



Employment Survey of 2017 MLIS Graduates

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SURVEY BACKGROUND

In January 2019, the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) conducted its 29th annual employment survey of graduates of the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) program at the University of Alberta. The phrase “2017 graduates” includes graduates who convoked in the fall of 2016 or in the spring of 2017.

The survey was sent to 61 potential respondents with 54 responding for a response rate of 89%; however, 10 of those respondents did not fully complete the survey.

Graduates were queried 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. The focus of this survey is to understand graduates’ experiences in finding employment after graduation, however the time lag of 18-24 months between survey administration and graduation provides an additional opportunity to consider additional employment data from those respondents who have moved on to subsequent employment opportunities.

This survey follows the same format as the 2016 survey and therefore direct comparisons can be made although consideration must be given the fact that the 2017 sample is significantly larger (54 versus 30 respondents).

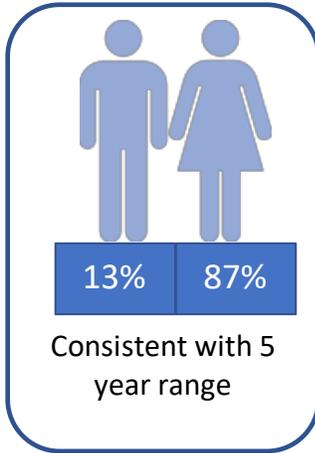
Thanks to SLIS Assistant Chair (Academic Professional Officer) Izabela Martyniak for liaising with Alumni Relations and the FOIP office for survey distribution and ethics approval.

KEY FINDINGS

- 96% of respondents have been employed at some time since graduation in the LIS sector.
- 59% of graduates had LIS experience prior to entering the program, with 81% engaging in some sort LIS experience while enrolled in the program.
- 20% of respondents had secured their post-degree LIS-related employment before entering the program, with another 20% securing related employment prior to graduation. Significantly more respondents took 6 months or more to find LIS-related employment than in 2016.
- Two-thirds of respondents have changed jobs since their first employment experience, with a net shift from part-time temporary to full-time permanent employment. (A job change can include change in job status for the same work, a different position with the same employer, or a change of employer.) There was also a shift from public library and not-profit employment to academic institutions.
- Although 71% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their current positions, 67% are still seeking more satisfactory work.
- 58% of jobs secured required American Library Association accreditation.
- Public libraries and academic institutions were the primary employers of graduates. When subsequent employment is considered, academic institutions were the leading employer of 2017 MLIS graduates.
- Job responsibility areas were varied with most jobs having multiple assignments, the most prevalent being Research/Consultation, Reference/Information Management, and Collections.
- Average salaries for initial jobs post-graduation were \$ 56,345/year for full-time permanent positions; \$4,249/month for full-time temporary or contract positions; and \$ \$24.80/hour for part-time positions.
- Over 50% of graduates reside in the Edmonton area.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender



Teaching and Learning Stream

Forty-six (85%) of the respondents completed the course-based MLIS learning stream, 2 were in the MLIS thesis-based stream, with 4 completing an MBA/MLIS combined degree, and 2 completing a MA/MLIS combined degree.

<i>MLIS course based</i>	85%	46
<i>MLIS thesis based</i>	4%	2
<i>MA/MLIS combined</i>	7%	4
<i>MBA/MLIS combined</i>	4%	2

Last Prior Degree

	2017	2016	
<i>Arts</i>	80%	76%	↑
• MA	20%	13%	↑
• BA	59%	63%	↓
<i>Education</i>	13%	17%	↓

At 80% of all previous degrees, Arts by far outweighed all other degree areas, but remains within the range of the past five years with the proportion of Masters degrees increasing. The next most common was Education. Singly listed degrees were BSc (Science), BFA (Fine Arts), JD (Law), and BCS (Communication Studies), with two

respondents indicating that they also held library diplomas in addition to their BA degrees. The narrow range of degree areas mirrors 2016 when a substantial narrowing in the diversity of degrees compared to previous years occurred.

Approximately 1/3 of respondents indicated that were English majors, similar to 2016, followed by History at 21%, a drop of 10%.

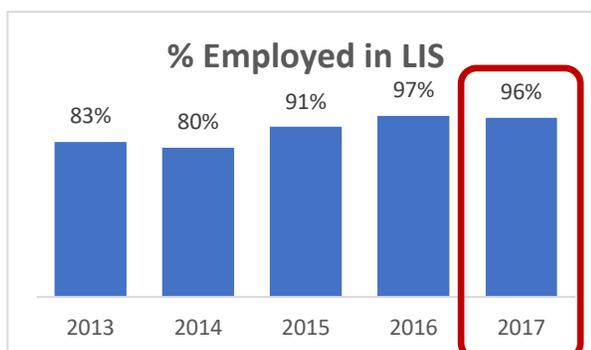
Library, Archives, or Other Information Agency Experience



EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

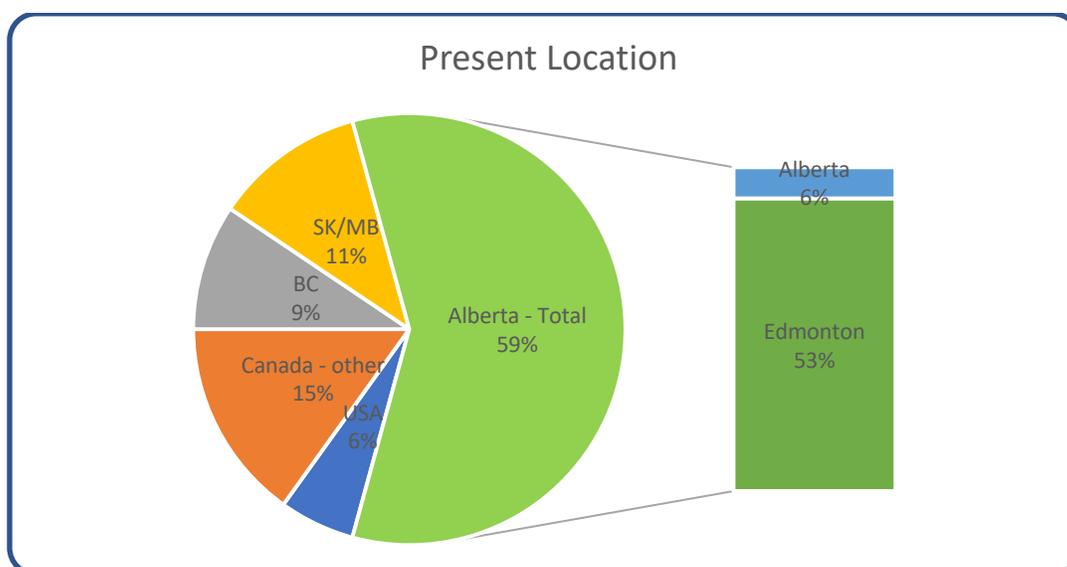
LIS Employment

Fifty-one (96%) respondents have been employed at some time since graduation in the LIS sector, with one respondent still seeking work in the LIS sector and another not interested in pursuing library work at this time.



Location

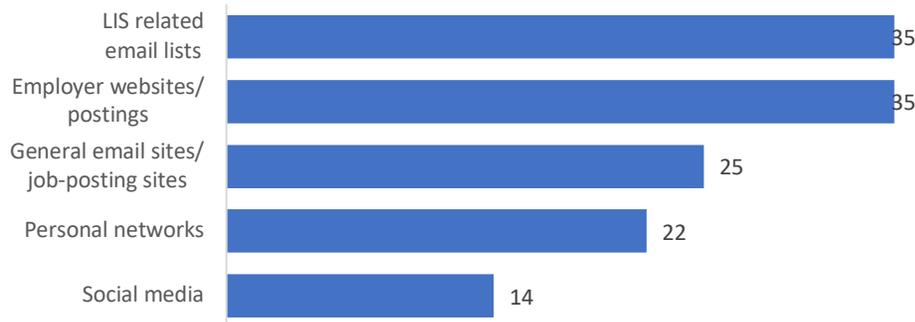
Over half of respondents indicated that they were based in Edmonton, higher than last year, yet the total proportion staying in Alberta decreased with only 3 respondents indicating an Alberta location outside the metro Edmonton area.



Relative to last year, a higher proportion located to the other Prairie provinces, while the proportional number located in BC, including 3 in Kamloops, dropped moderately. Relocation to other areas of Canada was proportionately similar. This year one respondent was located in Whitehorse, while last year one respondent was in Yellowknife. There were no international respondents this year.

	2017	2016	
<i>Edmonton</i>	52%	43%	↑
<i>AB – not Edm</i>	6%	20%	↓
<i>SK/MB</i>	11%	3%	↑
<i>BC</i>	9%	13%	↓
<i>Canada – other</i>	15%	13%	↑
<i>USA</i>	6%	3%	↑

Job Search Resources



General email/job-posting sites and social media factored more prominently in 2017 than in 2016.

Importance of SLIS Experiences

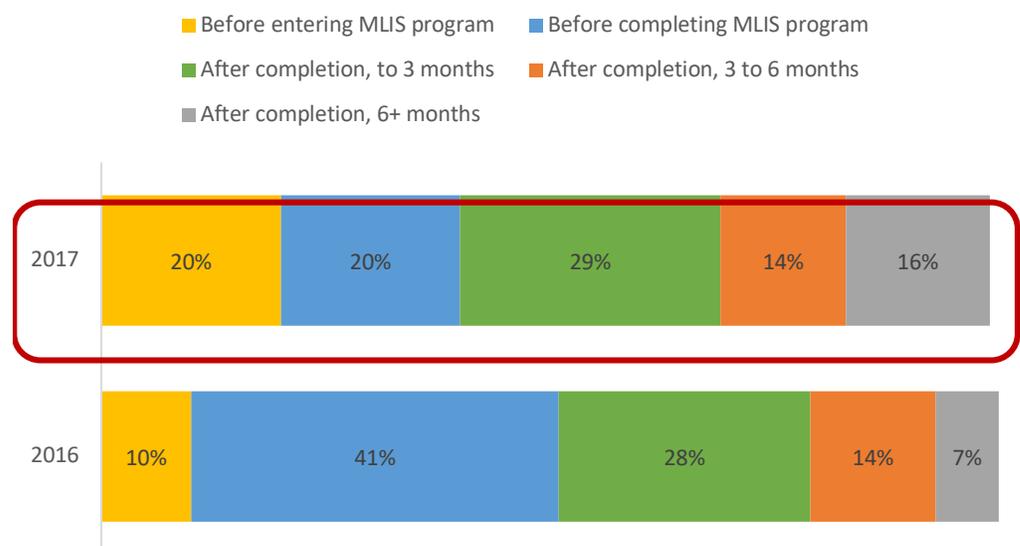
<i>MLIS Course Work</i>	3.09
<i>MLIS Practicum</i>	2.07
<i>Campus employment</i>	2.51
<i>Student Leadership</i>	2.09
<i>Networking</i>	2.02

