

## Employment Survey of 2016 MLIS Graduates

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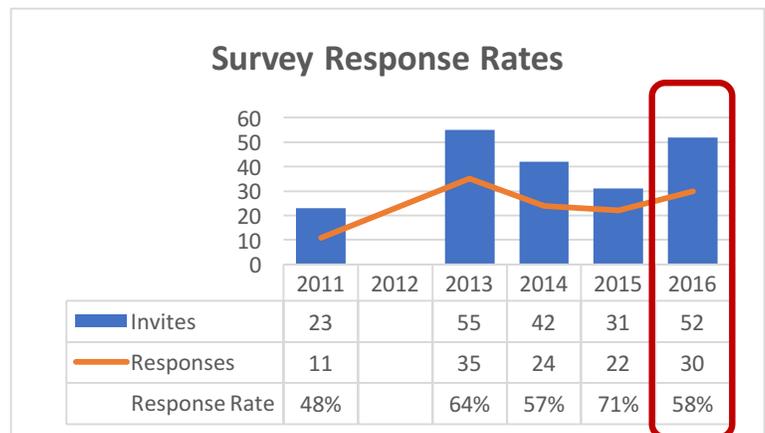
### SURVEY BACKGROUND

In November 2017, the School conducted its 28<sup>th</sup> annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) program at the University of Alberta. The phrase “2016 graduates” includes graduates who convocated in the fall of 2015 or in the spring of 2016. This group includes the first cohort of students from the MLIS online teaching and learning stream to graduate from the program.

The survey was sent to 52 potential respondents, with 30 responding for a response rate of 58%, which is slightly lower than the five-year average. (One of the 30 respondents did not fully complete the survey, therefore most questions indicate that there were 29 respondents.)

This year’s survey underwent a major re-design to:

- reflect a recognition of contemporary jobs that MLIS graduates are seeking and being employed in;
- identify the extent to which an American Library Association (ALA) accredited degree was referenced in the job qualifications language;
- identify the role that MLIS knowledge and competency areas, job responsibility areas, and student experiences while at SLIS, play in preparing graduates for the job marketplace; and
- isolate data specific to ‘first-job’ experience.



Toni Samek, Chair, Faculty of Education - School of Library and Information Studies, helped re-develop the web-enabled survey instrument with technical input from Matt Cheung, Learning Facilitator with Technologies in Education; they, along with Nancy J. Evans, Acting Assistant Chair, Administration, Faculty of Education - School of Library and Information Studies, also

field tested the instrument. As a result of this re-design, the survey was administered three months later than normal with the time-lapse since graduation to taking the survey ranging from 19 to 24 months.

Graduates were asked a number of questions about their job search; job specifics including employment classification, salary, responsibilities, and employer information; their preparedness for the job market; and job satisfaction. All respondents were queried about their *first* Library and Information Science (LIS) related positions post-graduation. Where respondents had changed jobs since their first-jobs, they were also queried about their *current* (at the time the survey was administered) LIS positions. Together, first-job and current-job data were amalgamated to provide comprehensive data on the post-graduation LIS-related employment experience. Where relevant, the distinction between first-job and current-job data is presented; where applicable, it is combined to provide a larger sample set of data.

Disclaimer: For comparative purposes, wherever possible and applicable, five years of results will be presented. Due to a technical error, the annual survey was not undertaken in 2012. However, it must be recognized that due to the inclusion of new or re-worded questions and relatively small sample sizes, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions regarding trends.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

97% of respondents have been employed at some time since graduation in the LIS sector - the highest rate in the five-year comparison period. Over 50% of graduates had secured LIS-related employment prior to graduation, however job change was quite prevalent post-graduation with 66% of respondents having changed jobs between graduation and the time of the survey. This shift resulted in a greater proportion of full-time permanent positions (62%) and the job titles and key job assignments seem to indicate more responsible roles.

At the time of MLIS degree completion, a significant proportion of graduates had some level of library, archives, or other information agency experience with 50% having had experience before entering the MLIS program, and 90% having worked in a related position during the MLIS program. The benefit of previous LIS experience and the importance of student work positions were reflected in the comments.

Querying graduates about their job assignments and the role that MLIS knowledge and competency areas, job responsibility areas, and student experiences while at SLIS played in preparing graduates for the job marketplace provided more granular information not available from previous surveys. Job responsibility areas were varied with most jobs having multiple assignments, the most prevalent being reference/information services – a responsibility where graduates indicated a high level of preparedness. However, the correlation between key responsibilities and preparedness was not consistent throughout the ranking. Overall,

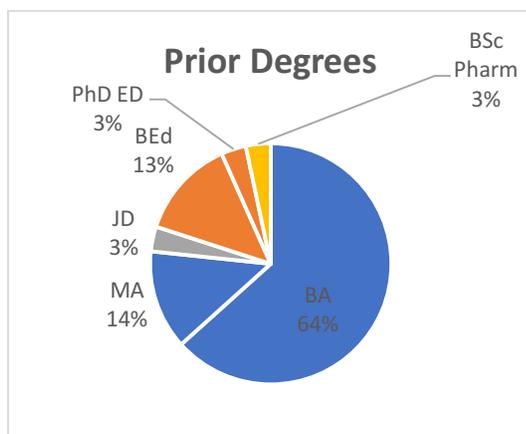
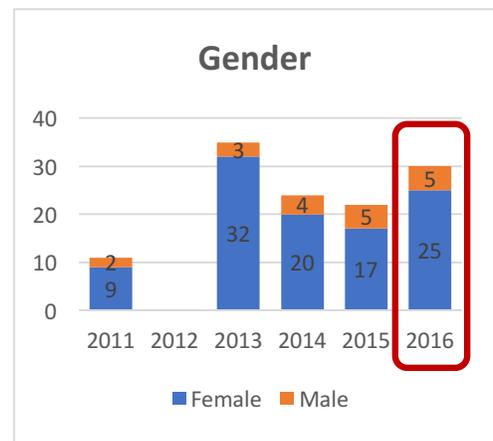
graduates felt a higher level of preparedness for the job market in the key knowledge and competency areas than in specific job responsibilities. This was also reflected in the comments where graduates indicated a desire for more practical skills to be taught and learned in the program.

Looking forward, graduates seem willing to continue beyond their stepping stone positions and change jobs to improve their employment situation. Although 69% of respondents reported being satisfied with their current-jobs, 59% indicated that they are still seeking more satisfactory work.

## **RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Teaching and Learning Stream.** Twenty-seven (90%) of the respondents completed the course-based MLIS teaching and learning stream, with 2 completing an MBA/MLIS combined degree, and 1 completing a MA/MLIS combined degree.

**Gender.** Twenty-five (83%) of the respondents identified as female, with the remaining five (17%) identifying as male. This proportional split is fairly consistent within the five-year range.

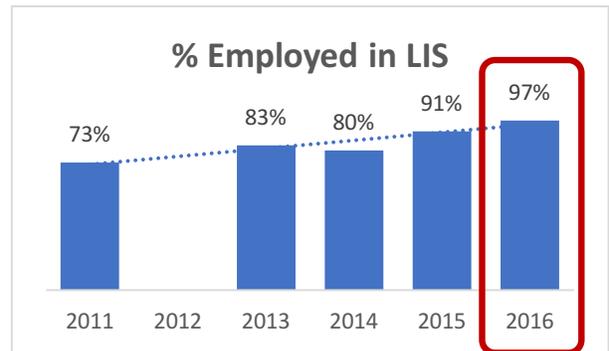


**Prior Degrees.** Nearly 75% of academic degrees obtained prior to entering the MLIS program were Arts degrees (19 BAs and 4 MAs), which is within the five-year range of 72-83%. There were 5 Education degrees (4 BEds and 1 PhD) and singular degrees from Pharmacy and Law. Compared to previous years, this is a relatively narrow range of degree areas. Disciplinary majors were English (10), History (10), Art History (2); singularly mentioned were Music, Psychology, Sociology, Science, Canadian Politics, Education, French, Communications, and Secondary Mathematics.

