

# Employment Opportunities for New Academic Librarians: Assessing the Availability of Entry Level Jobs

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**abstract:** This study examines the availability of entry level positions in academic libraries to better illuminate the status of the job market for current students and recent graduates of Library & Information Science programs. Over a twelve month period from 2010—2011, 1385 job advertisements were collected, with content analysis methods used to evaluate each advertisement by level of position, institution type, location, department, and job type. Findings revealed one-fifth of jobs advertised to be entry level, with seventy percent of all positions offered by universities, and public services accounting for more than sixty percent of entry level employment opportunities. Further research was conducted by contacting Human Resources departments at 33 institutions to ascertain the experience backgrounds of successful hires.

## Introduction

“**T**he Librarian Shortage.” “The Graying of the Profession.” “The Entry Level Gap.” These phrases are familiar to many librarians, appearing in various iterations over the past forty years in the professional literature, at conferences, and in conversations in libraries and library schools. Although a shortage of librarians has been predicted since the early 2000s owing to the anticipated retirement of baby boomers, discussions in the profession imply that securing a position in an academic library is extremely competitive and will remain so for some time. As Rachel Cannady and Daniel Newton explain in a recent article on job hunting, this is “one of the toughest economic climates since the Great Depression: layoffs are taking place, budgets are being cut, and some positions are no longer being filled.”<sup>1</sup> Christopher Stewart’s 2010 study of research library staffing trends indicates that many institutions are home to a

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decreasing number of professional librarians.<sup>2</sup> The job market is very limited for entry level job seekers in particular, who typically lack the experience of more seasoned job applicants and are unlikely to have integrated themselves into librarianship's multifaceted culture. In order to give a more accurate picture of job opportunities for prospective professionals and contribute data to the ongoing discussion of the realities of the library job market, this study focuses on the presence of entry level job advertisements in academic libraries.

Perspective on the topic of entry level positions comes from an understanding of the historical background of the library job market supply and demand. Librarianship has seen a recurring tug-of-war between commentators embracing either "recruitment crisis"

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or "job crisis" arguments. These dialogues have taken place in the library literature since at least the late 1960s and vigorously continue today. In an informative discussion of the job market for library professionals, Margaret Myers notes the "so-called manpower crisis" triggered by increased federal

funding and new positions in the 1960s, and the fact that although a shortage of 100,000 librarians was predicted, this number simply never materialized.<sup>3</sup> Federal budget cuts and an increasing number of LIS graduates resulted in an oversupply of librarians in the early 1970s. The sudden shortage of positions led to a flurry of articles blaming library schools and professional associations for over-recruiting and misrepresenting job prospects. *Library Journal*, for example, devoted a special issue in 1970 to the problem of securing employment titled, succinctly, "The Job Crisis."<sup>4</sup>

The early 2000s saw a marked resurgence in the notion of an imminent increase in the availability of jobs, due in large part to the "graying" of the profession. Authors such as William Curran and Stanley Wilder cited the average age of librarians as evidence of impending retirements.<sup>5</sup> A 2002 editorial from former American Library Association (ALA) President John Berry addressed the "Recruitment and Diversity Crisis," calling for each librarian to recruit at least two new professionals per year.<sup>6</sup> A month later, an article expounding on the data related to the anticipated retirements of library professionals appeared in *American Libraries*,<sup>7</sup> which was used heavily in the ALA's recruitment efforts and assisted in securing \$10 million in IMLS funding to recruit new librarians.<sup>8</sup> The issue of potential staffing shortages reached numerous channels outside of the profession, with major news outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Chronicle of Higher Education* reporting on the impending mass retirement of librarians.<sup>9</sup>

Soon thereafter, a series of articles in *Library Journal* addressed the job market from predominantly negative perspectives. Rachel Singer Gordon advised readers to "Get Over the 'Graying' Profession Hype" and argued that a mass retirement of professionals, were it to happen, would not translate into entry level jobs.<sup>10</sup> Rachel Holt and Adrienne Strock noted a shift in the job market toward an overabundance of graduates, citing a review of 900 job postings in which eleven percent were found to be entry level.<sup>11</sup> David Connors and Laena McCarthy took issue with Holt and Strock's methods and utilized *Library Journal* employment surveys to offer proof that graduates were finding jobs.<sup>12</sup> In



2009 one job seeker reported on her “Academic Library Job Search Blues.”<sup>13</sup> The dialogue regarding the accessibility of positions for new librarians continues to this day.

