



School of Library and Information Studies

University of Alberta

U of A SLIS Employment Survey, 2000 Graduates

The School is pleased to announce the findings of its 13th annual employment survey of its graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies program at the University of Alberta. In 2000, 36 students graduated with MLIS degrees, 32 of whom responded to this survey (an 89% response rate, the highest since the annual survey began in 1988). The 2000 survey was conducted in June and July 2001, approximately a year after the spring convocation.

Summary

Nine out of 10 responding graduates in 2000 were employed in library and information studies at the time of the survey. This echoes the high overall placement rates of MLIS graduates during the past decade or so, in the range of 75% to 90%. However, employment prospects for 2000 graduates were much brighter than for graduates in many recent years: some 81% of employed graduates in 2000 held permanent positions, up from 63% in 1999 and around 50% in earlier years.

Moreover, even though the 2000 graduates changed jobs during their first year at the same rate as 1999 graduates did, they were much faster at finding their current positions than were their immediate predecessors: 78% within 6 months of graduation compared to 53% of the 1999 graduates. As well, only 4 graduates in 2000 said they were still seeking more satisfactory employment at the time of the survey, in marked contrast to 1999 graduates, of whom 48% were still looking when surveyed.

The most frequent employers of the 2000 graduates were public and regional libraries, supplying 39% of all current positions, followed by special libraries and academic libraries. Graduates were clustered in reference and public service positions more markedly than were graduates in the previous year. Half of the 2000 graduates were employed in Alberta, mostly in Edmonton, and 17% went to the U.S. for work, patterns generally similar to the experience of 1999 graduates. The most common ways in which the 2000 graduates learned about their positions were word-of-mouth and the SLIS job board.

All but one of the 32 responding graduates gained library work experience either before or during their MLIS program, but patterns differed substantially from the 1999 experience: fewer 2000 graduates worked before entering the MLIS program than did 1999 graduates, while far more worked during it.

Placement

Almost all of the graduates in 2000 (91%) reported employment in library and information services at the time of the survey (29 out of 32). Three graduates were not actively looking (one was traveling and another was obtaining further education). The overall placement rate for 1999 graduates was 86%.

Of the 29 employed graduates in 2000, 27 or 93% held full-time positions, similar to the 1999 pattern. However, 81% of the graduates in 2000 (22 out of 27) had permanent positions, a much higher proportion than for 1999 graduates at 63%, as well as for graduates of several earlier years when it hovered around 50%. Two graduates reported part-time work.

Fifteen of the 29 employed graduates in 2000 (52%) said they had worked in a temporary position at some point since graduation; 4 had held two such positions. The pattern for 1999 graduates was similar (15 out of 25 or 60%), with 6 having had two temporary positions and 1 having had four.

Five of the 29 employed graduates in 2000 (17%) still held full-time temporary placements at the time of the survey, ranging in duration from 10 to 40 months, with a median of 12 months; 2 graduates noted positive prospects for one-year renewals. Temporary placements were two months longer on average than those held by 1999 graduates, when 32% were still in temporary positions at the time of the survey and the range was 2 to 36 months.

Current Placement Status	Number	Percentage
Full-time permanent*	22	76%
Full-time temporary	6	17%
Part-time	4	7%
TOTAL	29	100%

* one position initially offered as temporary employment changed to permanent status by the time of the survey

Employment Sector

Public and regional libraries were the most frequent employers of graduates in 2000 (39%). Special libraries ranked second (21%), academic libraries were a distant third (14%), and library consortia and employers not affiliated with libraries each provided 11% of current placements. This overall pattern was quite different from 1999, when academic and special libraries each supplied one-third each of the placements and public and regional libraries accounted for another 20%.

Current Placement Setting	Number	Percentage
Public and regional libraries	11	39%
Special libraries	6	21%
Academic libraries	4	14%
Consortia	3	11%
University agencies	3	11%
School libraries	1	4%
TOTAL	28*	100%

* one respondent did not describe their work setting

The 2000 graduates were clustered in reference and public service positions more markedly than were graduates in the previous year, with a total of 10 out of 29 reporting such placements, including one children's services librarian, two adult reference librarians, one reference librarian with dual responsibilities as a modern languages and cultures bibliographer, and one adult reference librarian with dual responsibilities as a programming librarian. In 1999, job titles were more varied, and only 6 graduates reported reference service positions of one kind or another.

Other positions and titles held by 2000 graduates were as follows: library services manager, assistant director, technical services supervisor/training and consulting librarian, technical services librarian, automation services librarian, support services librarian, business/marketing librarian, librarian/webmaster, metadata librarian, information specialist, information resources management specialist (databases), agricultural research librarian, teacher librarian/teacher, librarian, and library intern.

Three graduates working in agencies not affiliated with libraries gave the following job titles: research associate, electronic textbase manager, and education and content specialist.

