2014
PLACEMENT SURVEY
December 4, 2015

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION STUDIES

University of Alberta SLIS Employment Survey of 2014 Graduates

During July-September 2015, the School conducted its 26th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. The response rate for the 2014 graduates was 57% (24 out of 42 MLIS graduates). Although this response rate is lower than the 2013 graduates (64%), it continues the trend of higher survey responses than previous years (40% for 2010, 48% for 2011). Due to a technical error, the Employment Survey of the 2012 class was not undertaken and cannot be used for comparative purposes. However, the 2013 placement survey data (35 respondents), the 2011 placement survey data (11 respondents) and the 2010 placement survey data (18 respondents) are being used for comparative purposes when and where they are appropriate. The 2014 survey was conducted approximately one year after the spring class convocated, with 9 fall 2013 graduates also included.

Summary

Since graduating in 2014, 20 out of 24 reporting graduates (80%) said they were employed in library and information services at some point since graduation; four respondents reported that they were still seeking work in LIS. However, just 45% had changed positions by the time of the survey, whereas in 2013, 69% had changed positions, and in 2010 three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported a position change since graduating. One respondent held 1 permanent position and 4 part-time positions over the last year, 1 reported 3 placements, and 7 reported 2 placements each.

Another important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. Eight out of 19 responding graduates (42%) said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey. This number is lower than the 2013 cohort (47%) which was much lower than the 2010 cohort (60% seeking more satisfactory employment). One hundred percent of respondents (8 out of 8) who were seeking more satisfactory employment were looking for full-time permanent work in public libraries (3 mentions), academic libraries (3), and "anywhere that will hire me" (2). Of these eight, 4 respondents would like a full time temporary position or part-time position. One respondent commented that "I want experience in the LIS field." Annual salary expectations ranged from "over $30,000 CAD" to $70,000.

The median earnings for 2014 graduates holding full-time permanent positions was $60,000 and the mean was $61,572. Of the nine respondents who reported their annual salaries from full-time permanent positions, salaries ranged from $49,151 to $75,000. The mean and median salaries for the 2014 cohort are in alignment with the 2013 cohort who had a median of $63,086 and a mean of $61,836.

Eight graduates with full-time contract positions reported a monthly median salary of $4,200, ranging from $2,384 to $6,900 per month. Contracts were offered for 5 to 24 months. The 2013 cohort had a similar median at $4,640, but the range was much smaller $3,300 to $5,700 per month.

Of the 17 2014 graduates who reported the type of organization they worked for, 5 were placed at a public library (29%), 3 were placed in government (but not a government library), 2 were in records management, 2 were in a university library, and 1 each were in education technology, school library, school-public library, non-profit legal organization, and business library. Compared to the 2013 cohort, fewer placements were in public libraries (49% in 2013). For 2014 graduates, there was an increase in placements within government and records management compared to 2013 graduates. Most frequently mentioned job assignments among the 2014 cohort were described as administrative/management (3 mentions), information literacy instruction (2), marketing, outreach public relations (2), and reference/information services (2). Graduates in 2014 reported a wide variety of job titles from Information Management Analyst, to Open Data Coordinator to Mobile Library Assistant to Web and Communications Assistant, reflecting a diverse field.

Nineteen respondents answered the question about when they obtained their first position whereas 8 responded to the query about their current position. Thus, the total number of first positions and current positions reported are different. Six out of 19 (32%) found their first position within three months of graduating. This is a similar percentage as the 2013 cohort where 36% found their first position within three months of graduating. As in recent years, graduates found the majority of their positions through electronic sources.

Most of the 2014 graduates were positive about their MLIS program experiences. Key areas of curricular knowledge and skills acquired in the MLIS program that helped graduates most in securing their positions were subject specialization (7 mentions), technology skills (5 mentions), followed by management, marketing, and communication skills and practicum experience (4 mentions each), and type of library environment (3 mentions) which is a similar configuration to the 2013 graduates. "In a word" reactions to their program ranged from educational, enlightening, to incomplete, and "made life-long friends." One student

commented that "My experience was overall a positive one, though I feel that the job market is much more precarious than I expected it to be. I am grateful to have chosen the MLIS and recommend it to anyone thinking about pursuing it."