It has been said that history has a way of repeating itself, and a review of the library job market over the years informs us that the challenging employment situation recent graduates may find themselves in is not unique. A recent study by Marybeth Grimes and Paul Grimes underscores the natural ebbs and flows in staffing and the job market,<sup>14</sup> and Lipscomb provides an illuminating take on the cyclical nature of librarian shortages and surpluses.<sup>15</sup> With these historical lessons in mind, we can examine the details of today’s library job market. Specifically, what might a prospective academic librarian expect to find in terms of potential employment?

This paper analyzes the availability of entry level positions in academic libraries in the United States. As such, the research questions guiding this study are:

- What proportion of academic library job postings are entry level, relative to positions requiring experience?
- Are certain library departments more likely to offer entry level positions than others?
- What proportion of temporary and part-time jobs is advertised in relation to full-time, permanent positions?
- Are certain geographic locations more likely to offer entry level positions than others?

The author’s intent is to better illuminate the status of the current job market by providing quantifiable data on the positions being advertised, and more specifically, to compare the existence of entry level openings to job advertisements requiring more experience than most recent graduates would typically possess.

## Literature Review

The library literature contains a wealth of research analyzing job advertisements and requirements for positions in various specialties, settings, and time periods. For an excellent listing of many of these types of studies and their findings and methodologies, see Rachel Applegate’s 2010 article.<sup>16</sup> Although many other areas in the field have been addressed, no authors to date have focused upon the existence of entry level jobs in academic libraries. Studies of entry level jobs in libraries of all types, however, have appeared infrequently since the early 1990s and provide a beneficial context for this study.

The existence of entry level positions and the state of the library job market has been the subject of many opinion pieces over the years, but far fewer studies. A true consensus has not been reached within the body of research that addresses the availability of entry level jobs. In 1992 David Reser and Anita Schuneman examined over 1,000 nationally advertised positions to examine differences between public and technical services opportunities.<sup>17</sup> Utilizing a strict definition of “entry level,” the authors found eighteen percent of advertised positions met these requirements, and more opportunities existed for new librarians in public services compared to technical services. The lack of entry level postings was attributed to the reluctance of institutions to advertise nationally for non-specialized jobs. Seeking to update Reser and Schuneman’s study and following their same criteria, Penny Beile and Megan Adams found increased specialization among positions and a decrease in the number of entry level opportunities, particularly in cataloging.<sup>18</sup>



In 2002 Claudene Sproles and David Ratledge studied job announcements from *American Libraries* over a period of twenty years to discern trends in requirements for entry level positions. Analyzing 1500 job ads, the authors found entry level jobs constituted twenty percent of the advertisements, and that while the percentage of positions for new librarians remained stable over two decades, the qualifications had significantly increased.<sup>19</sup> More recently, Robert Reeves and Trudi Bellardo Hahn examined the requirements for entry level positions between 2006 and 2009. The authors concluded that a majority of entry level positions were in academic settings and the number of entry level jobs, as well as the requirements for these positions, had increased.<sup>20</sup>

## Methodology

### Sample Population

To collect all data pertinent to answering this study's research questions, content analysis was selected as the most appropriate methodology. One shortcoming of many studies on LIS job advertisements is their sampling methods. Much of the research done in this area examines only national job advertisements, print advertisements, or a combination of both. The reality is that job advertisements can and will be found primarily through a wide variety of online sources. To obtain a truly representative sample, researchers, and by extension, job seekers, must tap into an array of resources far beyond traditional sources.

In her recent study of sources for job advertisements, Applegate found that "commonly used print sources provide only a small fraction of available positions," leading to the conclusion that "taking job ad samples directly from hiring institutions is time consuming but provides more representative data." Following Applegate's sound advice, this study focuses exclusively on online advertisements and looks for listings nationally and in selected metropolitan areas to obtain the highest level of external validity reasonably possible. To this end, a number of job sources were identified at the national, regional, and local levels.