**Prior Experience.** Exactly 50% of respondents had library, archives, or other information agency experience before entering the MLIS program, while 90% (27) worked in a library, archives, or other information agency position during the MLIS program.

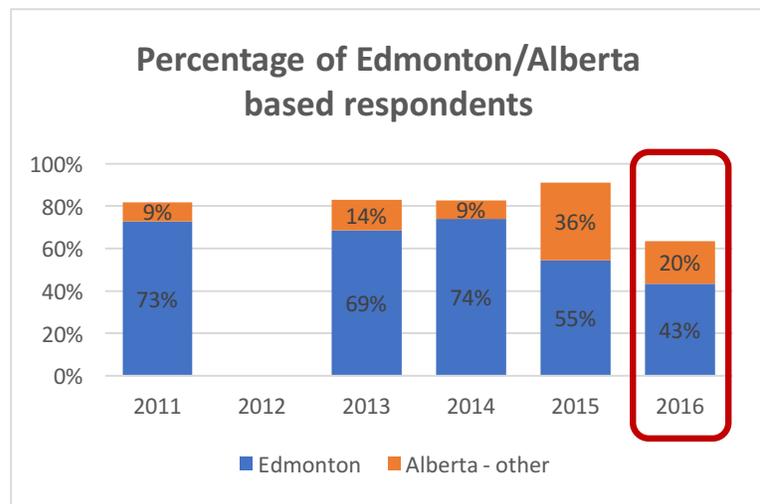
## **GENERAL EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION**

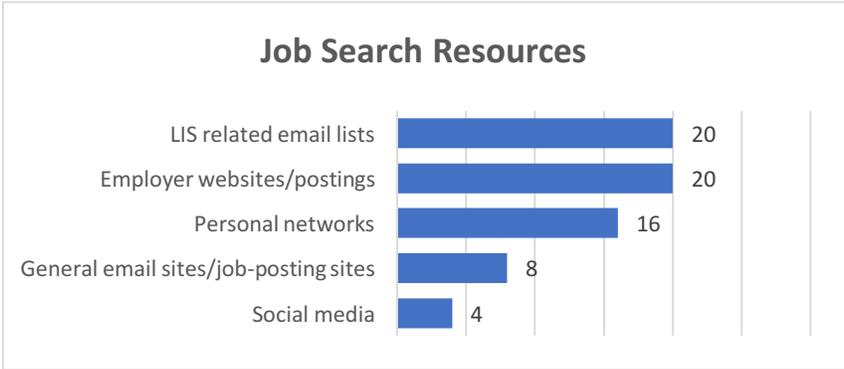
**Sector Employment.** Twenty-nine (97%) respondents have been employed at some time since graduation in the LIS sector, with one respondent still seeking work in the LIS sector. This is the highest rate in the five-year comparison period, which shows a general upward trend. Interpretation of these results should recognize the longer than normal time lapse between graduation and the administration of the survey.



**ALA Accreditation.** The survey identified 60 permanent or temporary LIS-related positions held by respondents since graduation. Thirty-five (58%) specifically referenced an American Library Association (ALA) accredited degree in the job qualifications language.

**Location.** Thirteen (43%) respondents remained in Edmonton, with another 6 (20%) remaining in Alberta. The proportion of respondents remaining in Edmonton is lower than in past years - likely a reflection of the more diverse geographic location of students as a result of the online teaching and learning stream. Other locations indicated by respondents include 4 in British Columbia (13%); 3 in Ontario (10%); and 1 each in Manitoba, Northwest Territories, the USA, and Switzerland. Again, likely attributable to the online cohort, respondents are more geographically dispersed than in past years.



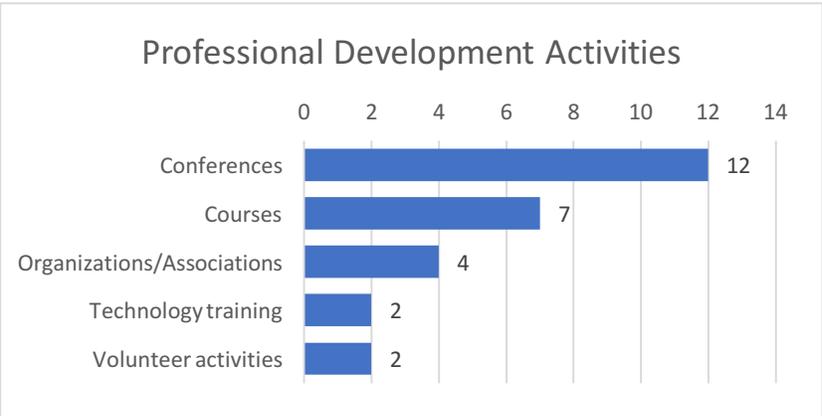


**Job Search Resources.**

LIS-related email lists and employer websites/postings were each used by 20 respondents (69%) in their job search; 16 (55%) used personal networks; 8 (28%) used general email lists/job posting sites; and 4 (14%) used social media.

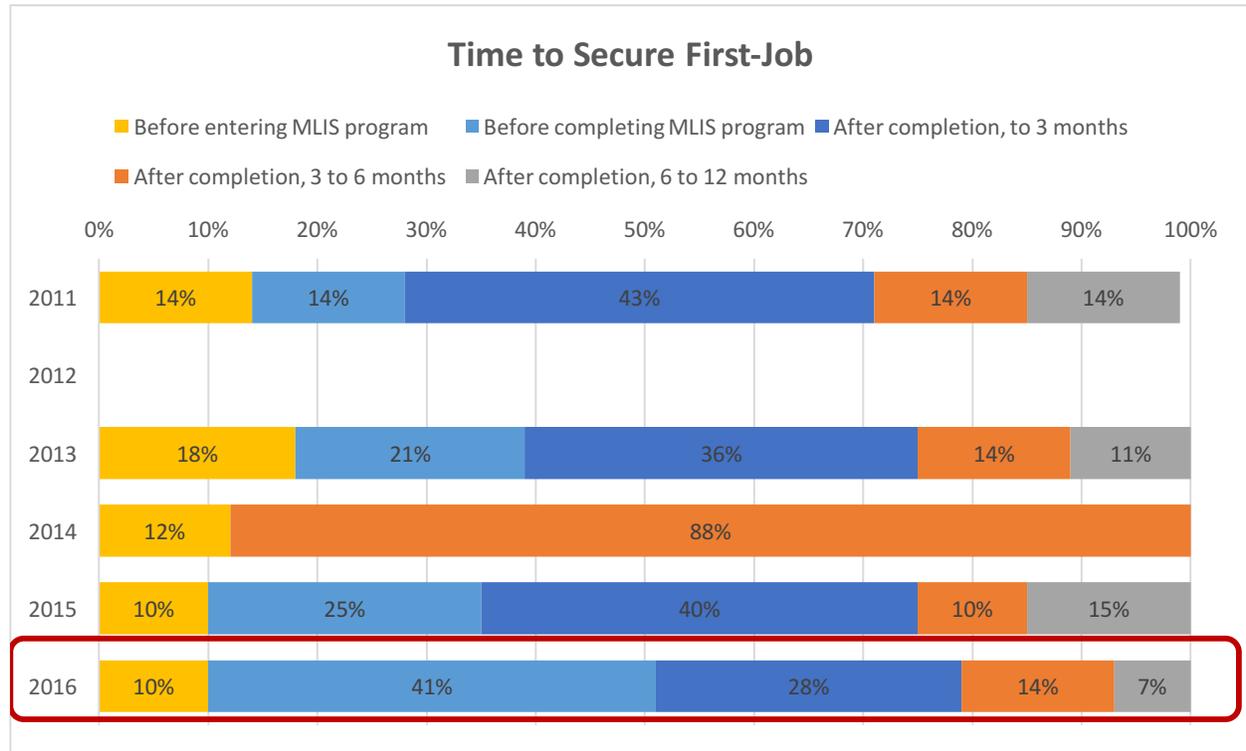
**Professional Development Activities.**

Twenty-one respondents indicated the types of professional development activities that they had participated in since graduation. (Respondents were invited to identify as many as applicable.)



