

Back to (a New?) Normal: Placements and Salaries Survey 2022

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Salaries are way up, and culture is even more important in this year's Placements and Salaries survey



Library Journal conducts its Placements and Salaries survey each year, to bring to light the story of the prior year's graduating class of LIS master's students as they conclude their studies, engage in job hunting, and begin

their professional careers. 2021 brought some hope and relief from the worst aspects of 2020, which saw the onset of the pandemic. However, our society continues to bear the burden of COVID-19 and its repercussions. We thank all the graduates who were able to participate during these difficult times. We also send our heartfelt appreciation to the LIS professional and education community for continuing to provide essential information services in support of our users, communities, and students, despite all the challenges. We extend our condolences to everyone who has experienced illness or loss and hope that much better days await us all very soon.

The 2021 LIS graduates faced brighter prospects and a more favorable job market than their immediate predecessors. The "COVID Cohort" of 2020 had to launch careers amid shutdowns, rescinded job offers, and social distancing. The Class of 2021 was met with a re-emerging economy, a rebounding seller's job market, and employers moving back towards normalcy, albeit supported by a somewhat creaky supply chain. Buoyed by the protection of available vaccines, plexiglass shielding, and ample personal protective equipment, employers sought the appropriate balance between returning to "business as usual" and retaining some telework that proved effective during the shutdowns.

Highlights from the findings include:

- In general, the results of most standard measures on the 2021 survey were more like those of 2019, rather than the anomalous year that 2020 proved to be. There were a few interesting exceptions noted below.
- Good news for 2021 graduates: salaries are (way) up, job satisfaction is up, and unemployment is down.

- COVID continued to affect these graduates' degree programs, but in more subtle ways, particularly impacting relocation decisions, internship modalities, and the prevalence of remote work.
- In assessing prospective employers, job seekers ranked a positive, healthy workplace culture as being an even more important attribute than salary.

Thirty-four of the 55 U.S.-based American Library Association (ALA) accredited schools participated fully in this survey, two fewer than last year. (For complete methodology and limitations, see the online version of this article at libraryjournal.com.) These schools reported that LIS master's degrees were bestowed on 4,931 graduates, a 9 percent increase over 2020. Twenty-seven percent of these graduates completed the survey, a 1 percent drop in response rate from last year, yet slightly higher than 2019.

The gender profile for this year's graduates displayed the usual predominance of women (75 percent), while the proportion of men (18 percent) was unchanged from 2020. There was a small but noticeable increase in the number of graduates self-reporting as non-binary/gender nonconforming (5 percent, up from 3 percent last year), or declining to answer (2 percent now versus 0.9 percent in 2020). The self-reported total for nonbinary/gender nonconforming was much larger than the schools' reported total (0.1 percent), while the schools' figure for nondisclosed gender was larger than the students' (3.5 percent versus 2 percent).

After last year's glimmer of increased diversity, the 2021 respondents' race/ethnicity composition returned to the common pattern. White graduates comprised 84 percent of the class, up slightly from the prior three years. Hispanic/Latinx graduates made up 7 percent of the class, down from 10 percent last year. Among other graduates self-reporting as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color), 4 percent were Black/African American (down from 8 percent last year), 4 percent were Asian, 3 percent identified as mixed race, and 1 percent as another race. Only 1 percent identified as Native American/Indigenous Persons, and no one selected Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

STATUS OF 2021 GRADUATES*

SCHOOL REGION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS REPORTING	NUMBER OF GRADUATES	EMPLOYED IN LIS FIELD	EMPLOYED OUTSIDE OF LIS	CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED OR CONTINUING EDUCATION	TOTAL ANSWERING	% EMPLOYED FULL-TIME*
Midwest	11	1,384	216	169	24	409	87%
Northeast	7	840	189	26	12	227	82%

South	7	1,109	160	25	14	199	90%
Central							
Southeast	4	727	153	20	12	185	88%
West							
(Pacific/ Mountain)	5	871	165	37	19	221	83%
TOTAL	34	4,931	883	277	81	1,241	86%

*IF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

TABLE BASED ON SURVEY RESPONSES FROM SCHOOLS AND INDIVIDUAL GRADUATES. FIGURES WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH SOME OF THE OTHER DATA REPORTED. TABLES DO NOT ALWAYS ADD UP, INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, SINCE BOTH SCHOOLS AND INDIVIDUALS OMITTED DATA IN SOME CASES.