For national sources, fourteen job aggregators were selected for their large number of and frequently updated job postings. Job aggregators list multiple positions, in periodicals, electronic discussion lists, or websites maintained by some entity not

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representing the hiring institution. Several aggregators were selected from Applegate's study, wherein she noted the most significant job aggregators in terms of number of positions listed: Academic Employment Network, ALA JobList, Chronicle of Higher Education,

and LibGig. The job postings, depending on the type of source, were accessed via RSS feed in Google Reader, a website bookmark, Twitter, or an e-mail folder. Table 1 displays a list of job aggregators, their geographic reach, and the way in which the postings were collected.



# Table 1

## Job aggregators monitored

Source Name	Aggregator Type	Method of Collection
Academic Employment Network	National	RSS Feed Reader
American Library Association Joblist	National	RSS Feed Reader
Art Libraries Society of North America	National	RSS Feed Reader
Association of Research Libraries	National	Website
Chronicle of Higher Education	National	Website
COLLIB-L Discussion List	National	Email folder
Educause	National	Website
ILI-L Discussion List	National	Email folder
LibGig	National	RSS Feed Reader
LibInfoSciJobs	National	Twitter
LisJobs	National	RSS Feed Reader
NeedALibraryJob	National	Twitter
NMRT-L Discussion List	National	Email folder
Special Libraries Association	National	RSS Feed Reader
Association of College & Research Libraries/New York Chapter	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Association of College & Research Libraries/New England Chapter	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Illinois Library Association Jobline	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Indiana University SLIS	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Metropolitan New York Library Council	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Simmons College GSLIS	Regional	RSS Feed Reader
Special Libraries Association/New York Chapter	Regional	RSS Feed Reader

Finding regional and local job postings proved to be a more complicated task than locating those advertised nationally. Because an approach to collecting local-level data such as identifying and locating the website of every institution of higher education in the U.S. would prove extremely impractical, the author chose to examine three of the nation's largest metropolitan areas as a sample. To this end, the three areas randomly selected from a list of the ten most populated metropolitan statistical areas in the United States were: Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; and New York, NY. Institutions of higher education within these cities were located using the U.S. Department of Education's Database of



Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs. The human resources webpages for these institutions were subsequently located using a search engine. This yielded a total of 126 institutions across three cities, whose webpages listing open positions were then bookmarked and visited twice per month to check for library job postings not announced via job aggregator.

### Data Collection

To determine how to accurately classify job postings as entry level, it is necessary to delineate the requirements for an entry level position. Entry level jobs may in fact be defined in many ways. For instance, is a position entry level if it requires a MLIS and *any* experience, or does the requirement of experience automatically disqualify it as entry level? Does a position with *preferred* requirements of one to two years of experience still qualify as entry level? For the purposes of this study, a position is considered entry level if the job advertisement requires:

1. An ALA-accredited Masters of Library Science degree or its equivalent;
2. One or fewer years of experience;
3. No experience or duties that entry level librarians typically do not possess (supervising other professionals, administrative experience, etc.)

Additionally, positions were automatically categorized as entry level if the job advertisement described the position as such. These criteria were adapted in part from previous studies examining entry level positions, in particular the work of Sproles and Ratledge, and Reeves and Hahn.<sup>21</sup> These authors operated under similar, though narrower criteria, by considering any position to be non-entry level if it required any experience at all. This study allows some latitude in the experience required, particularly because some employers can and do consider internships or pre-professional experience to count toward work experience requirements. It is for this reason that one or fewer years was set as the guideline for determining whether a position was entry level.

### Data Analysis

With job announcements at the national and selected regional and local levels ready to be collected and entry level positions defined, attention was turned to the data to be analyzed regarding these positions. Job advertisements that met the entry level criteria were examined for required qualifications. Preferred qualifications could be ignored as extraneous to the study. Temporary and part-time positions were included in the results and classified as such. Data from each job advertisement were collected according to the following characteristics:

- Level of position (entry level; above entry level on account of experience requirements; above entry level on account of required duties difficult to obtain; part-time and temporary)
- Source (the name of the source that published the job advertisement)
- Job Title (title of position listed in the job announcement)
- Institution Name (name of institution listed in the job announcement)
- Institution Type (college, community college, university, or other)



- Institution Status (public, private, or unknown)
- Location (state, as noted in job announcement or located via search engine)
- Location (Census-designated U.S. region)
- Category of Position (administrative; archives; electronic services; public services; technical services)
- Type of Position (narrowed by the position's duties, including such types as: outreach; cataloging; instruction; serials; Web services; director; systems; etc.)
- Years of Experience Required (number of years of experience required by job advertisement, if stated)

The data were collected from September 2010 to September 2011, with the intent of accounting for the typical ebbs and flows of the hiring processes over the course of an academic year. During the data collection process the pertinent information was recorded and compiled into a Google Docs spreadsheet, then at the end of the one year period exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed.

