

U of A SLIS Employment Survey of 2005 Graduates

During the summer of 2006, the School conducted its 18th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. In 2005, 31 students graduated with MLIS degrees from the University of Alberta, 24 of whom are represented in this survey (77%, compared to 54% of 2004 graduates and 70% of the 2003 cohort). The 2005 survey was conducted just over one year after the spring class convocated. (Caution is advised in comparing patterns and trends with data for previous graduates because of the lower response rate in 2004.)

Summary

All but one of the 2005 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%. Two-thirds obtained their first professional position within three months of graduation, similar to the previous year's cohort. The most common way in which 2005 graduates learned about their positions was through e-sources. The median salary reported by 2005 graduates with full-time positions was \$47,500, an increase of \$400, or less than 1%, over the previous year, with a range of \$37,100 to \$60,000 per year. Public and regional libraries attracted almost half of the graduates. Residency patterns of 2005 graduates were similar to previous years, with the majority remaining in Alberta (42% in Edmonton); one emigrated to the United States while none had done so in the previous two years — in contrast to the years between 2002 and 1999 when an average of 18% found positions annually south of the border.

Placement

Of the 24 graduates represented in the 2005 survey, 23 or 96% had been employed in library and information services at some time since graduation; the other graduate was still seeking a position. Employment rates in the previous three years were 85%, 93%, and 100% (2004, 2003, and 2002 respectively).

An important employment indicator is the type of position held. Of the 23 graduates employed in 2005, 21 had full-time positions at the time of the survey, with 13 of these being permanent (62%). This was somewhat similar to 2004 (64%) and slightly higher than either 2003 or 2002 (58% and 54% respectively), while the rates were 71% in 2001 and 76% in 2000.

Of the 8 graduates in 2005 reporting temporary full-time status, contracts ranged from 6 months to 2 years, some with renewal options and one reporting an open appointment.

Another indicator of employment trends is the number of graduates holding temporary positions at any time since graduation. Some 18 out of 23 graduates in 2005 (78%) reported one or more temporary positions. This was in marked contrast to the previous year at 41%. Among the 2005 graduates with temporary positions at some point since graduation, 13 had been in one such position, 2 in two, and 3 in three. One of the two graduates holding part-time positions at the time of survey had 2 placements.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	13	57%
Full-time temporary	8	35%
Part-time	2	8%
TOTAL	23	100%

Salaries

Annual salaries of those with full-time permanent positions ranged from \$37,100 to \$60,000, with a median of \$47,500 (mean \$48,500 for 12 graduates). These figures reveal an average increase in median remuneration of only \$400, less than 1% more than the year before (the mean increase was \$1,100 or 2.3%). Eight graduates in 2005 with full-time temporary positions reported median earnings of \$3,300 per month (mean \$3,390), a drop of \$700 per month over 2004 median earnings of \$4,000.

The two graduates in 2005 holding part-time positions were paid between \$11.00 and \$22.00 per hour (averaging \$16.30), a drop of \$2.20 over hourly wages reported by 2004 graduates of similar status. The 2005 part-time appointments were 15 to 17.5 hours per week.

Employment Sector

Half of the 2005 placements since graduation were in public and regional libraries, followed by post-secondary libraries (31%) and special libraries (14%)

All Placements Since Graduation	Number	Percentage
Public libraries	12	41%
Post-secondary libraries	9	31%
Special libraries	4	14%
Regional libraries & consortia	2	7%
School libraries	1	3%
Museum	1	3%
TOTAL	29	99%

The most frequent titles and positions held by 2005 graduates at some point since graduation were: reference librarian or intern (4 each), children's services librarian (3), and head librarian (2); 6 held paraprofessional positions (3 library assistants, 2 library technicians, and 1 information management assistant). Others were mentioned once only: public services librarian, youth services librarian, information literacy librarian, collection development librarian, community outreach librarian, customer services manager for diversity services, virtual reference librarian, environmental affairs librarian, reference/physical science librarian, technical and metadata services librarian, web/assistant librarian, SFX link resolver administrator, branch librarian, and assistant director.