## FIRST-JOB DATA

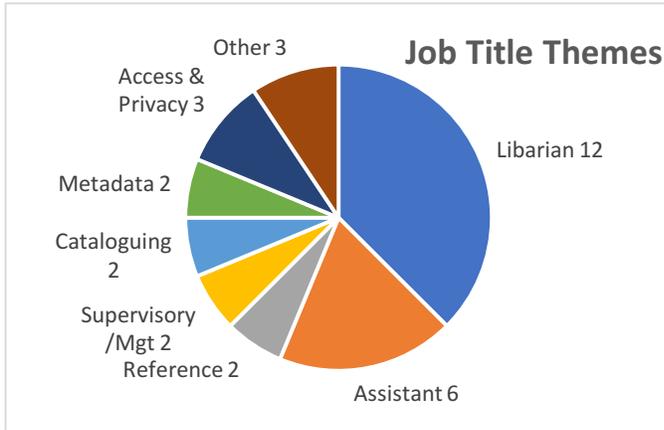
**Time to Secure First-job.** Of those who indicated that they had found LIS-related employment, over 50% had secured employment before graduation, a relatively higher percentage than in other years in the comparison. Two (7%) took 6 to 12 months after completion to find their first LIS-related employment and 1 respondent was still looking at the time of the survey.



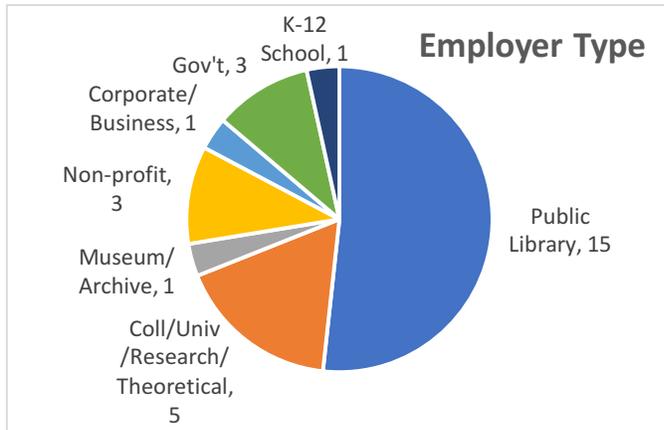
**Job Classification and Salary.** From the survey, the following information is available about first-job positions:

- 10 respondents (34%) indicated that their first-job was a full-time permanent position, with 7 still in those jobs at the time of the survey. The annual salary range for these positions was \$40,000 to \$78,000 with a mean salary of \$58,592 and a median salary of \$58,000.
- 13 respondents (45%) attained full-time temporary/contract positions with 2 remaining in those jobs at the time of the survey. The monthly salary range for these positions was \$2,800 to \$6,000 with a mean salary of \$4,165 and a median salary of \$4,100. The term of the contracts ranged from 4 to 12 months, with an average length of 9.25 months and a median of 11 months.
- 6 respondents (21%) attained part-time (permanent and/or temporary positions) employment with 5 indicating that they did not work more than one job concurrently. The part-time hours worked per week ranged from 12 to 24 hours, with a median of 17.7 hours and a median of 17.6 hours. The wages ranges from \$15.75 to \$31 per hour, with an average of \$23.91/hour and a median of \$25.41/hour.

**Job Titles.** Listed along the right, first-job titles were varied. Grouping of these titles indicates some commonalities based on job function.



'Librarian' appeared in 12 (43%) job titles; 'Assistant' appeared in 6 (21%); 'Access and Privacy' or 'Information Access' appeared in 3 (11%); 'Manager' or 'Supervisor' occurred twice (7%), as did 'Metadata', 'Cataloguing', and 'Reference' (7%).



**Employer Type.** Fifteen respondents (52%) attained their first-job after graduation with a public library, while 5 (17%) were first employed by a college/university/research/theological institution. The government and non-profit sector each accounted for the jobs of 3 respondents (10%).

- Community Outreach and Program Librarian

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- Librarian

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- Senior School Librarian

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- Library Assistant

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- Branch Supervisor

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- Research Analyst

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- Metadata and Data Curation Specialist

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- Library Technician

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- Student Assistant

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- Records Coordinator

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- Library Assistant

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- Library Assistant

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- Librarian

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- Cataloguing Librarian

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- Cataloguing and Metadata Assistant

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- Instruction Librarian

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- Specialist, information and access

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- Career and Small Business Librarian

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- Librarian, Children's, Teens, and Families

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- Librarian, programming and outreach

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- Branch Manager

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- Assistant archivist

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- Access and Privacy Advisor

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- Access and Privacy Advisor

