian,

research and instructional librarian, research librarian, clinical research librarian, health instructional librarian, liaison librarian, systems librarian, assistant director, professional researcher, coordinator, assistant supervisor, records administrator, and bookseller.

Primary job assignments were reference/information services (5 mentions), information literacy instruction (4 mentions), and collections (4 mentions). Two mentions were indicated for each of administration/management, interlibrary loans, teacher-librarian, marketing/outreach/public relations, and systems/network manager. One mention only was indicated for each of the following categories: acquisitions, circulation, database management, telecommunications, youth and children's services, webmaster/web content manager, research, information retrieval, project manager, seniors outreach, and records management. Most respondents indicated multiple task assignments.

## Location

Edmonton continues to be the residence of choice for responding graduates in 2004, whether working or not, with 55% remaining in the city. Among 2003 graduates, it was 60%. Two of the 2004 placements lived in Calgary. Generally speaking Alberta provided 75% of current locations for 2004 graduates; among 2003 graduates it was slightly higher at 82%. Other work locations reported by 2004 graduates were Ontario (2), Saskatchewan (1), and the Middle East (1). Like the 2003 graduates, none in 2004 was working in the United States, in contrast to the previous four years 1999-2002 when on average 18% went there for employment.

## Job Searching

Some 41% of the 2004 graduates (7 out of 17) obtained their first position before graduation, and another 4 (24%) within 3 months. Six (35%) took longer than 3 months. This pattern deviated from the year before, when only 12% took longer than 3 months to find their first position.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	2	12%	---	---
Before graduation	5	29%	1	12%
Within 3 months of graduation	4	24%	1	12%
3 to 6 months after graduation	1	6%	1	12%
More than 6 months after graduation	5	29%	5	63%
<b>TOTAL</b>	17	100%	8	99%

*\*if different from first*

Some 13 graduates in 2004 found positions through electronic joblines and websites, among which were JEROME-L listserv (4 mentions), the FLA jobline website (2), the UofT website (2), the CLA job site (1), and other unspecified websites and listservs (4).

Source of Job Information — All Positions	Number of Sources (1st& current positions)	Percentage
JEROME-L listserv	4	18%
FLA jobline website	2	9%
UofT website	2	9%
CLA job site	1	5%
unspecified websites and listservs	4	18%
internal posting	2	9%
former employer	2	9%
colleague	2	9%
networking	1	5%
SLIS job board	1	5%
current employer	1	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	22	101%

This indicates a shift from the year before when "word-of-mouth" and newspapers were more frequently mentioned (35%). Among 2004 graduates, newspapers were not identified at all, and word-of-mouth sources amounted to 23%, including colleagues (2 mentions), former employers (2 mentions), and a current employer (1 mention). Other sources of job information were internal postings (2) and the SLIS job board (1).

### **Library Work Experience and Demographics**

As in previous years, most of the 2004 graduates gained library work experience either before or during their MLIS program (85%), with almost all working during the program even if they had prior experience. In the previous four years 2003-2000, graduates with work experience before or during the MLIS ranged from 82% (2002) to 97% (2000).

<b>Library Work Experience*</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Either before or during MLIS	17	85%
- before (6 out of 17 – 35%)		
- during (14 out of 17 – 82%)		
Neither	3	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\* excludes for-credit field placements and practicums*

Also similar to previous years was the very high proportion of 2004 graduates who worked part-time during their MLIS program (82%), comparable to previous years: 89% in 2003, 88% in 2002, 86% in 2001, and 94% in 2000.

Of the 20 graduates represented in the survey, 17 were women and 3 were men, 85% and 15% respectively, very similar to the full graduating class of 37 with 89% women. The average age at graduation for the class of 2004 was 35 years, at the upper end of the range of the last two decades, 29 to 35 years of age. Academic patterns for degrees reported by 2004 graduates earned prior to the MLIS were as follows: 8 the BA, 5 the BEd, 2 the BSc, 1 the BFA, 2 the MA, and 1 the MSc. Many disciplines were represented, with the most frequent being 5 in education and 2 in English literature; other disciplines were anthropology, psychology, political science, history, geography, women's studies, dietetics, nutrition, psycholinguistics, recreational administration, and Canadian studies.

### **Future Prospects**

An important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. All survey respondents were asked about this, whether working or not. One out of three graduates in 2004 said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey (7 out of 20 or 35%). This was an improvement over the previous year, when 54% said they were still looking, but it is considerably higher than the 29% reported in 2002, 25% in 2001, and 14% in 2000. Only graduates before 2000 indicated higher rates than those for 2004, with 48% of 1999 graduates and 43% of 1998 graduates still looking for better job prospects. Preferences for type of library were not indicated by the 2004 graduates still looking for better jobs; one person mentioned academic libraries and another said special libraries but others did not specify. Annual salary expectations were in the range of \$30,000+ to \$50,000+, averaging out at a median of \$40,000 per year, the same as for a year earlier.

*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.*

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