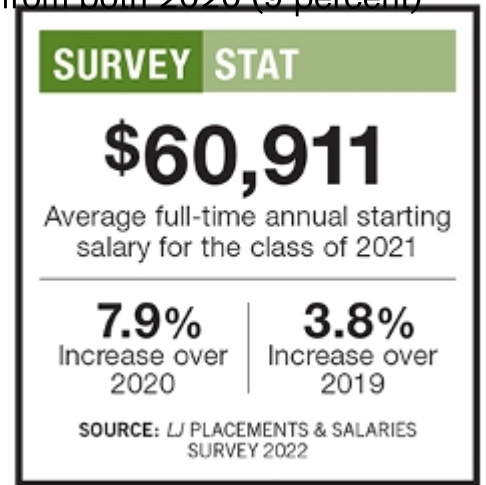
SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

The age composition of the 2021 class was much like the prior year but skewed slightly more towards middle age. More than half (53 percent) of respondents were between 26 to 35 years old, making 35 the average age, similar to 2020 (54 percent and age 35). Almost three-fourths of the current class were between 26 and 45 years old. Slightly fewer 2021 graduates were over 45 years old (14 percent), versus the prior year (16 percent). Just under half of this year's graduates are pursuing their first professional career, continuing a trend seen for the fourth year in a row.

PLACEMENTS AND SALARIES

The average full-time annual starting salary for the class of 2021 was \$60,911, a soaring increase of 7.9 percent over 2020's pandemic-impacted salary level, and 3.8 percent above 2019, which was the previous high watermark. This is the first time the average salary level has topped \$60,000 and represents an impressive 36.9 percent increase over the average starting salary earned by LIS graduates a decade earlier. This year's increase also reflects the economy-wide trend toward rising salaries in 2021, as workplaces emerged from the 2020 lockdowns and began to return to normal. Eighty-six percent of employed 2021 graduates hold a full-time position; this measure is back to the high level of 2019, after a slight dip (84 percent) for the 2020 COVID cohort. As with recent years, almost all the full-time jobs are permanent (94 percent), not temporary (6 percent), positions.

Unemployment for 2021 graduates was 7 percent, slightly down from both 2020 (9 percent) and 2019 (8 percent), though still twice the national average of 3.5 percent in 2021. Although unemployment is lower, there are notable shifts this year in the activities of the unemployed. About two-thirds were actively seeking employment within the LIS field (65 percent), a substantial drop from the proportion of active job seekers in 2020 (76 percent). There was a large jump in the number of unemployed graduates taking time off for personal reasons (15 percent versus 10 percent in 2020, and only 4 percent in 2019). This may reflect the widely reported societal trend towards choosing to concentrate on other aspects of life other than work, or hesitance to return to an in-person workplace while COVID continues and many preventative measures are no longer required. Somewhat fewer graduates this year indicated they were pursuing additional education (14 percent versus 17 percent in 2020), while those doing internships held constant (3 percent now and last year). Happily, no current graduates have been furloughed (down from 3 percent last year).



Although fewer graduates are working part-time this year, those that do are holding down even more positions. Only 14 percent of this year's employed graduates are working part-time, which is down from 2020 (16 percent), and aligned with 2019 (14 percent). However, only 58 percent of 2021's part-timers are holding a single position, for an average of 1.5 positions, versus 64 percent and 1.4 positions for 2020 graduates. More than a third of this year's part-timers are holding down two positions, while 8 percent are working three or more jobs. Both of these figures are up from 2020 (30 percent with two jobs, and 6 percent with three or more). In contrast, fewer 2021 graduates who are employed full-time are also holding down a second or third job (12 percent) than their 2020 counterparts (17 percent). For about half of these 2021 moonlighters, their additional position(s) are not related to libraries or education. Student debt load alone appears to be somewhat less of a factor in moonlighting this year; only 19 percent of this year's graduates who are employed full time and are carrying \$50,000 or more in student debt have a second job, versus 28 percent in 2020, perhaps owing to the pandemic pause on repayments or the temporary relaxation of the rules for seeking Public Service Loan Forgiveness, since the survey was conducted prior to the Biden administration's decision to forgive an additional \$10,000 in student debt.