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- Reference Librarian

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- Teen Services Librarian

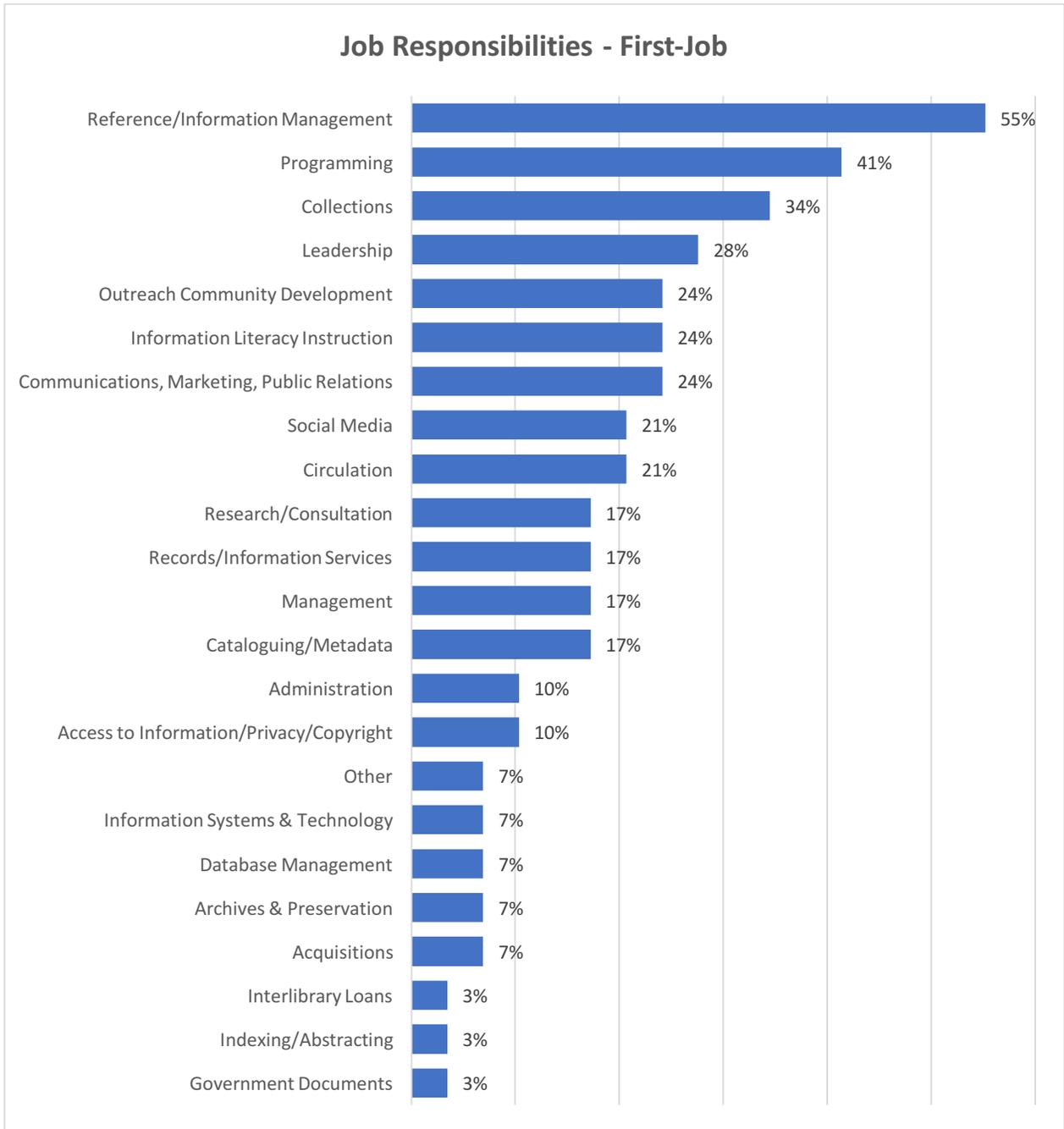
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- Reference assistant

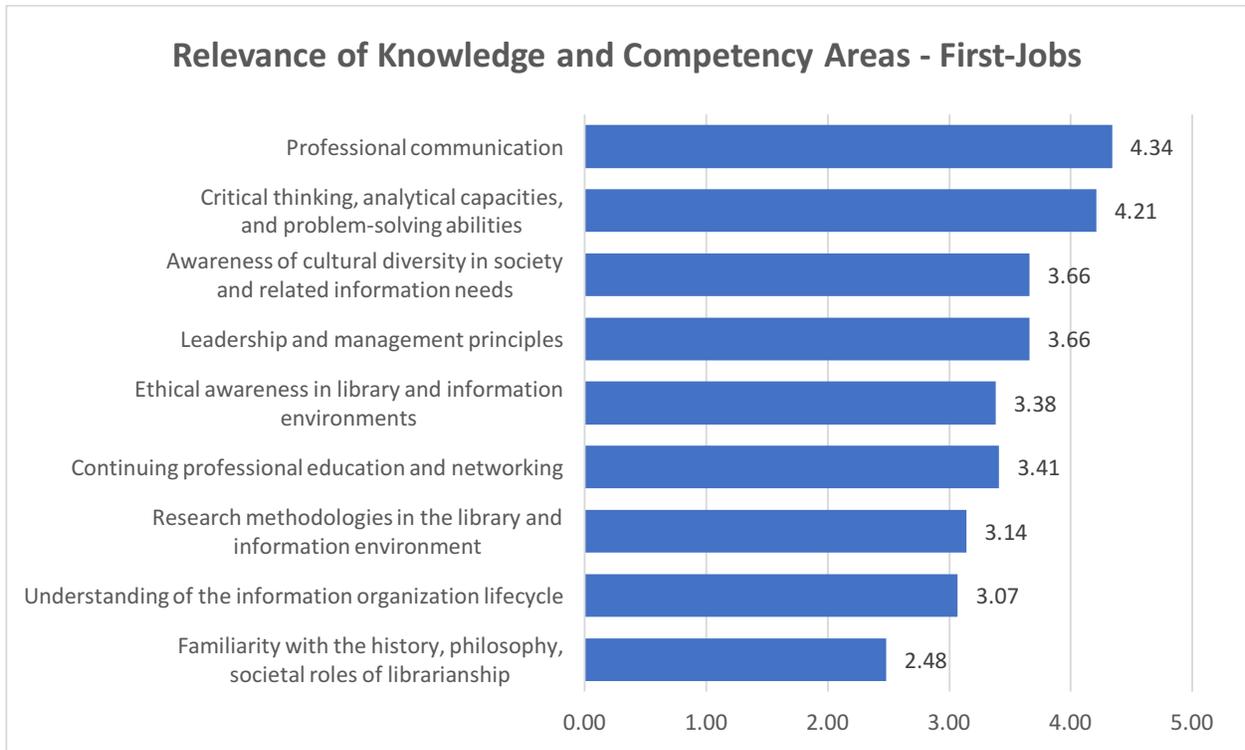
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- Public Services Librarian

**Job Responsibilities - Prevalence.** Respondents were asked to indicate the main job assignments encountered in their first-jobs, choosing as many responses as applicable. Over half of respondents indicated that reference/information services were a part of their initial job responsibilities. Job responsibilities were quite diverse with programming, collections, leadership, outreach community development, information literacy instruction, and communications/marketing/public relations ranking as the most prevalent.

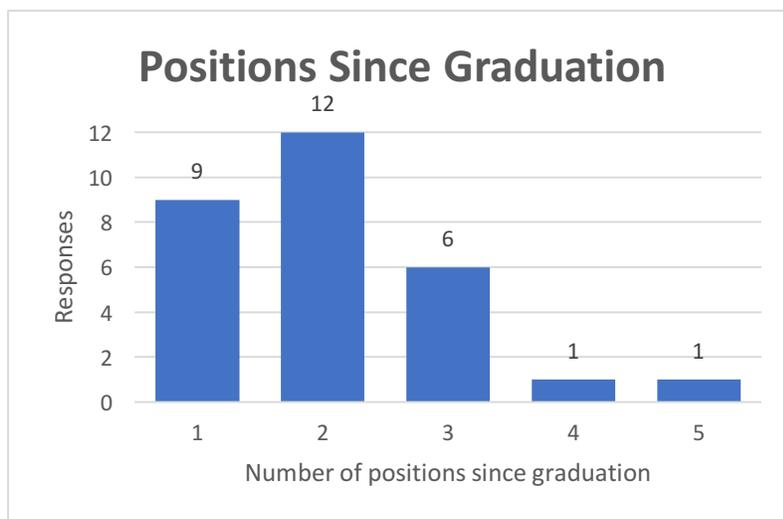
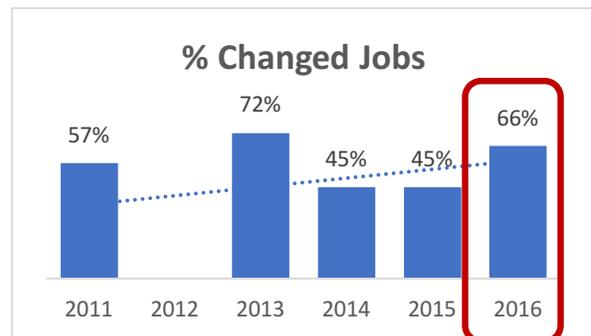


**Knowledge and Competency Areas - Relevance.** On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Not Important, 3 being Moderately Important and 5 being Very Important, respondents assessed the relevance of knowledge and competency areas (based on the MLIS Program Learning Outcomes) in helping them secure their positions in the LIS sectors. Results indicate that “professional communication” and “critical thinking, analytical capacities, and problem-solving abilities” were the most important, while “familiarity with the history, philosophy, societal roles of librarianship” was less than moderately important in securing their first-jobs after graduation.