Limitations of this methodology include the fact that not all jobs available are advertised online by the hiring institution (for example, internal job postings) and thus could not be included in the results. Also worth noting is the reality that this study was conducted during a nationwide financial recession, likely resulting in fewer ads being collected than would have been in a more robust economic climate. Nonetheless, on account of the extensive sampling methods, the advertisements accurately reflect the proportion of entry level positions to those requiring additional experience, and the information gathered is highly instructive on the type and level of job postings one may expect to see from academic libraries hiring new employees.

## Results

The final data set included 1385 job advertisements from a total of 22 job aggregators and 126 webpages of individual institutions in Boston, Chicago, and New York City. After the one-year collection process, the data were categorized into three distinct sections: Experience Requirements, Hiring Institution Type and Location, and Type of Position.

### Experience Requirements

Entry level positions, classified as jobs requiring a MLIS or its equivalent, one or fewer years of experience, and no experience or duties that entry level librarians are generally unable to gain, accounted for 282 (20.7 percent) of the 1385 positions. Seventeen advertisements were either specifically noted as entry level or encouraged submissions from entry level candidates, most frequently phrased as, "Entry level applicants are welcome to apply." Alluding to problems with the quality of applications previously received, one institution specifically instructed applicants, "Entry-level candidates are welcome to apply but must highlight their potential for success in this position." Another institution found it necessary to note suitable experience, stating, "New graduates with relevant experience are welcome to apply." Entry level applicants may meet the minimum requirements for these jobs, meaning recent graduates can apply to these positions without their applications immediately rejected owing to lack of skills. However, a vast



majority of job advertisements include Preferred Qualifications that request additional knowledge in terms of either years of experience or duties, which are frequently used to determine which applicants are most suitable for a given position. This greatly reduces the number of jobs that entry level candidates are considered for beyond the preliminary application stage.

Nearly 75 percent of positions were non-entry level, because of either experience or duty requirements. Slightly more than 57 percent (57.4 percent) of the job advertisements (795 ads) required more than one year of experience. Most commonly required was between two and three years of experience, appearing in 205 position announcements. Far fewer jobs were classified as non-entry level because of duties required, as was the case with 230 advertisements (16.6 percent). More than half of these classifications were made owing to supervisory experience stated as a requirement.

Part time and temporary positions accounted for only 78 (5.6 percent) of the total, approximately half of which were part time and half temporary. Part time was classified as twenty or fewer hours per week, and temporary was considered a duration of one year or less. It can be assumed that few institutions would expend the time and cost involved in advertising a part time or temporary job nationally, resulting in the relatively small number of these positions. Figure 1 shows the percentage of advertisements by the type of experience they require.

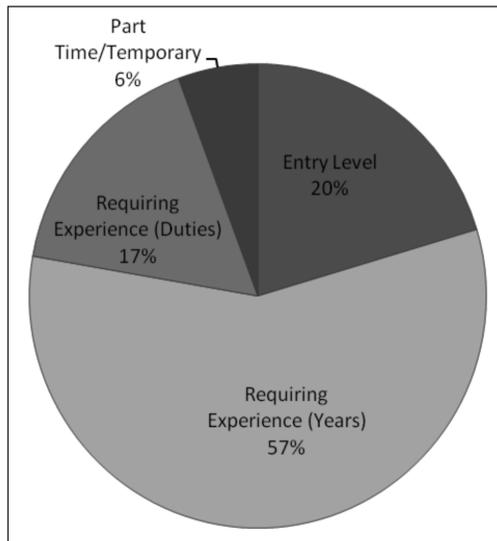


Figure 1. Job advertisements by experience requirements.

### Hiring Institution Type, Status, and Location

During the data collection process, the type of institution, its public or private status, and the geographic location were noted for each job advertisement. Institution types were designated as their name implied (for example, Kenyon College, or University of Texas), except when the type of institution was explicitly stated in the job advertisement.