PLACEMENTS & FULL-TIME SALARIES OF 2021 GRADUATES BY REGION

AVERAGE SALARY

REGION	NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS	Women	Men	Nonbinary*	All	DIFFERENCE IN AVERAGE M/F SALARY
Midwest	217	\$56,433	\$67,181	\$52,267	\$58,746	-16.0%
Mountain	68	55,571	50,417	41,427	55,768	10.2%
Northeast	181	58,304	74,901	60,493	62,113	-22.2%
Pacific	132	81,439	90,982	63,833	83,143	-10.5%
South Central	135	51,578	64,676	38,500	53,299	-20.3%
Southeast	153	52,033	46,421	46,000	51,169	12.1%
International	16	51,001	60,500	n/a	58,500	-15.7%
Remote	50	76,739	82,714	63,750	76,441	-7.2%
TOTAL	952	59,042	69,845	53,360	61,099	-15.5%

THIS TABLE REPRESENTS ONLY SALARIES REPORTED AS FULL-TIME. SOME DATA WERE REPORTED AS AGGREGATE WITHOUT BREAKDOWN BY GENDER OR REGION. COMPARISON WITH OTHER TABLES MAY SHOW DIFFERENT NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS.

*INCLUDES NONBINARY AND GENDER NONCONFORMING

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

Following the pattern begun in 2019, 71 percent of the 2021 graduates either work for an LIS institution or function in an LIS capacity, while 22 percent report employment outside of the LIS field. Over half of those working outside LIS are working in private industry (59 percent). These levels align more with the 2019 class, while fewer 2020 graduates worked outside LIS (18 percent) in that unconventional year.

Despite the differences in circumstances between this year and 2020, the workplace destinations for both years' graduating classes were remarkably similar. The most frequent landing spots for both 2021 and 2020 graduates were public libraries (33 percent) and college/university libraries (19 percent). Private industry drew 17 percent of graduates for both years as well. K-12 schools attracted 9 percent of this year's class; a bit lower than last year (10 percent). Less frequent 2021 destinations all scored within a percentage point of their 2020 levels: nonprofit organizations (4 percent), other academic units at colleges/universities (3 percent), archives and special collections (3 percent), special libraries (3 percent), government agencies (3 percent), government libraries (2 percent), vendors (1 percent), and library cooperatives/networks (1 percent). Only 1 percent of the 2021 class work as consultants.

FULL-TIME SALARIES OF REPORTING PROFESSIONALS BY PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT

PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT	NO. RECEIVED	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Children's Services	54	\$50,300	\$50,785	\$24,000	\$71,000
Reference/Information Services	50	54,886	52,084	21,000	100,000
School Librarian/School Library Media Specialist	50	53,962	54,000	32,000	90,000
Administration	37	51,295	50,000	28,000	89,000
Archival And Preservation	33	47,006	45,099	32,000	80,000
Adult Services	28	48,936	48,150	34,722	75,000
Digital Content Management	27	55,778	55,000	35,000	118,000
Metadata, Cataloging & Taxonomy	26	53,927	53,428	29,280	90,000
Training, Teaching & Instruction	21	54,238	54,000	21,000	88,000
Teacher Librarian	20	57,160	53,250	40,000	83,000
Public Services	19	49,223	48,002	30,000	71,000
Outreach	18	55,296	52,785	40,000	88,000
Patron Programming	15	51,444	48,000	39,000	86,000
Technical Services	14	59,170	56,800	42,100	76,000
YA/Teen Services	14	49,631	48,500	40,000	64,000
Circulation	12	36,741	38,500	24,000	43,000
Access Services	11	47,727	45,000	40,000	63,000
Data Analytics	11	66,964	60,000	35,600	150,000
Collection Development/Acquisitions	10	47,536	48,550	32,457	64,000
Records Management	10	58,328	55,000	31,000	101,000
Knowledge Management	8	75,250	70,500	24,000	125,000