## COMPREHENSIVE JOB DATA

**Job Change.** The data indicates significant turnover in jobs during the period since graduation with 19 (66%) respondents having changed jobs. Of those still in their first-job since graduation, 7 are in permanent jobs, 2 are in temporary or contract positions, and one is unidentifiable.

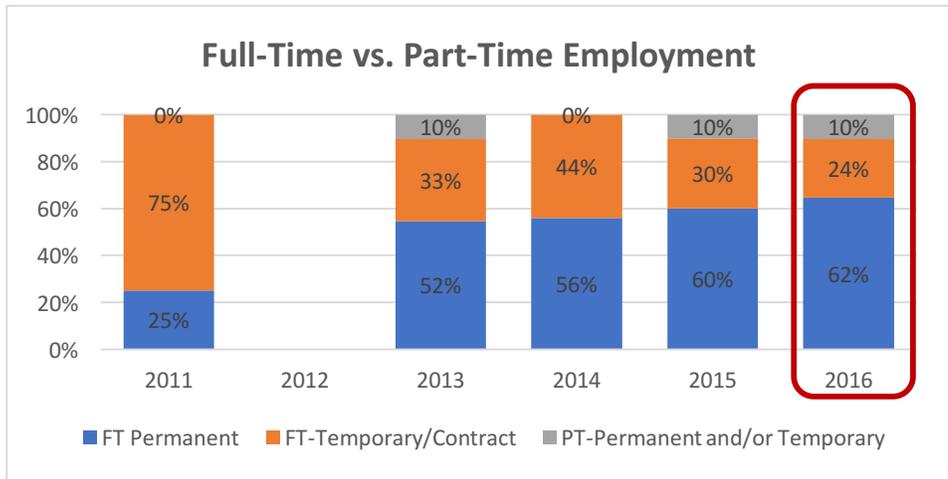


A job change can include situations where respondents remain within the same organization, but change jobs laterally or receive a promotion. Some respondents changed jobs multiple times during the timeframe. On average, respondents have held 2.06 positions since graduation; if only those who changed jobs are included, the average increases to 2.55 positions since graduation.

Considering job change and multiple positions held at the same time, the survey identified a total of 60 permanent or temporary LIS-related positions held by respondents since graduation.

The balance of data presented will be an amalgamation of the 29 first-position responses plus the 19 current-job responses to provide a more fulsome picture of the total job search experience, a greater depth of data to consider, and the ability to compare with past data collections. Where relevant for comparison purposes, the first-time and current data may be presented separately.

**Job Classification.** Job change since first employment resulted in a greater proportion of full-time permanent positions (62%) relative to full-time temporary/contract positions (24%) and part-time permanent and/or temporary positions (10%) than there was with first-



jobs (34%, 45%, 21% respectively). These proportions are consistent with the five-year trend and seem to indicate a shift towards full-time permanent positions over the time period.

**Salary – Permanent.** The annual salary range for full-time permanent position positions was \$40,000 to \$104,000 with a mean salary of \$63,474 and a median salary of \$61,000. The mean salary is higher than in any of the comparative years, with the median being lower than in 2013.

| 2011     |          | 2013     |          | 2014     |          | 2015     |          | 2016     |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Mean     | Median   |
| \$53,450 | \$55,500 | \$61,836 | \$63,086 | \$61,572 | \$60,000 | \$57,265 | \$57,194 | \$63,474 | \$61,000 |

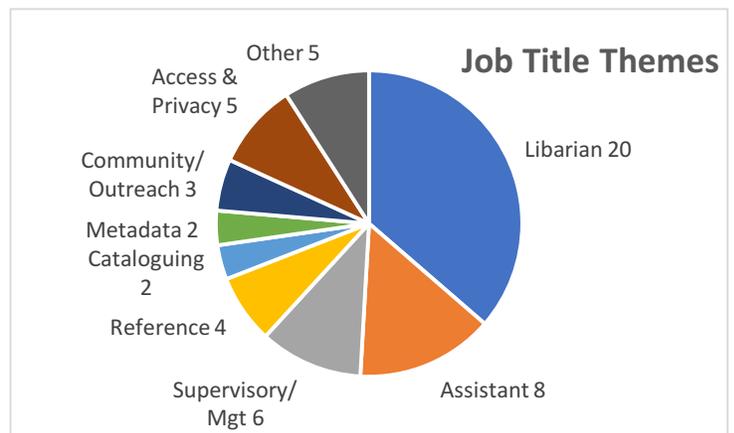
**Salary - Full-time temporary/contract.** The monthly salary range for full-time temporary/contract positions was \$2,800 to \$6,000 with a mean salary of \$4,119 and a median salary of \$4,050. The term of the contracts ranged from 4 to 24 months, with an average length of 10.2 months and a median of 11 months.

**Salary – Part-time.** The part-time hours worked per week for permanent and/or temporary positions ranged from 0.5 to 30 hours, with an average of 17.1 hours and a median of 17.75 hours. The wages range from \$12.50 to \$71 per hour, with an average of \$30.38/hour and a median of \$25.41/hour. Removing the \$71/hour wage (which was a conversion from Swiss francs only applicable for 30 minutes of work/week, and an obvious outlier), results in a range of \$12.50 to \$40 per hour, with an average of \$24.58/hour and a median of \$25.00/hour.

**Job Titles.** Job titles were varied. The list to the left is a list of first-job titles while the list to the right adds current-positions.

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| Community Outreach and Program Librarian   |
| Librarian                                  |
| Senior School Librarian                    |
| Library Assistant                          |
| Branch Supervisor                          |
| Research Analyst                           |
| Metadata and Data Curation Specialist      |
| Library Technician                         |
| Student Assistant                          |
| Records Coordinator                        |
| Library Assistant                          |
| Library Assistant                          |
| Librarian                                  |
| Cataloguing Librarian                      |
| Cataloguing and Metadata Assistant         |
| Instruction Librarian                      |
| Specialist, information and access         |
| Career and Small Business Librarian        |
| Librarian, Children's, Teens, and Families |
| Librarian, programming and outreach        |
| Branch Manager                             |
| Assistant archivist                        |
| Access and Privacy Advisor                 |
| Access and Privacy Advisor                 |
| Reference Librarian                        |
| Teen Services Librarian                    |
| Reference assistant                        |
| Public Services Librarian                  |