Using a 5-point scale with 1 being 'Not Important', 3 being 'Moderately Important' and 5 being 'Very Important', the ratings of the importance of SLIS experiences in securing first employment was quite low, with only MLIS Course Work attaining a score of at least Moderately Important. Examination of the rating

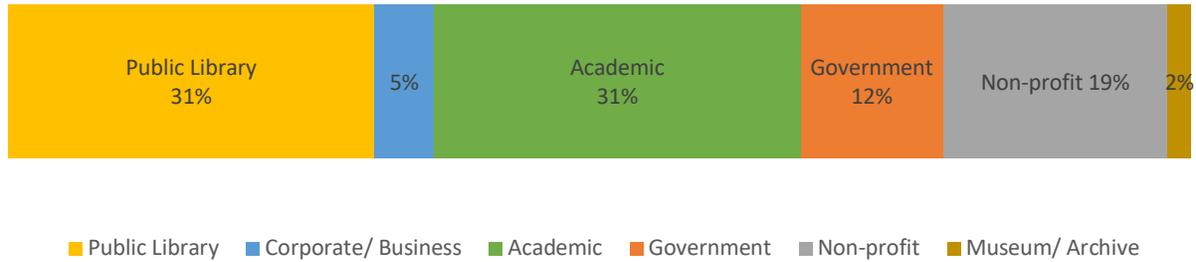
breakdown shows that for all other experiences – MLIS practicum, LIS-related on-campus employment, Student leadership opportunities, and Networking with graduates and other professionals – at least 50% of respondents gave an evaluation of Not Important.

Time to Secure First Jobs

Twenty percent of respondents had secured their post-degree LIS-related employment before entering the program, with another 20% securing related employment prior to graduation. Significantly more respondents took 6 months or more to find LIS-related employment than in 2016.



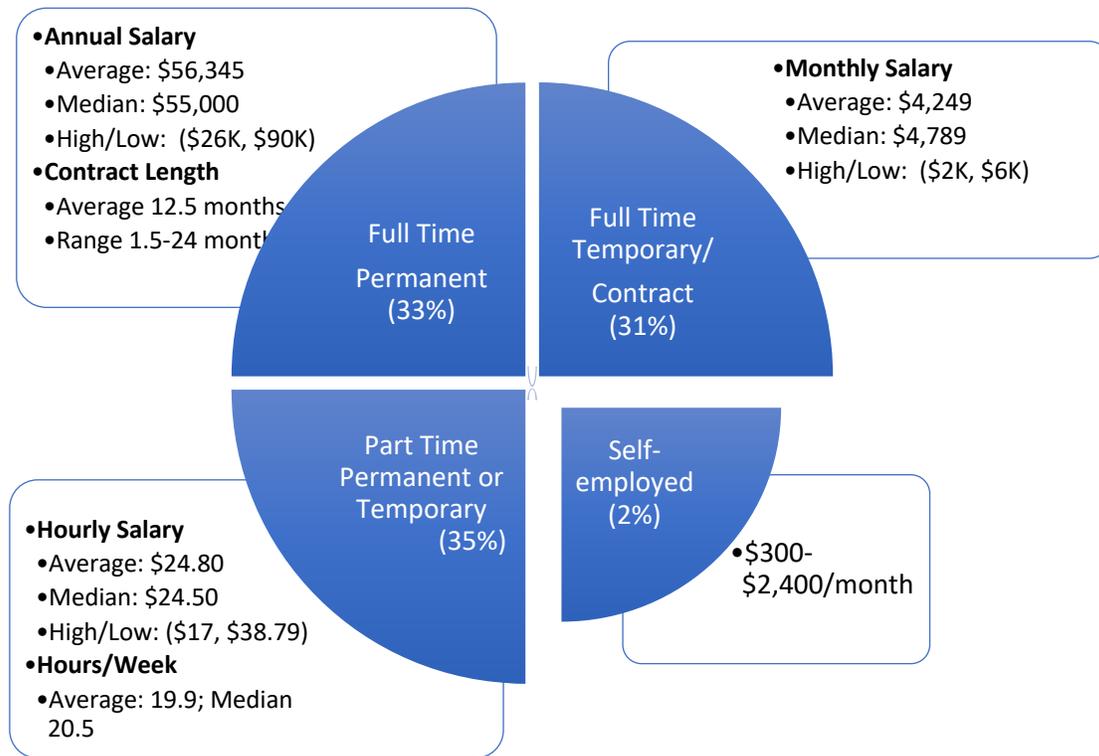
Employer Type



Academic (which includes university, college, research, and theological institutions) and public library employment were equally selected as employer types, unlike last year where public library employers accounted for greater than ½ of first jobs. This year, proportionate employment in academic institutions and not-for-profit organizations jumped substantially.

	2017	2016	
Public Library	31%	52%	↓
Academic	31%	17%	↑
Government	12%	10%	↑
Non-profit	19%	10%	↑
Corporate/Business	5%	4%	
Museum/Archive	2%	4%	

Employment Parameters





58% of jobs secured required American Library Association accreditation.

Job Titles. The term ‘librarian’ – or variant – occurs in 21 of the first job titles, with another 4 clearly in the traditional library realm, for a total of at least 58% of grads attaining first employment related to traditional library services. This compares to 62% of respondents finding first jobs with public or academic institutions. When current jobs are factored in, that proportion increases to 66%.

The first column indicates the job titles for the first jobs that respondents were hired into post-graduation. Where respondents indicated that they had changed positions, the second column lists the jobs that they are currently employed in.