Placement

Twenty out of twenty-four reporting graduates in 2014 (83%) said they were employed in library and information services at some point since graduation. This is the exact same percentage (83%) as 2013 graduates. In 2011, eight of the eleven survey respondents (73%) reported being employed in library and information services at some point since graduation. Nine out of 20 had changed positions by the time of the survey.

By the time of the survey, 5 graduates out of 20 in 2014 had worked in both permanent and temporary positions. Of the 5 graduates out of 20 who did not hold a permanent position, all held at least one temporary position with two respondents holding two positions each and one respondent holding four temporary positions.

Altogether, 55% (11 out of 20) reported just one placement each (permanent or temporary). This percentage is two times the number reported by the 2013 cohort (24%). Forty-five percent of respondents had two or more placements at the time of the survey, with 7 out of 9 reporting two placements each, 1 reporting three, and 1 reporting five.

Q14 How would you describe your current employment status?

Answered: 18   Skipped: 6
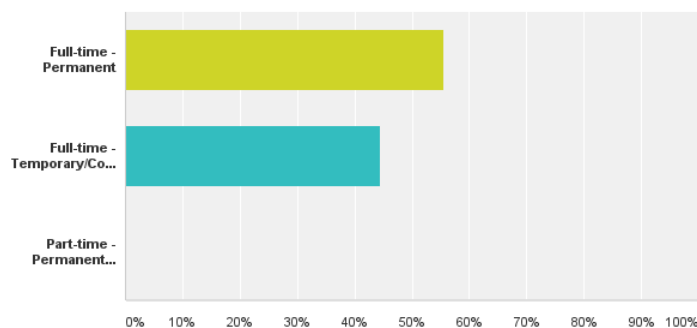
Of the eighteen respondents who answered the question about their current position, 56% (10 out of 18) stated that they held permanent full-time positions. The remaining 44% (8 out of 18) reported working full-time temporary or contract positions. No one reported working part-time in their current position which is a change from 2013 graduates who reported 4

positions as part-time. Full-time contracts ranged from 6 months to 24 months with a median of 12 months.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent	10	56%
Full-time temporary	8	44
Part-time	0	0
TOTAL	18	100%

Salaries

The median earnings for 2014 graduates holding full-time permanent positions were $60,000 and the mean was $61,572. Of the nine respondents who reported their annual salaries from full-time permanent positions, salaries ranged from $49,151 to $75,000. The mean and median salaries for the 2014 cohort are in alignment with the 2013 cohort who had a median of $63,086 and a mean of $61,836.

Eight graduates with full-time contract positions reported a monthly median salary of $4,200, ranging from $2,384 to $6,900 per month. Contracts were offered for 5 to 24 months. The 2013 cohort had a similar median at $4,640, but the range was much smaller $3,300 to $5,700 per month

Employment Sector

Of the 17 2014 graduates who reported the type of organization they worked for, 5 were placed at a public library (29%), 3 were placed in government (but not a government library), 2 were in records management, 2 were in a university library, and 1 each were in education technology, school library, school-public library, non-profit legal organization, and business library. Compared to the 2013 cohort, fewer placements were in public libraries (48% in 2013).

All Placements since Graduation	Number	Percentage
Public libraries	5	29%
Government	3	17
Records management	2	12
University library	2	12
Education technology	1	6
School library	1	6
School-public library	1	6
Non-profit legal organization	1	6
Business library	1	6
TOTAL	17	100%

Graduates in 2014 reported a variety of job titles, Information Management Analyst, School Librarian, Information Management and Records Analyst, Open Data Coordinator, Librarian, Mobile Library Assistant, Scholarly Communications Librarian, Community Services Librarian, Information Specialist, Collections and Readers Advisory Librarian, Library Director, Document Control Administrator, Library and Information Services Technician, Sr. Document Control Coordinator, Education Learning Facilitator, Web and Communications Assistant.

Primary job assignments were described as administrative/management (3 mentions), information literacy instruction (2), marketing, outreach public relations (2), and reference/information services (2). Secondary job assignments were described as administrative/management (3 mentions), reference/information services (2), and 1 mention each for acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, government documents, indexing/abstracting, telecommunications, Web manager, and youth services. Tertiary job assignments included: reference/information services (3), database management (2), and 1 each of administrative/management, cataloguing, circulation, indexing/abstracting, marketing, outreach public relations, Web manager, and youth services.