Universities overwhelmingly dominated the postings, with 954 (68.9 percent) of positions in university settings. Colleges accounted for the next largest number of advertisements, with 268 (19.4 percent). Community colleges solicited applications for 152 jobs (10.9 percent). Miscellaneous higher education institutions, such as military academies, seminaries, and others, advertised a total of 11 positions (.8 percent).

The public or private status of each institution was determined either as stated in the job advertisement or by locating the website of the institution. Private institutions accounted for 532 postings (38.4 percent), while 729 job postings originated from a public institution (52.6 percent). The status of 124 institutions (nine percent) could not be determined. The number of entry level jobs advertised did not differ significantly according to institution status, though a greater number of public institutions offered entry level jobs (164 positions, 58.2 percent of all entry level positions). This is likely because more positions overall were advertised in university settings, of which many are public institutions.

The number of hiring institutions roughly corresponds to each state's population, with New York and California advertising the most positions. Beile and Adams, for comparison, found the greatest number of advertisements in 1996 to be in Texas and New York.<sup>22</sup> Because this study examined New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois at the local level, each of these three states invariably has a larger number of positions represented in the results, indicated in Table 2.

The distribution of job postings among the four major U.S. regions was moderately even. The South represented 429 job advertisements (31 percent), with the Northeast accounting for 416 (thirty percent). The Midwest (288, 20.8 percent) and West (252, 18.2 percent) followed. Figure 2 displays the number of job postings by region.

## Table 2

### Job postings by state (top ten number of advertisements)

State	Frequency	Percentage of Total
New York	148	10.7
California	113	8.2
Massachusetts	90	6.5
Illinois	79	5.7
Pennsylvania	75	5.4
Texas	70	5.1
Florida	58	4.2
Virginia	51	3.7
Connecticut	41	3
Indiana	41	3
Total Number	766	55.5

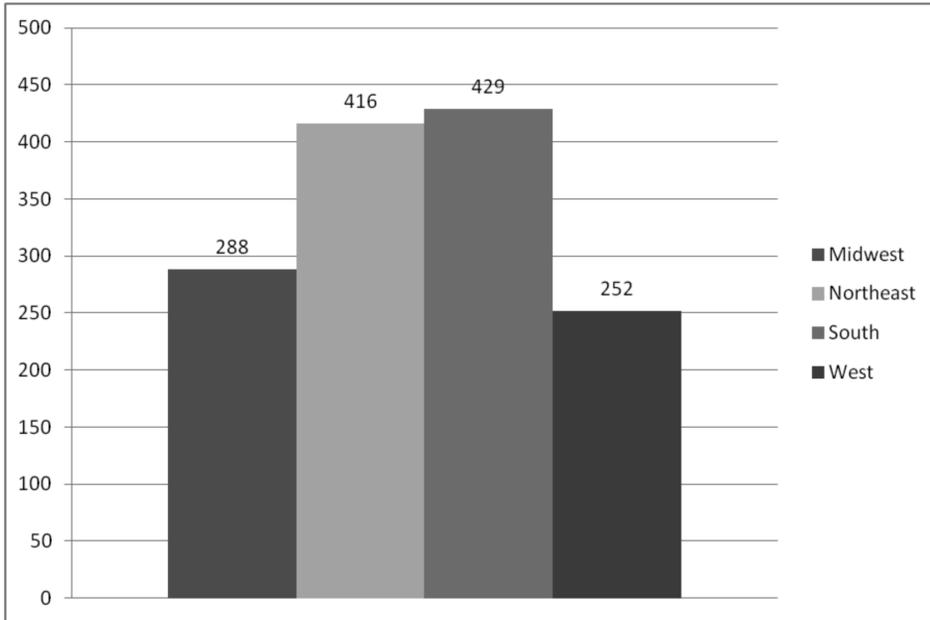


Figure 2. Positions advertised by U.S. Region

### Type of Position

For each job advertised, the position's category and specific focus was noted. A given job's category was assigned according to the majority of time spent in a particular area. Public Services constituted a majority of positions, followed by Administrative and Electronic Services. Each job category, sample job title, and number of positions are as follows:

- Administrative ("Dean of Libraries") 355 jobs, 25.6 percent
- Archives ("Archives and Special Collections Librarian") 77 jobs, 5.6 percent
- Electronic Services ("Systems/Emerging Technologies Librarian") 234 jobs, 16.9 percent
- Generalist ("Librarian") 34 jobs, 2.4 percent
- Public Services ("Reference and Instruction Librarian") 541 jobs, 39.1 percent
- Technical Services ("Cataloging Librarian") 144 jobs, 10.4 percent

The number of entry level advertisements found for each position category is shown in Figure 3. Contrary to Sproles and Ratledge's findings that systems librarian positions were most likely to require experience,<sup>23</sup> this study found that the "Electronic Services" category, which includes systems and emerging technologies, is the category with the second-highest number of entry level positions.

Positions were further analyzed to provide insight into specific job duties beyond the position category. A significant number of positions consist of a combination of job duties, such as Reference, Instruction, Outreach, and Collections, but the duties of each job advertisement were considered to determine a singular area of focus. The results convey a concentration of positions in the "Reference" and "Director" categories,

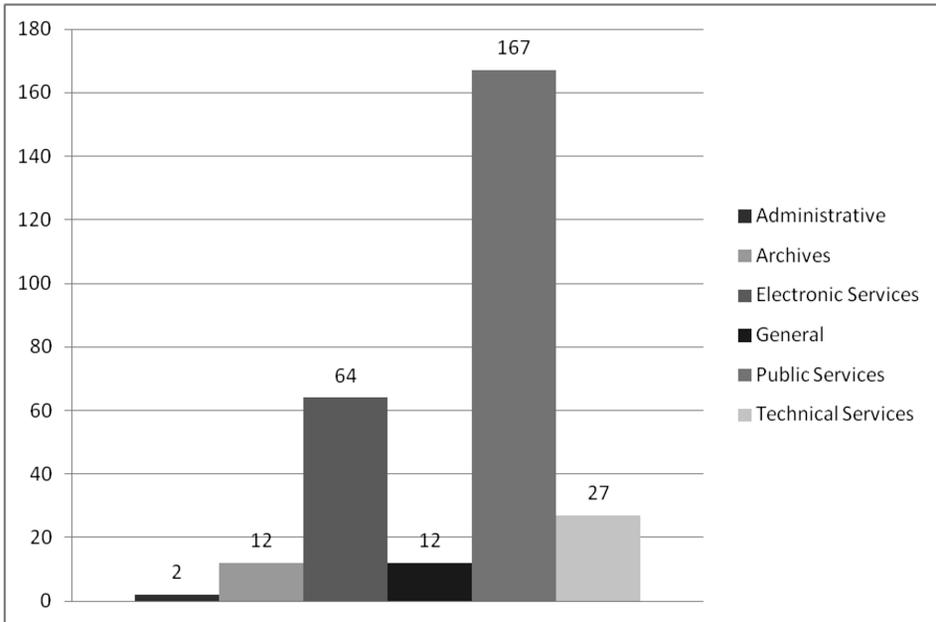


Figure 3. Entry level jobs by position category

following the same general trend as positions by category. A list of the position types that were advertised are shown in Table 3.

### Additional Questions

These results raised additional questions that warrant discussion in this study. How do the increasing number of professional positions that do not require an MLS impact the library job market? What types of experience matter most for competitive entry level positions? What differences exist in the hiring practices of public and private institutions, unionized settings, or for part time and temporary opportunities? How many entry level positions are filled by entry level applicants, compared to candidates with prior professional experience? A review of the management and library literature and the inclusion of pilot data will begin the process of answering these key questions, each of which requires far more complex data collection than is possible here and as such should be incorporated into future studies.