First Job Titles	Current Job Titles
Copyright Strategy Manager	
Neighbourhood Librarian	
Auxiliary On-Call Library Assistant	Auxiliary On-Call Relief Librarian
Access and Privacy Advisor	
Public Service Librarian	
Library Technician	Program Assistant
Auxiliary On-Call Library Assistant	
Database Administrator Intern	
Online Reference Centre Coordinator	
Library Coordinator	Assistive Technology Specialist
Academic Library Resident	
Librarian	
Archivist	Collections Officer and Curator Library tech
IT Librarian	
Knowledge Management and Taxonomy Specialist	
Consultant	Teen Services Librarian
Teaching and Learning Librarian	Interdisciplinary Studies Librarian
Academic Conference Coordinator	
Spatial Metadata Technologist	Strategies and Partnerships Manager
Library Manager	Campus Librarian
Library Assistant	Library Assistant
General Librarian	General Librarian
Information Sharing Analyst	
Adult programming and services coordinator	Library assistant

Book store clerk	Server
Head Librarian	Head Librarian
Metadata assistant	Data management consultant
Cataloguing Librarian	Professor, Library and Information Technician Program
Information analyst	Data Governance Analyst
Head of Children's and Teen Services	
Public Services Librarian	Reference and Instruction Librarian
Librarian I	
Library Assistant (held this job prior to graduating)	Customer Service Librarian - Adult Services
Records Management Specialist	
Researcher/Archival Assistant	Archivist
Archivist	Research Assistant
Circulation Assistant	Copyright/Collections Library Technician
Library Assistant (Recent Graduate)	Academic Librarian
Online Media Specialist	
Library Services Coordinator	Library Assistant
Product Support Specialist	Teaching & Learning Librarian
Customer Experience Intern Librarian	Public Services Librarian
Production Assistant	

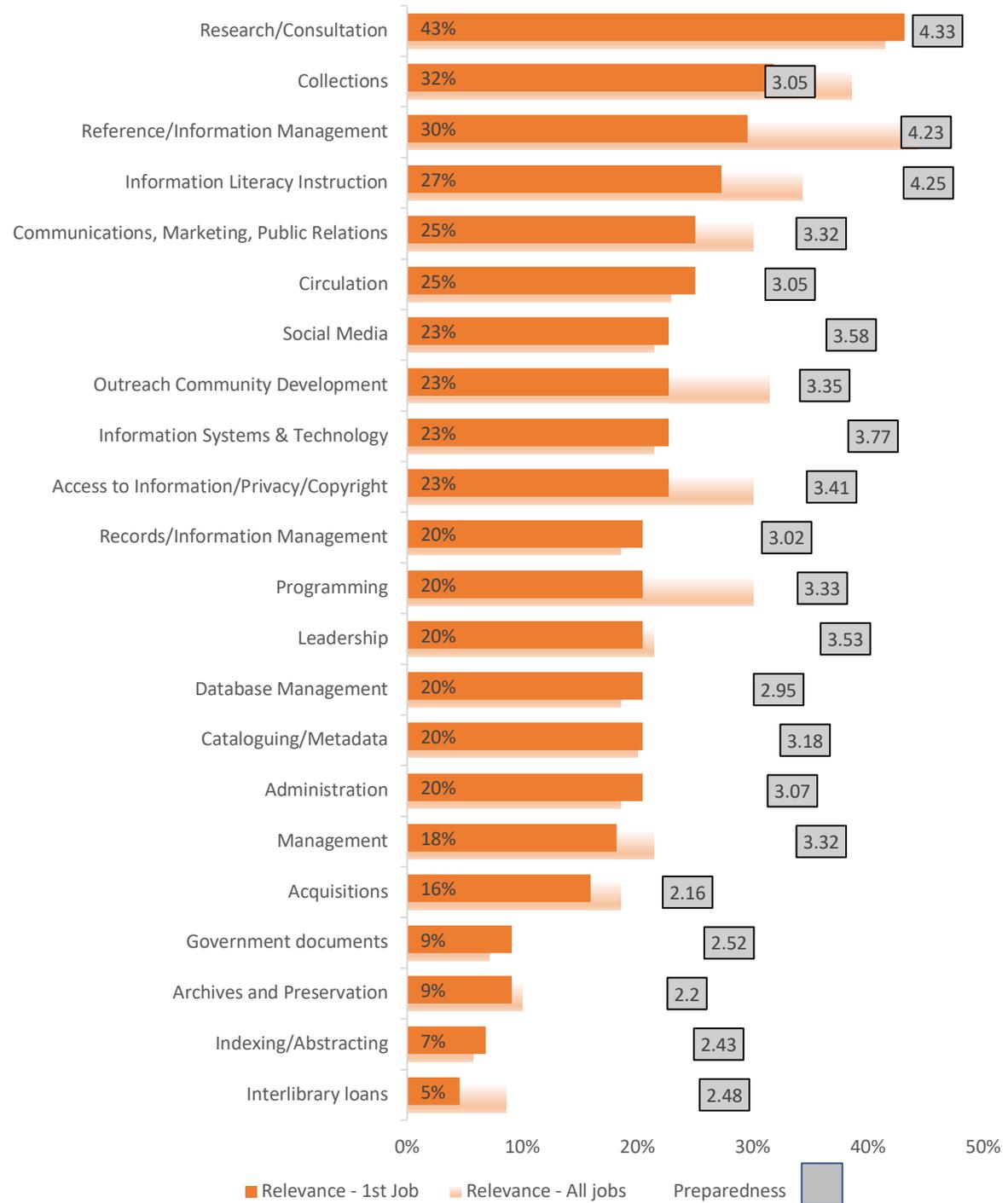
Job Responsibilities

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. The following chart ranks the prevalence of each responsibility by the percentage of respondents indicating that it is an activity that they perform in their jobs.