Location
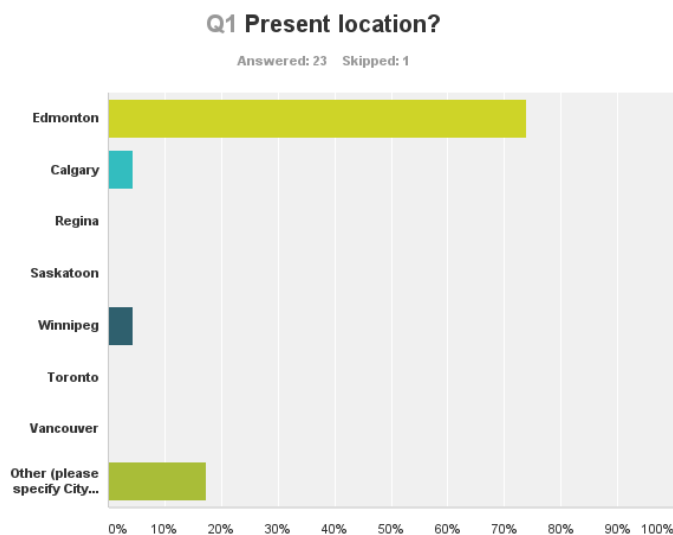
Seventy-four percent of the 2014 reporting graduates listed Edmonton as their present location—a higher percentage from 2013 (69%). Only two other Alberta locations were mentioned: Entwistle (1) and Calgary (1). Altogether, 82% of graduates stayed in Alberta. Other work locations reported among 2014 graduates were 1 in Winnipeg, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (1), Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and Grand Forks, British Columbia (1).

Job Search Time Frame

Nineteen respondents answered the question about when they obtained their first position whereas 8 responded to the query about their current position. Thus, the total number of first positions and current positions reported are different. Six out of 19 (32%) found their first position within three months of graduating. This is a similar percentage as the 2013 cohort where 36% found their first position within three months of graduating. However, in 2011 and 2010 71% and 80% respectively found their first positions with three months of graduating.

A significant difference between the 2013 and 2014 cohorts is the time it took to obtain the current position. In 2013, 61% of respondents reported taking more than six months to secure their current position whereas the vast majority (87.5%) of the 2014 cohort secured their positions within 3 to 6 months of graduating.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	4	21%	1	12.5%
Before graduation	3	16	0	0
Within 3 months of graduation	6	32	0	0
3 to 6 months after graduation	4	20	7	87.5%
More than 6 months after graduation	2	11	0	0
TOTAL	19	100%	8	100%

Job Search Sources

Of the thirteen respondents who specified how they obtained their first and/or current position, over 75% reported they found their position through electronic sources. All but one position was found through electronic sources or personal contacts.

Job Search Sources*		Number of Sources	Percentage
Listservs and job sites		10	77%
Government of Alberta Student Repository	1		
listserv	1		
Library partnership site	1		
Company / library website	7		
Word of mouth and personal contacts		3	23
An acquaintance	1		
Personal connection	1		
Employed as a student	1		
TOTAL		13	100%

* first and current positions

Library Work Experience

By graduation in 2014, 20 out of the 24 responding cohort (83%) had gained experience in libraries, archives, or other information-related positions. Sixty-seven percent (16 out of 24) of 2014 graduates had no experience working in a library, archive, or other information agency prior to entering the MLIS program. However, during the program, 80% of graduates without prior experience (12 out of 16 graduates), gained experience in a library, archive, or information agency.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS - before (8) - during (20)	12	50%
Both before and during MLIS	8	33%
Neither	4	17%
TOTAL	24	100%

MLIS Program Professional Career Preparation

Q38 If you could point to one area of knowledge or skills acquired while in your MLIS program that most helped you secure your FIRST position in the library and information sector, what would that be?