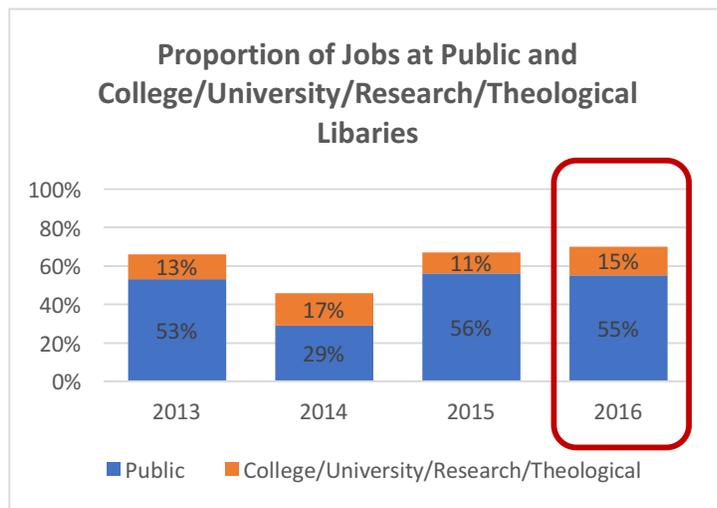
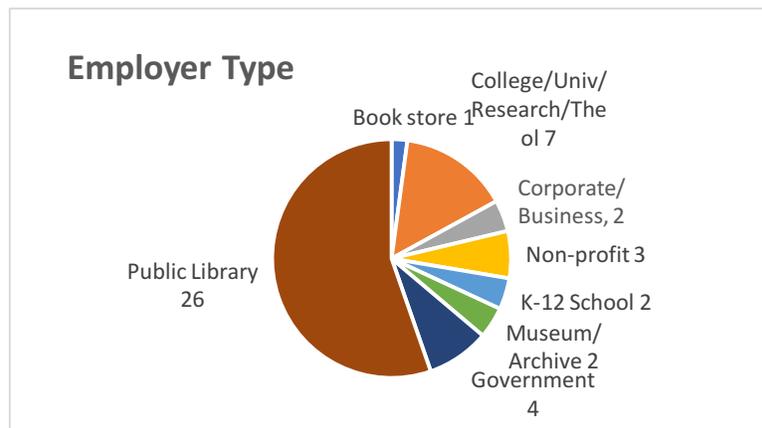
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| Supervising librarian                                  |
| Cover Teacher  |
| Customer Service Librarian Children and Youth Services |
| Lead Branch Supervisor                                 |
| Development Liaison                                    |
| Librarian in Residence                                 |
| Information Management Analyst                         |
| Digital Services Librarian                             |
| Library Assistant                                      |
| Librarian  |
| Reference Assistant                                    |
| Community Outreach Librarian                           |
| Manager, Information Services                          |
| Outreach and Program Librarian                         |
| Head of Reference Services                             |
| Community Outreach Librarian                           |
| Customer experience representative                     |
| Library Manager  |



Analysis of these titles indicates some commonalities based on job function. ‘Librarian’ appeared in 20 (43%) of job titles; ‘Assistant’ appeared in 8 (17%); ‘Manager’ or ‘Supervisor’ or ‘Head’ occurred in 6 (13%); ‘Access’ and ‘Privacy’ or ‘Information Access’ appeared in 5 (11%);

'Reference' occurred in 4; 'Community' or 'Outreach' occurred in 3 (7%); while 'Metadata' and 'Cataloguing', each occurred twice (4%). Although caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from small sample sizes, it was noticed that the proportion of supervisory/management positions increased, while the proportion of assistant positions decreased, when comparing current to initial job positions, perhaps signalling that respondents seem to be offered more responsibility over time. No community outreach positions were offered as first-time positions (although Outreach Community Development was identified by 24% of respondents as main job assignment of first-jobs), but 3 of these positions were subsequently offered. Additionally, the proportion of jobs related to information management seemed to increase with experience.

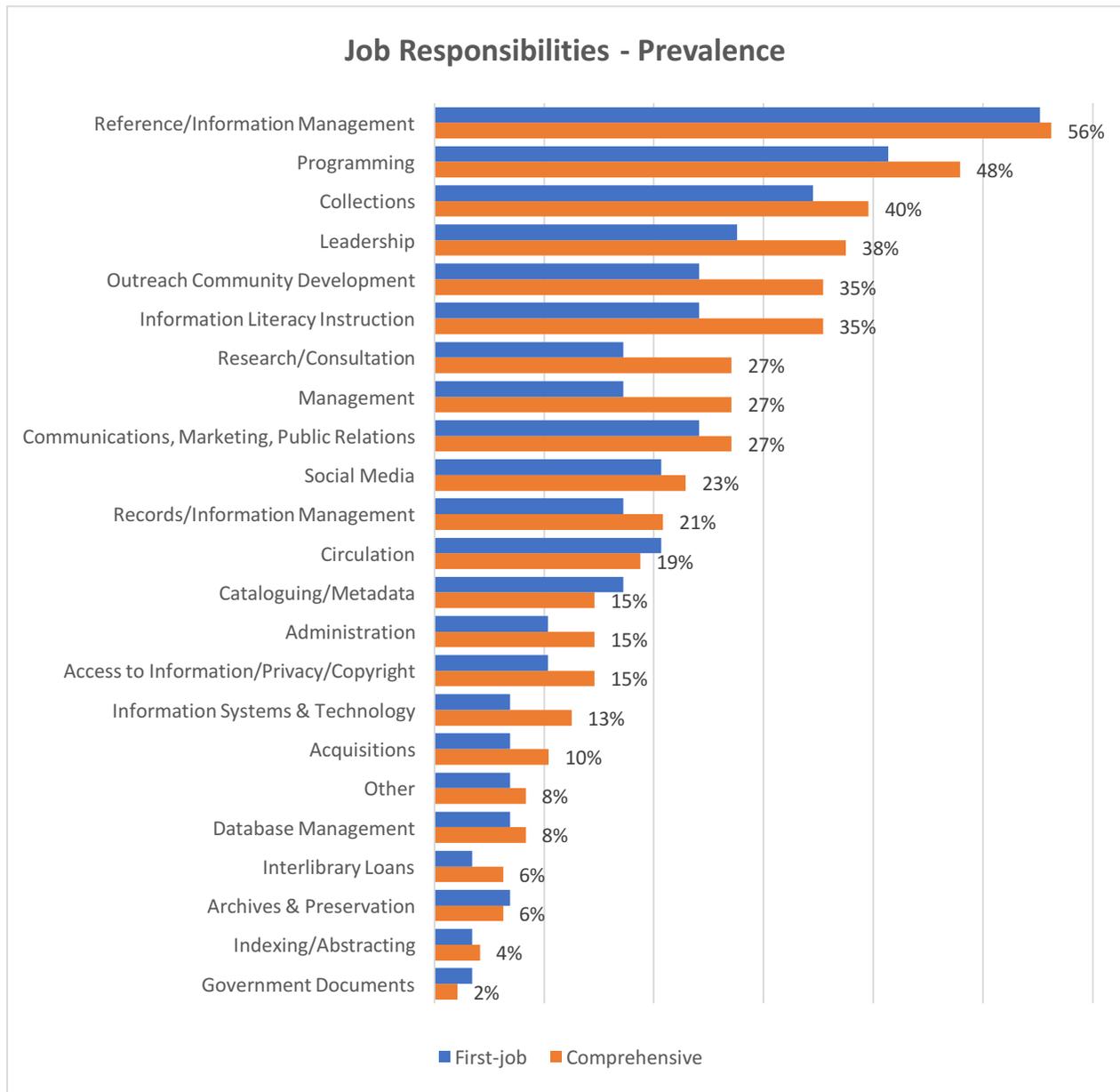
**Employer Types.** Twenty-six of 47 (55%) jobs identified in the survey were in public libraries; 7 were in college/university/research/theoretical institutions; 4 (9%) were with government; and 3 (6%) were with non-profit organizations.



Comparison with previous years requires some subjectivity, as previous surveys combined types and functionalities (eg. government, records management) of organizations, however, it is possible to determine the proportional importance of public libraries, and to a lesser extent, college/university/research/theoretical libraries, as employers. Previous surveys referred to 'academic', 'university', and 'post-secondary' libraries, none of which are as comprehensive as the definition in the

current survey, therefore it is possible that results for this category from previous years are slightly under-reported. The data indicates that the role of public and college/university/research/theoretical libraries as employers is as relevant in the current survey as in past years. (2011 data was omitted due to low response rate.) Analysis of the first-job vs. current-job responses indicates that the role of these employers grows for subsequent employment opportunities.