The solid (orange) bar indicates the responses based on first jobs only with the shaded (orange) bar indicating the impact of considering first jobs plus current jobs where respondents had changed jobs since graduation. The grey squares indicate how prepared respondents felt upon graduation in each responsibility area, based on a 5-point scale with 1 being 'Not At All', 3 being 'Somewhat' and 5 being 'Adequate'.

The increased relevance in some categories as subsequent jobs are factored in may be indicative of increasing responsibilities.

Job Skills - Relevance and Preparedness



<i>Responsibilities – 1st job</i>	2017	2016	Change	
<i>Research/Consultation</i>	43%	17%	26%	↑
<i>Collections</i>	32%	34%	-3%	↓
<i>Reference/Information Management</i>	30%	55%	-26%	↓
<i>Information Literacy Instruction</i>	27%	24%	3%	↑
<i>Circulation</i>	25%	21%	4%	↑
<i>Communications, Marketing, Public Relations</i>	25%	24%	1%	↑
<i>Access to Information/Privacy/Copyright</i>	23%	10%	12%	↑
<i>Information Systems & Technology</i>	23%	7%	16%	↑
<i>Outreach Community Developing</i>	23%	24%	-1%	↓
<i>Social Media</i>	23%	21%	2%	↑
<i>Administration</i>	20%	10%	10%	↑
<i>Cataloguing/Metadata</i>	20%	17%	3%	↑
<i>Database Management</i>	20%	7%	14%	↑
<i>Leadership</i>	20%	28%	-7%	↓
<i>Programming</i>	20%	41%	-21%	↓
<i>Records/Information Management</i>	20%	17%	3%	↑
<i>Management</i>	18%	17%	1%	↑
<i>Acquisitions</i>	16%	7%	9%	↑
<i>Archives and Preservation</i>	9%	7%	2%	↑
<i>Government documents</i>	9%	3%	6%	↑
<i>Indexing/Abstracting</i>	7%	3%	3%	↑
<i>Interlibrary loans</i>	5%	3%	1%	↑

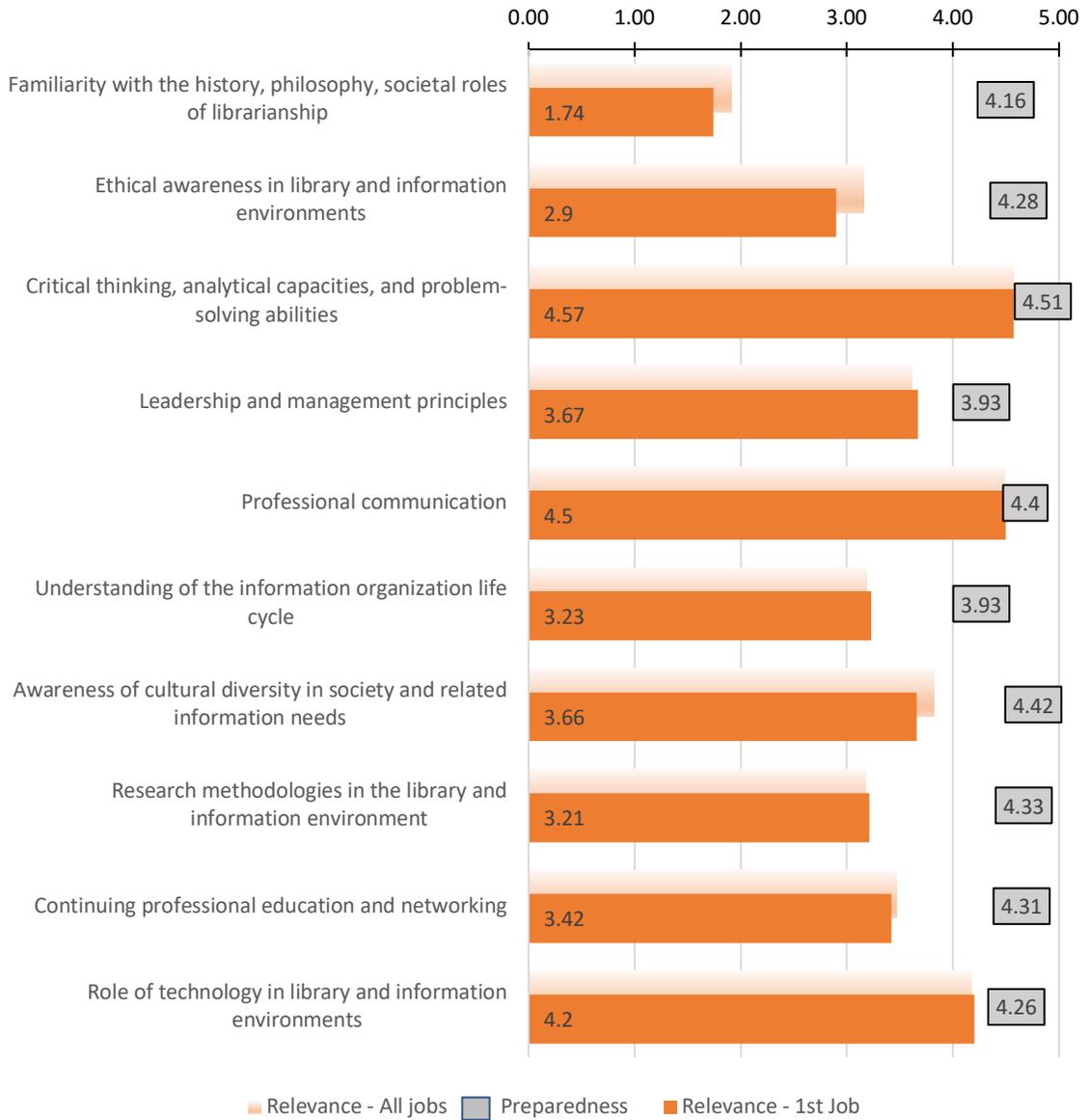
Compared to 2016, 2017 1st Job Responsibilities are more evenly distributed, perhaps indicating a greater variation in the types of jobs or possibly a broader range of responsibilities within jobs. Most categories were more prevalent with Research/ Consultation showing the largest increase. Conversely,