Primary job assignments were reference/information services and administration/management (6 mentions each), database management and youth & children's services (4 mentions each), information literacy instruction and webmaster/web content manager (3 mentions each), and acquisitions, archives, cataloguing, collections, and systems/network manager mentioned once each. Most respondents indicated multiple task assignments.

Location

Edmonton continued to be the residence of choice for responding graduates in 2005, with 42% remaining in the city compared to 55% the year before and 60% in 2003; 3 of the 2005 graduates lived in Calgary, and one each resided in Brooks, Red Deer, Fairview, and Fort McMurray. Altogether Alberta provided 71% of current locations for 2005 graduates, similar to the previous year at 75%. Other work locations reported by 2005 graduates were 3 in Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert), 1 in Manitoba, 1 in Quebec, 1 in the U.S. and 1 in Australia. None of the graduates in the previous two years went to the United States, in contrast with the earlier years 2002-1999 when an average of 18% went there annually for employment.

Job Searching

Six of the 2005 graduates (27%) obtained their first professional position before graduation, and another 8 (36%) within 3 months. Eight others took longer than 3 months. These patterns were similar to the year before.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	---	---	---	---
Before graduation	6	27%	2	18%
Within 3 months of graduation	8	36%	1	9%
3 to 6 months after graduation	5	23%	1	9%
More than 6 months after graduation	3	14%	7	64%
TOTAL	22	100%	11	100%

*if different from first

Two-thirds of placements in 2005 were found through a variety of electronic sources, among which were JEROME-L (7 mentions) and the FLA jobline website (3).

Source of Job Information — All Positions	Number of Sources (first & current positions)	Percentage
JEROME-L listserv	7	21%
FLA jobline website	3	9%
Online job boards, listservs, websites	9	27%
SLIS job board	2	6%
word of mouth	5	15%
internal posting	1	3%
former employer	4	12%
employment agency	1	3%
initiated contact	1	3%
TOTAL	33	99%

This pattern is similar to 2004 graduates but a shift from the year before when "word-of-mouth" and newspapers were more frequently mentioned (35%).

Library Work Experience and Demographics

As in previous years, most of the 2005 graduates gained library work experience either before or during their MLIS program (96%), with almost all working during the program even if they had prior experience. In the previous five years 2004-2000, graduates with experience before or during the MLIS ranged from 82% to 97%.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS	23	96%
- before (11 out of 23 – 48%)		
- during (22 out of 23 – 96%)		
No response	1	4%
TOTAL	24	100%

* excludes for-credit field placements and practicums

Also similar to previous years was the very high proportion of 2005 graduates who worked part-time during their MLIS program (96%), similar to previous years with 82% in 2004 and 89% in 2003. Ten respondents reported library work experience both before and during their MLIS programs.

Among 2005 survey respondents, 20 were women and 3 were men, 87% and 13% respectively, similar to previous years, and their average age at graduation was 31 years, which was within the range of 29 to 35 years for the last two decades.

Academic patterns for degrees reported by 2005 graduates earned prior to the MLIS were as follows: 14 =BA, 4 BEd, 2 BSc, 2 BCom, 1 BMngt, and 1 MA. Many disciplines were represented, with the most frequent being English (8); other disciplines were anthropology, psychology, history, women's studies, general arts, educational psychology, finance, business studies, and palaeobiology.

Future Prospects

An important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. All survey respondents were asked about this, whether working or not. Over half of the 2005 graduates said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey (57%). This was higher than the previous year, when 35% said they were still looking, but comparable to 2003 at 54%. Preferences for type of library were academic libraries (3), special or public libraries (1), public or academic libraries (1), and archives (1), and annual salary expectations ranged from \$43,000 to \$70,000.

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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