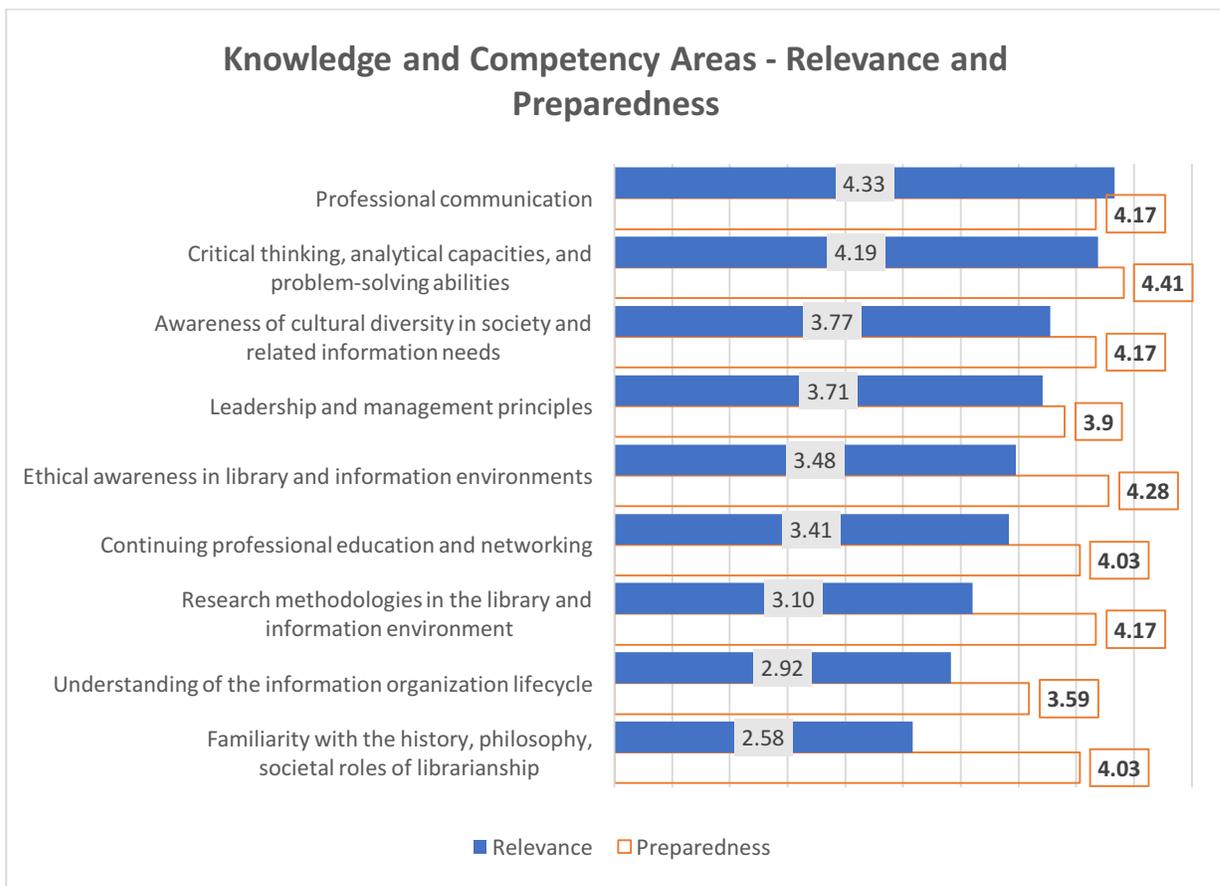
**Job Responsibilities - Prevalence.** Surveying respondents about job responsibilities, allowing for multiple selections, provides a more granular and accurate examination of the job activities being carried out than can be deduced from only considering job titles. Providing reference/information management services was identified by greater than 50% of respondents as being a main job assignment, yet is rarely reflected in job title. Programming, collections, leadership, outreach community development, and information literacy instruction were identified by over one-third of respondents as being key activities in their employment. Compared to first-jobs, the ranking of the prevalence of jobs responsibilities was somewhat stable, with a marked increase in the prevalence of information literacy instruction, outreach community development, management, leadership, and research/consultation.



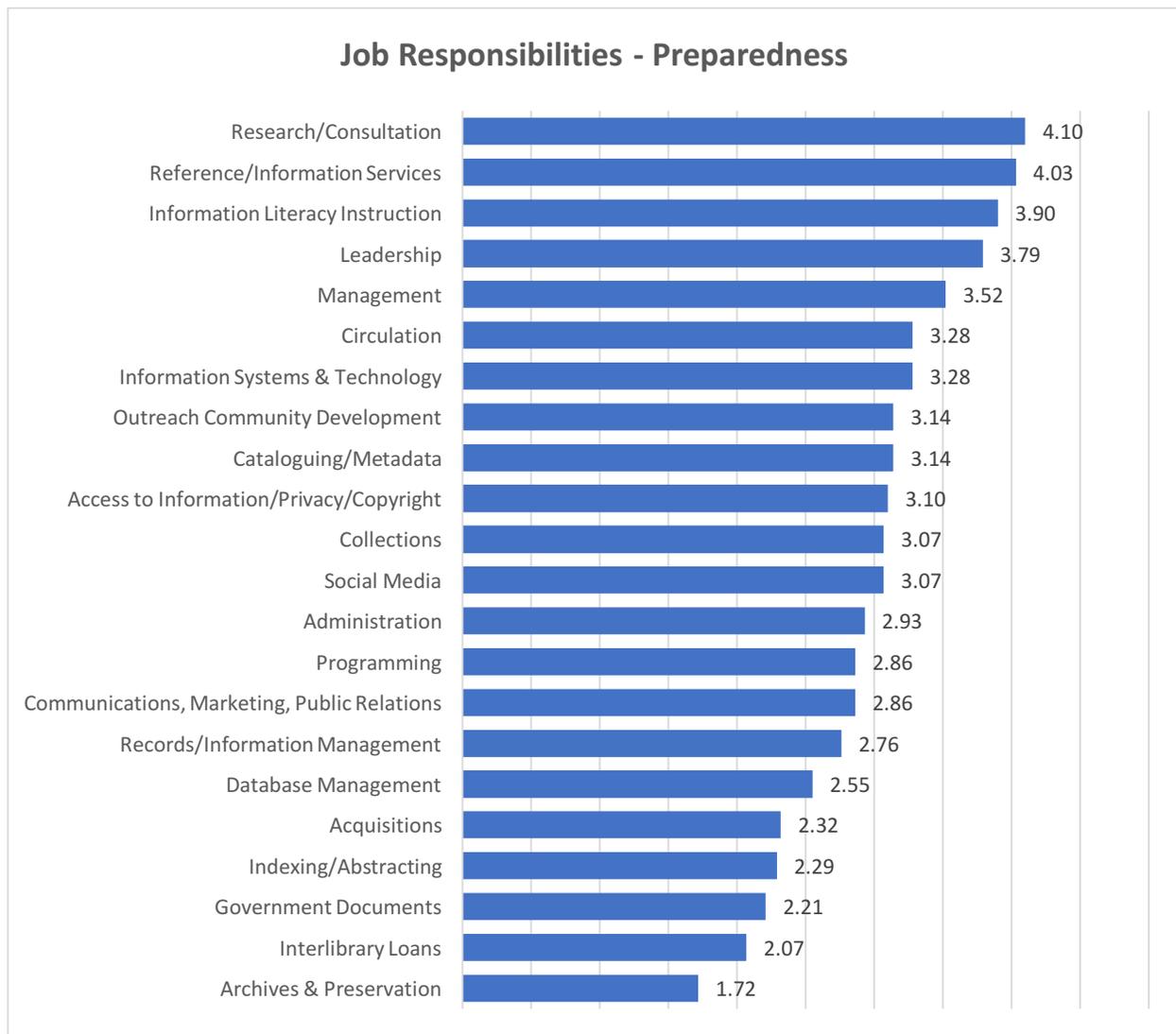
**Knowledge and Competency Areas - Relevance.** On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Not Important, 3 being Moderately Important and 5 being Very Important, respondents assessed the relevance of knowledge and competency areas (based on the MLIS Program Learning Outcomes) in helping them secure their positions in the LIS sector. As the chart in the next section illustrates, rankings remain consistent between first-job (presented on page 9) and comprehensive data with “professional communication” and “critical thinking, analytical capacities, and problem-solving abilities” identified as the most relevant. In all categories, relevance was higher for securing first-jobs than it was for subsequent positions.