Reference/Information Management decreased significantly, however when All (first plus current)2017 jobs are included, it continues to rank amongst the most relevant. Programming also dropped significantly.

Knowledge and Competency Areas

The following chart presents data related to the Program Level Learning Outcomes that guide curriculum design in the MLIS program. Respondents were asked to assess the importance of these knowledge and competency areas in helping them secure their first positions and their current positions on a 5-point scale with 1 = ‘Not important’, 3 = ‘Moderately important’, and 5 = ‘Very important’,. Preparedness at the time of graduation for each areas was assessed on a 5-point scale with 1 being ‘Not At All’, 3 being ‘Somewhat’ and 5 being ‘Adequate’.

PLLOs - Relevance and Preparedness



Ratings remain consistent between First Jobs (solid orange bar) and All Jobs (shaded orange bar) with “Professional communication” and “Critical thinking, analytical capacities, and problem-solving abilities” identified as the most relevant. These areas also scored highest for preparedness, suggesting alignment between programming priorities and job requirements.

The two categories that scored lowest in relevance, “Familiarity with the history, philosophy, societal roles of librarianship” and “Ethical awareness in library and information environments” were scored significantly lower by 2017 graduates than by 2016 graduates who also ranked

them the lowest. The top ranked category, “Critical thinking, analytical capacities, and problem-solving abilities”, increased somewhat, while other categories were relatively stable.

2017 graduates evaluated preparedness to be improved for nine of the PLLOs, with “Ethical awareness in library and information environments” remaining the same. The biggest improvement areas were “Understanding of the information organization life cycle”, followed by “Role of technology in library and information environments”.

Preparedness remained stable or slightly increased in all categories.

<i>Knowledge & Competency Areas</i>	<i>Relevance</i>			<i>Preparedness</i>		
	2017	2016	Change	2017	2016	Change
<i>Familiarity with the history, philosophy, societal roles of librarianship</i>	1.74	2.48	↓	4.16	4.03	↑
<i>Ethical awareness in library and information environments</i>	2.9	3.38	↓	4.28	4.28	
<i>Critical thinking, analytical capacities, and problem-solving abilities</i>	4.57	4.21	↑	4.51	4.41	↑
<i>Leadership and management principles</i>	3.67	3.66	↑	3.93	3.9	↑
<i>Professional communication</i>	4.5	4.34	↑	4.4	4.17	↑
<i>Understanding of the information organization life cycle</i>	3.23	3.07	↑	3.93	3.59	↑
<i>Awareness of cultural diversity in society and related information needs</i>	3.66	3.66		4.42	4.17	↑
<i>Research methodologies in the library and information environment</i>	3.21	3.14	↑	4.33	4.17	↑
<i>Continuing professional education and networking</i>	3.42	3.41	↑	4.26	4.03	↑
<i>Role of technology in library and information environments</i>	4.2	N/A		4.31	4.03	↑

Subsequent Employment

Two-thirds of respondents have changed jobs since their first employment experience, providing some insight into early career progression.

Twenty-nine respondents provided information which allowed tracking of their employment status from their first job to their current position. The following table summarizes their changes in employment status. A job change can include a change in job status for the same work, a different position with the same employer, or a change of employer.

		<i>Current job</i>			<i>TOTAL 1st Job</i>
		Part-time Permanent and/or Temporary	Full-time Temporary	Full-time Permanent	
<i>1st job</i>	Part-time Permanent and/or Temporary	4	3	5	12
	Full-time Temporary	1	3	6	10
	Full-time Permanent	1	2	4	7
	<i>TOTAL- Current Job</i>	6	8	15	29