Location

Alberta provided 48% of the current placements for 2000 graduates (14 out of 29), somewhat lower than the pattern in 1999 at 58%. Five graduates in 2000 (17%) went to the United States for work, similar to 1999 graduates (20%). Other work locations reported by 2000 graduates were Ontario (4), Saskatchewan (3), British Columbia (1), Manitoba (1), and Tanzania (1). Most of the Alberta placements were in Edmonton (12 out of 14 graduates or 86%), similar to 1999 at 79%.

Salaries

Fifteen of the 2000 graduates with full-time permanent positions in Canada reported annual salaries ranging from \$23,700 to \$48,000, with a median of \$38,000. This represented a median increase of \$2,500 over salaries reported by 1999 graduates. Five graduates in 2000 with full-time permanent positions in the United States reported annual salaries in U.S. dollars ranging from \$32,000 to \$57,000, with a median of \$35,000, up \$2,400 on average from the previous year.

Four graduates in 2000 holding full-time temporary positions in Canada reported earnings of \$3,000 to \$3,360 per month, with a median of \$3,170, up \$820 on average from 1999. Two part-time positions paid \$22.29 and \$26.33 per hour.

Job Searching

All 29 employed graduates reported how they learned about their first and, if different, current positions. One-third of their sources were "word-of-mouth" (15 mentions) and the SLIS job board ranked second in frequency (10 mentions), followed by the Foothills Library Association website (4), JEROME-L (3), and the American Library Association annual conference Job Fair (3).

Source of Information	Number of Sources Mentioned (first and current positions combined)	Percentage
Word-of-mouth	15	32%
SLIS job board	10	21%
FLA website	4	9%
JEROME-L	3	6%
ALA annual conference Job Fair	3	6%
Other*	12	26%
TOTAL	47	100%

* posting (2), internal posting (1), listserv (1), University of Alberta posting (1), Edmonton Public Library posting (1), BCLA website (1), OLA website (1), University of Toronto Faculty of Information Studies website (1), Alaska SLA website (1), LIT program (1), FSWEF program (1)

Graduates in 1999 also mentioned word-of-mouth and the SLIS job board as their most frequent sources of information, but frequencies were much less pronounced (14% and 12%, respectively).

Other sources mentioned once each by the 2000 graduates were: University of Alberta Library posting, Edmonton Public Library posting, British Columbia Library Association website, Ontario Library Association website, University of Toronto Faculty of Information Studies website, and Alaska State Library Association website. One graduate mentioned submitting an unsolicited application.

Two of the graduates in 2000 who mentioned word-of-mouth indicated that the contact was made through the MLIS Practicum course. Two graduates returned to positions held before the MLIS program.

Some 76% of 2000 graduates found their first position before graduation, and 90% within 3 months of graduation. The 1999 graduates were similar in that 77% found their first position before graduation, and 81% within 3 months of graduation.

Position Obtained	First Position		Current Position (if different from first)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Before entering program	7	24%		
Before graduation	15	52%	1	5%
Within 3 months of graduation	4	14%	9	47%
3 to 6 months after graduation	3	10%	5	26%
More than 6 months after graduation			4	21%
TOTAL	29	100%	19	100%

Comparison of first and current placements shows that 19 of the 29 graduates in 2000 (66%) changed jobs at least once during their first year after graduation. While this was identical to the experience of 1999 graduates, the graduates in 2000 found their current positions much more quickly than their 1999 predecessors: 78% of 2000 graduates compared to only 53% of 1999 graduates had secured their current positions within six months of graduation.

Future Prospects

All survey respondents were asked about job satisfaction with their current work situation. Only 4 graduates in 2000 said they were still seeking more satisfactory employment, in marked contrast with graduates in previous years: 48% of 1999 graduates and 43% of 1998 graduates.

Library Work Experience

Only one of the 32 responding graduates in 2000 did not obtain library work experience either before or during their MLIS program (one reported volunteer experience). This was generally similar to the experience of 1999 graduates, of whom 90% reported library work experience either before or during their MLIS program.

However, work experience patterns differed substantially. Fewer graduates in 2000 worked before their MLIS program than did 1999 graduates (47% versus 55%), while more 2000 graduates worked during their program than did 1999 graduates (97% versus 83%). In fact, only 2 of the 2000 respondents did not work during their MLIS program, compared to 5 respondents in 1999.

Library Work Experience*	Number	Percentage
Either before or during MLIS	31	97%
- before (15 of 32 or 47%)		
- during (30 of 32 or 94%)		
Neither before nor during MLIS	1	3%
TOTAL	32	100%

* excluding for-credit field placements and practicums

Demographics

Of the 32 survey respondents in 2000, 26 were female and 6 were male, 81% and 19% respectively, a ratio similar to the full graduating class of 2000; in 1999, graduates were 76% female and 24% male.

The average age for the graduating class of 2000 was comparable to the norm for recent years, which has ranged between 29 and 34 years of age at graduation. In 2000, the average age of a graduate was 32.5 years; in 1999, it was 34.1.

Academic patterns for degrees earned prior to the MLIS for 2000 survey respondents were as follows: 20 held the BA, 2 the BEd, 1 the BMus, 2 the BSc, 1 the BHEc, 1 the BES (Environmental Studies), 1 the LLB, 2 the MA, and 1 the MSc.

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