**JOB PREPAREDNESS**

**Knowledge and Competency Areas – Preparedness.** Respondents were also asked to rate their level of preparedness upon graduation for the job market in the knowledge and competency areas. A 5-point scale was used with 1 being ‘Not At All’, 3 being ‘Somewhat’ and 5 being ‘Adequate’. Most categories scored 4.0 or above, however, the rankings of the relevance and preparedness results do not always align.



**Job Responsibilities - Preparedness.** Respondents were asked to rate their level of preparedness for the job market in the various responsibility areas. A 5-point scale was used with 1 being 'Not At All', 3 being 'Somewhat' and 5 being 'Adequate'. Overall, these scores were lower than the Competency and Knowledge areas with only 'Research/Consultation' and 'Reference/Information Services' scoring 4 or higher. Ten of 22 categories (45%) were rated lower than 3.0 (Somewhat Prepared). The preparedness rankings are not aligned with the graduates' job assignment experiences.



**SLIS Experiences.** Using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Not Important, 3 being Moderately Important and 5 being Very Important, students assessed the importance of various SLIS

experiences in helping them secure positions in the library and information sector. These scores should be interpreted carefully – they are not scores of the experience themselves, but of the relevance to *that particular respondent* in securing a position. Scores are (rightfully) deflated by respondents providing a score of “1 – Not Important” to activities that they did not participate in. From the data, it is not possible to determine whether a score is low because the experience gained from participating in the activity is not an effective tool in securing a position or whether it reflects a lack of participation. It is relevant to note that for each category, the SLIS activities were most relevant for securing a first-job than for subsequent positions.

| SLIS Experiences                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> Position | Current-job | Comprehensive |
|---|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| MLIS course work*                                 | 3.41                     | 3.16        | 3.31          |
| MLIS practicum*                                   | 2.71                     | 2.26        | 2.53          |
| LIS-related on-campus employment opportunities    | 2.14                     | 1.74        | 1.98          |
| On-campus student leadership involvement          | 1.97                     | 1.63        | 1.84          |
| Networking with graduates and other professionals | 1.79                     | 1.42        | 1.64          |

\*The MLIS practicum is an optional credit course offered within the curriculum.

**Comments.** The following comments were provided in response to the question, “Do you have any comments about how well your MLIS program prepared you for employment in the library and information sector?”

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#### Comments about MLIS program

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Being in the combined program, I didn't have very many electives so I was unable to really flesh out my education. Thankfully, I was able to get hired on for several student positions which REALLY helped me with my career!

Most of the skills I been to succeed in my current position I learned from the part time work I did while at school and from interactions and conversations outside class with my classmates. Many of my classes, particularly the technology related ones, were dated and unhelpful.

Adequate can also mean an over emphasis compared to the realities of actual on the ground work.

Took many courses that focused on practical skills (e.g., metadata), which helped me prepare. More options for coding/database management/IT would have been useful

I felt that the MLIS program was very focused on theoretical aspects of the position, but didn't necessarily focus on practical aspects as much such as programming. In addition, with having been in the first cohort of the online program, the options for courses to take were limited, and it was disappointing to not be able to take more courses related to collections and cataloguing.

Many of the applicable/practical skills I used to apply and work within libraries were not from the MLIS program itself, but from an opportunity I had to work with the University of Alberta Libraries throughout my degree.

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[M]ore instructional skills training would be helpful

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To be honest, I feel like I paid for an expensive piece of paper. I didn't get much out of it. But I knew that going in.

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Overall I felt well prepared -- though some things like metadata went way over my head. Thankfully I haven't had to deal with that in my job!

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It laid a strong foundation for employment in a public library and complimented my previous library work experience.

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The MLIS program made me highly prepared for employment and made me more of an asset to my current job.

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Overall, I'm satisfied with the MLIS program. Some more practical information, however (collection development, budgets, vendor interaction, committee expectations, etc) would have been really helpful. Perhaps a course that briefly covers what your day-to-day may look like on a practical level as a librarian. I learned a lot of this during my practicum but I was very fortunate to have a really successful practicum placement - others who were less lucky may have been at a disadvantage upon graduation.

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My previous job experience in libraries was far more important than the MLIS degree.

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It armed us with the knowledge to succeed. However all the knowledge in the world cannot compete with a current job market that, reasonably, values quantifiable experience over theoretical knowledge . As such it gave us the skills to succeed in the job but not the skills to succeed getting the job.

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No post-grad support whatsoever for online students. I remember thinking the course very much felt like it was catered to those already working in the field and in some ways graduating felt like a self-fulfilling prophesy. Those who were already working gained a better career path but a few I have know who were in other career paths looking to transition have had a much more difficult time.

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Would like to have had a budgeting course

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A number of themes emerged from respondents' comments about how well the MLIS program prepared them for employment in the LIS sector:

- desire for increased focus on practical skills
- benefit of previous LIS experience
- the importance student work positions
- desire for increased/improved technology courses
- specific challenges of the online teaching and learning stream

These comments are consistent with those of past years – with the addition of those specific to the online structure.

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

**Current Satisfaction.** On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Very Dissatisfied and 5 being Very Satisfied, respondents indicated an average satisfaction level of 3.79. Although 20 of 29 respondents (69%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their current-jobs, 17 (59%) indicated that they are still seeking more satisfactory work. Of those seeking more satisfying work, the following reasons were explicitly stated (Respondents were allowed to identify as many as applicable):

| <b>Reason</b>                               | <b>Number of respondents</b> |
|---|------------------------------|
| Seeking a librarian position                | 4                            |
| Seeking a permanent or more stable position | 4                            |
| Seeking higher pay                          | 2                            |
| Seeking greater challenge                   | 2                            |

In a subsequent question, all indicated that they would like a permanent full-time position.

Targeted employers included (Respondents were allowed to identify as many as applicable):

| <b>Preferred Employer</b>  | <b>Number of respondents</b> |
|--|------------------------------|
| Academic library   | 9                            |
| Public library   | 6                            |
| Government   | 2                            |
| Special libraries, School libraries, Special Collections/Museums/Art galleries | 1 each                       |

Target salaries ranged from \$30,000 to \$95,000 (\$Canadian dollar equivalent of 73,500 CHF) per year, with an average of \$63,350.

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***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.***

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