Answered: 17   Skipped: 7
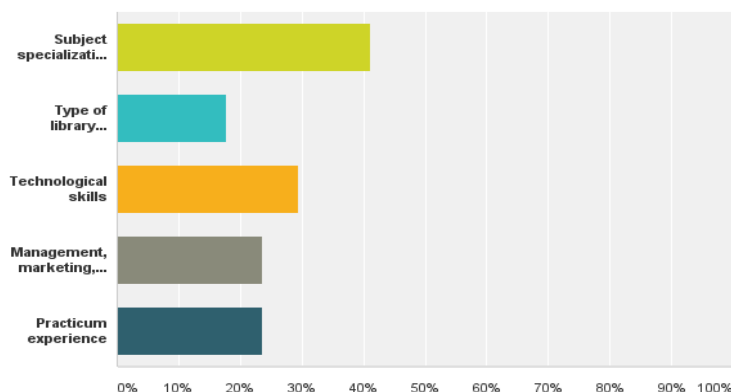
A key area of curricular knowledge and skills acquired in the MLIS program that 2014 graduates thought helped them most in securing their positions, both first and current, was subject specializations (7 mentions), technology skills (5 mentions), followed by management, marketing, and communication skills and practicum experience (4 mentions each), and type of library environment (3 mentions). Also mentioned was "Not so much the knowledge or skills I acquired during the degree, just the fact that I HAD an MLIS."

Some respondents thought that the MLIS program had prepared them well for the workforce "Because I was hired to start up a library from scratch I have pulled from a broad range of my classes. Specifically I am grateful for: cataloging, digital libraries, web design, policy, collections management and human information interaction," "Wonderfully—opportunities for networking and interacting with the library community at local, provincial and national levels were made available to me without any difficulty," "I felt very well prepared for a career in LIS because of the student employment and practicum opportunities available to me during my time in the MLIS program," and "I am expected to know about all facets of the library. The program gave me the variety of courses I needed to be ready for this."

Similar to constructive feedback provided by the 2013 cohort, 2014 graduates noted that a greater focus on career development and guidance, more opportunities for practical experience, and courses exploring non-traditional environments would be useful. "The MLIS probably did not contribute to securing my current position. I do think the MLIS program makes me a better librarian in that position," "The MLIS program prepared me well, but the job market is tight and experience is king. Universities should strongly consider limiting enrolment in MLIS programs," and "I think it prepared me relatively well even though I'm having a hard time getting hired. I feel adequately prepared to a career but somewhat less prepared to actually obtaining one." "I suggest that non-traditional library jobs should have more light shed on them. The MLIS is more than just preparing to be a librarian," "Please consider a co-op program…A more structured placement, or a more long term opportunity that a co-op would provide might help to provide students with a more level playing field for finding a job once we graduate," "I think it is ESSENTIAL that the brown bags continue with honest advice regarding positions in our field," and "I would love for there to be more opportunities for thesis students to find experience in the field during their degrees."

When asked to describe their MLIS program experience "in a word," top of mind reactions ranged from phenomenal, amazing!, satisfactory, interesting, valuable, incomplete, exhausting, necessary, useful, excellent, well-balanced, educational, and enlightening.

Demographic Profile

Of the 24 survey respondents in 2014, 20 were women and 4 were men, 83% and 17%, respectively. The 2013 ratio was 91% women and 9% men whereas the 2011 ratio was 82% women and 18% men. In 2010, 61% of respondents were women and 39% were men. However, with the anomalous years of 2010 and 2013, since 2005, survey respondents tend to be approximately 80% women and 20% men. The average age at graduation for the class of 2014 was 30 years, the same as the 2013 graduating class, and also comparable to the range in ages of the previous three decades or so, 29 to 35 years old.

The vast majority of 2014 graduates held a Bachelor Degree at 19 out of 24 (79%). Other degrees included: 2 (8%) BEds, 1 (4%) BSc, 1 (4%) BCom, 1(4%) BFA, and 1 (4%) MA. Disciplinary majors were English (5 graduates), History (4), Political Science (2), Classics (2), and one each in Anthropology, Art History, Biology and Comparative Literature, Communication Studies, Elementary Education, French, International Relations, Marketing, Native Studies, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Sociology, Theatre, Women's Studies, and Writing.

Future Prospects

An important employment indicator is graduates' satisfaction with their present situation. Eight out of 19 responding graduates (42%) said they were seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey. This number is lower than the 2013 cohort (47%) which was much lower than the 2010 cohort (60% seeking more satisfactory employment). One hundred percent of respondents (8 out of 8) who were seeking more satisfactory employment were looking for full-time permanent work in public libraries (3 mentions), academic libraries (3), and "anywhere that will hire me" (2). Of these eight, 4 respondents would like a full time temporary position or part-time position. One respondent commented that "I want experience in the LIS field." Annual salary expectations ranged from "over $30,000 CAD" to $70,000.

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

December 2015

Thanks to Dr. Alvin Schrader for permission to use the template that he developed.