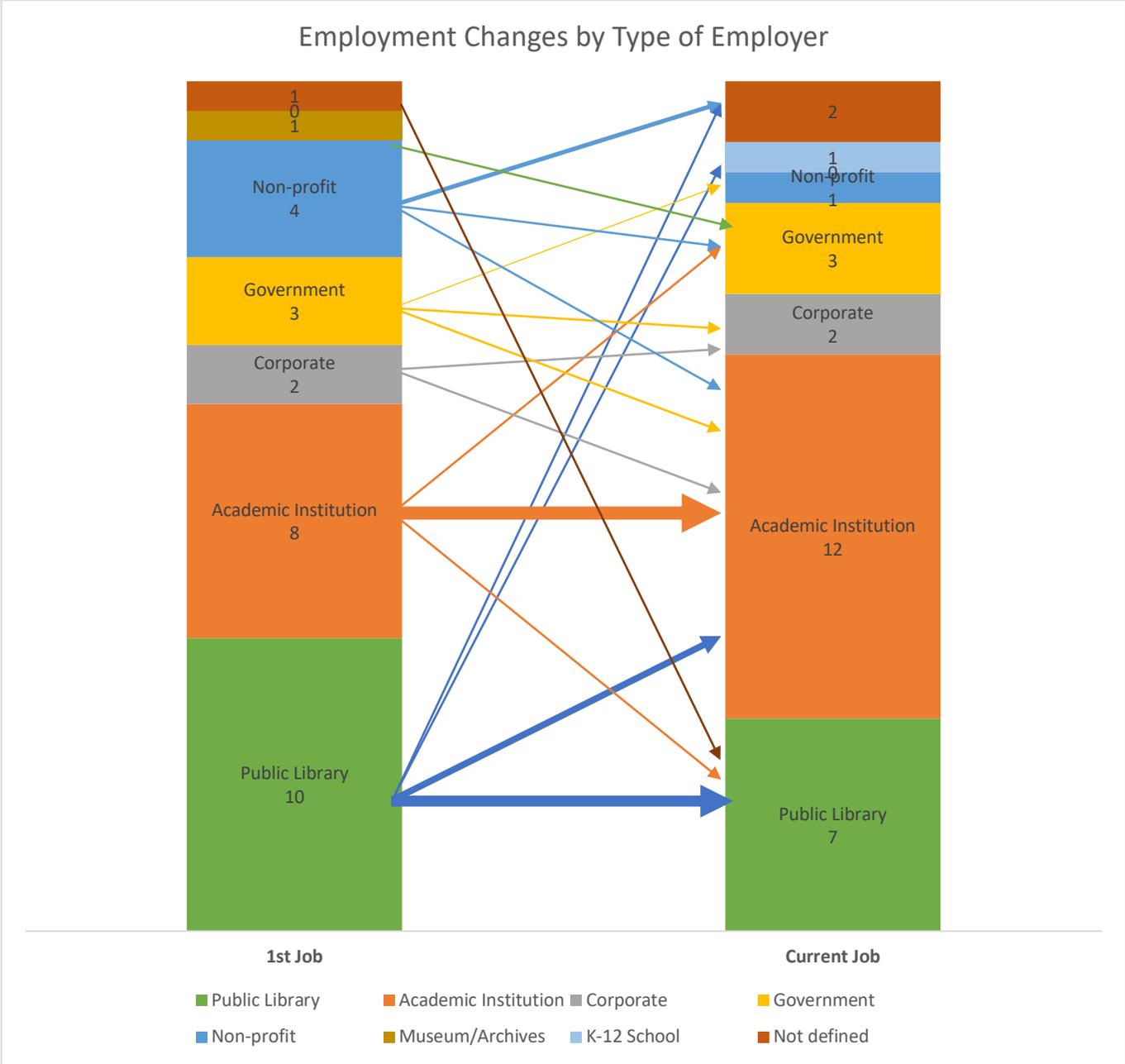
Overall, the number of part-time permanent and/or temporary employees decreased from 12 to 6 and 8 full-time permanent positions were added.

Of the 12 part-time employees who changed jobs, 8 achieved full-time employment with 5 of the positions being permanent. Six of 10 full-time temporary employees gained permanent full-time employment. Seven respondents with full-time permanent jobs also changed positions with only 4 retaining a full-time permanent status, indicating that graduates may be seeking job change for reasons other than stability.

Job changers also changed the type of employer that they worked for.

		<i>Current job</i>								<i>TOTAL 1st Job</i>
		Public Library	Academic	Corporate	Gov' t	Non-profit	Mus/Arch	K-12	N/D	
<i>1st job</i>	Public Library	5	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	10
	Academic Institution	1	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	8
	Corporate/ Business	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Government	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	3
	Non-profit	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	4
	Museum/ Archive	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
	K-12 School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Not defined	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>TOTAL-Current Job</i>	7	12	2	3	1	0	1	3	29	

There was a net loss of employment in public libraries and growth in employment in academic institutions. With this shift, academic institutions became the largest employer of 2017 graduates. At the time of the survey, 40% of respondents were employed by academic institutions and 24% were employed by public libraries (versus 31% each for first jobs). The non-profit sector which originally employed 8 respondents in their first positions, had a net loss of 3, bringing it more in line with 2016 levels; the only museum/archives employee shifted to the government; the K-12 School sector added their only employee; and shifts in and out of the government and corporate sectors resulted in no net change.



Current Job Satisfaction

Still seeking more satisfactory

Although 71% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their current positions, 67% are still seeking more satisfactory work.



Ninety-two percent of those seeking more satisfactory work indicated that they are seeking full-time permanent work. In addition to specifically pursuing full-time permanent work, other reasons included wanting a more LIS-related position or work in a specific sector (eg. academic, archives, research). Respondents indicated that they were seeking salaries ranging from \$45,000 to \$120,000, with an average target of \$70,000 and median of \$65,000.

Continuing Professional Development Activities



Respondent comments about how well their MLIS program prepared them for employment in the library and information sector

I believe it was invaluable because it provided me a context and perspective necessary for my employment which is more administrative but with Library overlap.

It was far more geared towards an academic career, and I always knew I wanted to work in a public library

Although I did not take a cataloguing course and my employer found it strange that it was not a required course, it was very easy to learn. Solo project management - there is surprisingly little collaboration work My course about HR was hugely beneficial.

The program prepared me very well for employment as even with no experience in the work area, the program provided me with skills in critical thinking and research that made me develop knowledge in area quickly.

I wish they would have told me that without much library experience prior to my MLIS that it would be harder to get a job in a related field.

Very well!