The growing number of professional positions not requiring an MLS has generated substantial discussion, though little discourse is concerned with these positions' impact on the library job market as a whole. Regarding the status of the MLS in the academic library job market, Grimes and Grimes reported in 2008 that "the [MLS] degree's relative

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**Table 3**  
Position types advertised

Position Type	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Access Services	50	3.6
Administrative	62	4.5
Archives	69	5
Cataloging	80	5.8
Collections	99	7.1
Director	160	11.6
Generalist	51	3.7
Instruction	124	9
Outreach	51	3.7
Public Services	40	2.9
Reference	338	24.4
Serials	36	2.6
Special Collections	39	2.8
Systems	54	3.9
Technical Services	29	2.1
Web Services	103	7.3
Total Number	1385	100

importance has declined over time," and the degree is considered less essential when employers seek workers with specialized skills outside of the traditional librarian's purview.<sup>24</sup> James Neal's influential article describing "feral professionals" observes that libraries are creating new positions that the MLS does not prepare graduates for, in areas such as systems, fundraising, publishing, and instructional technology. Because the professionals occupying these positions come from different educational backgrounds than MLS-credentialed professionals, Neal argues, they bring to libraries a "'feral' set of values, outlooks, styles, and expectations" that may both disrupt and positively contribute to the library environment.<sup>25</sup> Wilder also notes the changes occurring in academic library hiring and demographics, using ARL statistics collected in 2005 to determine that non-traditional positions account for 23 percent of research library professionals, compared to just seven percent twenty years prior.<sup>26</sup> Further, 39 percent of library professionals under 35 work in nontraditional positions, a finding with considerable yet unexplored implications for the entry level job market and academic library staffing. The increasing number of nontraditional library employment opportunities indicates that although the MLS remains a prerequisite for a majority of positions, this may not remain the case as academic libraries continue to redefine their goals and create new positions accordingly.



This study addressed the number of years of experience required by advertised positions, but do hiring managers or search committees value certain types of experience in candidates? What types of experience matter most for entry level jobs? These questions address the complexities of hiring practices beyond the basic requirements found in a position advertisement, and they are difficult to measure. The library literature contains recently completed studies surveying library professionals' on the topic of what qualities hiring committees value most in applicants. Zhonghong Wang and Charles Guarria found that ninety percent of respondents considered "Skills and performance of job requirements" to be the most important criteria, with previous academic library experience considered "essential" by 38 percent.<sup>27</sup> Additional advice from the practitioner's viewpoint is contained in Eamon Tewell's survey of 280 art library professionals, wherein respondents indicated that their subject backgrounds and experience were the most significant factors toward obtaining their first position.<sup>28</sup> In both cases experience is directly correlated with obtaining a position. A survey or qualitative study interviewing hiring managers in different settings would be of great value in understanding which types of experience matter most for entry level opportunities.

The advertising and hiring practices in public and private institutions, unionized settings, and for part-time or temporary jobs vary widely. These institutional factors, which may be very instructive in how and which types of positions are advertised, are absent from previous studies on entry level positions as well as emerging employment trends in academic libraries. In the management literature, recruitment in public institutions is the subject of Brian Collins' 2008 paper, while Robert John Araujo discusses hiring practices in religiously affiliated universities from a legal perspective.<sup>29</sup> The effect of unionized settings on hiring practices has also been briefly addressed outside of the LIS field. Most pertinent are Marianne Koch and Greg Hundley's findings that unionization is

associated with the selection of fewer recruitment sources and the increased use of formal candidate selection methods.<sup>30</sup> Research is highly encouraged on unionized settings in higher education and/or libraries, similar to the work of Applegate or Garcha and Phillips.<sup>31</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that temporary and part-time opportunities are less likely to be announced on even a local level because of the time and costs involved in advertising a position of any type. This study attempted to locate part-time and temporary jobs by collecting postings from selected cities and regions, compared to related studies that examine national occupational trends but fail to account for types of work other than full time professional. Part time library employment has been a subject of interest for some time now, most significantly in Mary Jane Brustman and Barbara Via's 1988 article.<sup>32</sup> Further investigation into this area, potentially by consulting a significant number of hiring managers or library directors, would afford a better depiction of the realities of the job market.

Most germane to this study is the question of how many entry level jobs are filled by entry level applicants. Content analysis of job advertisements indicates the availability of

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entry level jobs that can be applied for, but not necessarily obtained. It can be assumed that in some cases the most qualified applicant will be selected by the hiring institution

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regardless of a position's entry level status. It is not unheard of for entry level positions to be obtained by professionals with several years of experience, particularly in a difficult job market. In an attempt to provide pilot data addressing this matter, it was decided the best means of determining the experience backgrounds of successful applicants was by contacting the hiring institutions directly.

Fifty positions were randomly selected from the 1385 job advertisements collected. Forty-seven human resources departments were contacted via e-mail addresses located on the selected institution's website, and informed they were being e-mailed as part of a research study being conducted on entry level positions in academic libraries. The exact position was referenced by title and date of posting, followed by the question, "Did the person hired for this position have experience in libraries after obtaining their Masters in Library Science (MLS) degree? If so, how many years of experience did they have post-MLS degree?" Thirty-three valid responses were received for a response rate of 70.2 percent.

These pilot results provide evidence that entry level positions are not likely to be filled by applicants with experience of one year or less. In total, 25 of the 33 successful candidates (75.8 percent) did not fit the entry level description. The eight remaining successful applicants (24.2 percent) are classified as entry level according to this study's guidelines. Table 4 displays the number of years of experience of all successful applicants.

A majority of positions from this sample of entry level opportunities indicates that successful applicants are more likely to have several years of previous experience in libraries, contrary to the assumption that entry level jobs are filled by candidates with corresponding levels of experience. This could be on account of the fact that, in a difficult job market, employers are more likely to receive large numbers of applications and thus have the ability to select candidates with more experience. While this preliminary data does not address the myriad other factors in hiring, including types of skills beyond years of experience, it does suggest that additional research should be undertaken to address this aspect of the entry level job market.

## Conclusions

The results confirm that recent graduates face considerable challenges finding an entry level job in an academic library. Nearly three-quarters of positions were non-entry level, owing to either experience or duty requirements, and administrative positions represented 26 percent of all job advertisements. The number of entry level jobs is consistent with previous studies, in particular Reser & Schuneman and Beile & Adams.<sup>33</sup> However, as previously stated, this study employed a more liberal definition of "entry level" by including positions requiring up to one year of experience, suggesting that the number of entry level jobs by previous researchers' criteria is even less than indicated here.



## Table 4

### Experience of Successful Applicants

Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage of Total
0	3	9.1
1	5	15.2
2	5	15.2
3	8	24.2
4	7	21.2
5	2	6.1
6	1	3
7	1	3
8	0	0
9	0	0
10+	1	3
Total Number	33	100

Given the small number of jobs that recent graduates can viably apply for, this study provides insight as to what types of institutions and locations are most likely to offer opportunities. Applicants for entry level jobs are most likely to find positions in a university setting, since nearly seventy percent of all jobs were found in this type of institution. The distribution of job advertisements among the four major U.S. regions was relatively even, though slightly more positions were located in the South and Northeast. This suggests that for job hunters, targeting universities may be a more fruitful path to finding employment than pursuing particular areas of the country.

The data indicated that certain specialties are more likely to offer positions, particularly Administration and Public Services. In terms of entry level positions, recent graduates have the most opportunities in Public Services and Electronic Services. In what is a departure from previous studies, Electronic Services accounts for seventeen percent of jobs while Technical Services is ten percent. This suggests one of two things: that more positions historically included under the purview of Technical Services are moving toward their own distinct classification as Electronic Services as library services are increasingly offered online; or, independently of each other, the number of Electronic Services jobs is growing and fewer Technical Services positions are available.

Additional research is recommended in the form of a longitudinal study to identify the long-term trends in entry level job availability. Work completed in this area would also address significant questions outside of the scope of this study, such as the number of jobs offered year to year, as well as provide a valuable perspective on how the job market weathers future economic changes. This study provided pilot data on the number of entry level positions filled by applicants with entry level experience by soliciting information



from human resources departments, though full scale studies addressing this complex question would be highly useful in achieving a realistic representation of employment opportunities for recent MLS graduates. Several articles described above address such questions as the impact of professional positions not requiring an MLS and the types of experience valued most by employers, but further research is needed to document a field rapidly changing because of budget constraints and advancements in technology.

Since the 1960s, the profession has seen cyclical waves of overstated job opportunities followed by a sharp correction in the job market. This study provides evidence that in the current academic library market, entry level positions are greatly outnumbered by those requiring years of experience and duties beyond the reach of recent graduates. Recent graduates lacking significant practical experience may find securing a professional position to be a potentially insurmountable challenge. However, with increased documentation regarding the realities of the job market, seasoned professionals, recent graduates, and prospective students alike can make more informed decisions regarding their career paths and goals.

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## Notes

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