My MLIS program prepared me in the sense that I have a strong abstract and theoretical understanding, but in terms of actual skills that employers are looking for, I have little to offer. It's fine for traditional library positions, but it's making it harder to branch out to less typical positions.

I felt the MLIS program was good in helping secure a general knowledge base of how libraries work but most if not all of my skills required for the job I have now were acquired through actual work experience and the training I received from my employer.

I really wish we had more technology-oriented courses available that focused on systems currently used in larger libraries (ILS, proxy, link resolvers, discovery layers - anything!). The database and digital archives classes were interesting but not really applicable in a real work environment.

I tailored my MLIS to fit my needs to work in a technology/metadata sector of librarianship. Taking HUCO courses gave a distinct advantage.

Day-to-day readiness will always be job-specific. More emphasis on designing programs in public libraries could be helpful.

More opportunities to learn about pedagogy (i.e., teaching and learning) are needed. I went on to do an educational certificate at UBC to get this knowledge/experience.

Very poorly. It would take a whole essay to really get into it, but long story short most of the classes are literally useless as the whole program caters to people who already work or have worked in the field and want to advance. The technological knowledge is dated, the classes have poor discourse, the professors don't particularly seem in the thick of the field, and the program has a terrible reputation locally. I can't say how many times I've heard how the U of A MLIS is something people look to avoid when hiring. What it needs is a better emphasis on skills (archiving is badly under served in this program, as are so many other disciplines) and raising the bar on assignments and up to date assessment of what the field looks like. I was and continue to be disappointed in the program.

Did not prepare me in any practical sense for the day-to-day operations. My previous library experience combined with my Practicum is what provided me with the skills to be the winning candidate for an academic library position.

More emphasis on technology and the role of technology in LIS would have been useful

Some of these things I was prepared for because of my own previous experience, not because of the MLIS program.

Overall did a good job - I ended up in a role that is in many ways very different than a library setting, but I learned a lot of transferable skills in the MLIS program. I could have used more practically applicable management/leadership skills.

I think the issue was more than I expected libraries to take information literacy, censorship, equal access, and the like seriously, when they often don't seem to care much.

I had multiple jobs during my MLIS in the field and an archival practicum and felt I was very prepared for the job market but every job I have interviewed and applied for felt there was someone more qualified than me.

The MLIS program did very little to prepare me to work in public libraries, especially in small city libraries. From my experience at SLIS there is minimal capability to adequately prepare students for the job environment. I am just fortunate I had extensive work experiences to fall back on, else I would likely be completely lost trying to be a librarian.

The knowledge and competency portions were well done, but the skills section seems lacking. Perhaps that's because I did the online program and it's difficult to get the 'hands-on' during the online parts.

The program was most useful to me in conjunction with my MA.

Lots of good knowledge about libraries, not as much specific skills as I had originally thought (learned a lot on the job in first months)

It was my dual degree (HUCO/MLIS) that really gave me an edge in securing a job as an academic librarian. The majority of the work that I do is as a liaison librarian, supporting the needs of students and faculty. Because I wrote a thesis, I understand the research process, which allows me to support researchers at all levels. Also, my job with Digital Initiatives (UAL) was probably the second-most important in terms of securing employment.

As an experienced library technician, I found that my lib tech training provided more detailed skills that I have used frequently throughout my librarian career. These are skills that my non-library technician peers often lack. The MLIS program provided a broader, more generalist understanding of library functioning and concepts. If I had not had prior library technician training and years of experience, my answers above would have been quite different.

I definitely felt that we needed to study more modern technologies - if you're working in any type of business environment, there are programs out there now that we never touched on for content management or records management etc. I felt that my most valuable courses were knowledge management, metadata, records management, research and information policy.

Course material in SLIS was very focused on community and public librarianship, fields which I don't especially wish to work in and which do not relate to my professional background. To date, I don't feel that my MLIS prepared me well to work in the subset of LIS in which I am specialised

These questions are not well written - I could tick off "Adequate" to all of them, but I answered my questions based on how well taking the MLIS program prepared me for these areas. I learned most of these concepts due to on the job experience or life in general (like professional communication and social media... the MLIS had NOTHING to do with my abilities in these areas). Most of the MLIS classes I took barely scratched the surface on any of these topics anyway - at best, without any prior knowledge, they would only somewhat prepare someone for work in this field.

I believe the aspect of critical thinking needs added emphasize. Grades should be earned and require a significant level of effort. As graduate program I think more scrutiny can be applied as to who is admitted. With limited job prospects across the field, I believe more care should be given to ensuring that those graduating are finding full-time and permanent work within 3 years.

It prepared me conceptually, but I was unprepared for the fact that I would not be qualified for even the most entry level librarian positions with an MLIS. Prior library work experience of multiple years was required in almost all instances. Because the practicum was not required and because I was full-time employed in another field, I was not able to do the on-the-job experience. This was a huge drawback and part of the reason it has taken me so long to find a job. The reality is, not all students come from a library background and I did not feel this was ever addressed as a reality of the coursework. I do think instructors tried to describe the professional job environment but it was "assumed" all would have the background/experience.

My MLIS was required to move from a paraprofessional to a professional position. I believe that the degree did prepare me well for that step.

There is a practical component missing from the MLIS. The only way some individuals got to learn library basics was having a position at UofA (or already had a position with another library). The balance between the theoretical and practical could be struck better. Some courses skimmed the surface of issues and topics, and could have brought more depth. Archival courses were not offered in my year, which made it difficult for the students who wanted to focus on archival work.

The program prepared me very well for employment as even with no experience in the work area, the program provided me with skills in critical thinking and research that made me develop knowledge in area quickly.

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.