Communications, PR, and Social Media	7	46,857	51,000	26,000	53,000
Data Curation & Management	7	68,286	67,000	48,000	87,000
Information Technology	7	118,381	80,000	47,669	295,000
Solo Librarian	5	62,500	54,000	47,500	104,000
Systems Technology	4	61,000	62,000	54,000	66,000
User Experience/Usability Analysis	4	91,750	91,000	70,000	115,000
Market Intelligence/ Business Research	3	62,073	60,000	50,000	76,220
Website Design	3	57,000	55,000	54,000	62,000
Budgeting/Finance	2	65,116	65,116	52,850	77,381
Emerging Technologies	2	89,000	89,000	63,000	115,000
Assessment	1	45,000	45,000	45,000	45,000
Government Documents	1	54,000	54,000	54,000	54,000
Grant Writing	1	103,000	103,000	103,000	103,000
Readers' Advisory	1	36,400	36,400	36,400	36,400
Other	27	55,183	50,000	25,000	110,000

THIS TABLE REPRESENTS FULL-TIME PLACEMENTS REPORTED BY PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT.

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

The 2021 survey has revealed some positive changes in graduates' satisfaction with their current placements. Seventy-six percent of the employed graduates (full and part-time) said they are satisfied with their positions, a clear uptick from both 2020 (65 percent) and 2019 (72 percent). The lowest levels of satisfaction were voiced by graduates working in non-librarian positions in library settings (only 38 percent satisfied). Some of this dissatisfaction can be explained by part-time status, as part-time workers are much less satisfied than full-time employees (59 percent versus 79 percent). Another factor is salary differential; non-librarians working in a library made 18 percent less than librarians.

CONTINUING EFFECTS OF COVID-19

One lasting impact of the pandemic on the U.S. workplace was proof that remote work or hybrid remote/in-person modalities could be successful. This had the potential to affect respondents during their coursework, job search, and subsequent employment. However, the impact was not always positive. Noted one respondent, “Zoom interviews were used by large, toxic institutions during COVID as a way to hide their dysfunction and the reality of the location.”

Thirty-six percent of the LIS schools said that COVID affected their ability to support their graduates’ job search. Most indicated that they had to convert to online delivery of support services. A few noted a negative impact on advising, student chapter activities, or student morale and mental health.

Employed 2021 graduates were a little more likely to have relocated for their job (19 percent) than last year’s class (16 percent), but relocation remained less common than in 2019 (26 percent). Current graduates were most likely move away for new positions in archives/special collections (40 percent) or academic institutions (37 percent). Among 2021 graduates, 22 percent applied to positions outside their local area without intending to relocate, because of a rise in remote work opportunities during the pandemic. This is slightly lower than the score for 2020 graduates (23 percent). 2021 graduates who work in private industry or nonprofit organizations were most likely to apply for remote work.

PLACEMENTS BY FULL-TIME SALARY OF REPORTING 2021 GRADUATES*

SCHOOLS	TOTAL PLACEMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Alabama	7	\$64,287	\$65,000	\$46,000	\$73,512
Arizona	8	48,160	48,000	25,000	72,000
Buffalo	6	46,500	44,500	40,000	55,000
Chicago State	3	56,083	57,000	43,250	68,000
Denver	14	49,522	50,000	34,000	66,500
Emporia State	13	54,035	50,000	37,000	70,000
Hawaii Manoa	4	63,542	60,584	45,000	88,000
Illinois Urbana-Champaign	38	55,884	53,500	40,000	87,000
Kent State*	18	48,443	41,500	33,280	94,000
Kentucky	21	47,270	43,680	26,000	78,000

Louisiana State	19	51,715	50,000	32,000	89,000
Maryland	17	556,388	56,000	44,000	72,000
Michigan*	106	93,104	85,000	37,500	225,000
Missouri	4	53,785	55,000	45,000	60,140
NC Greensboro	55	48,774	48,000	31,000	85,000
North Texas	22	55,137	54,000	32,000	83,000
Pittsburgh	6	56,558	46,250	39,000	115,000
Pratt	8	55,374	52,000	38,000	82,000
Queens	29	54,021	50,570	24,000	76,000
Rutgers	28	66,081	55,000	24,000	295,000
San José*	57	64,789	57,000	39,000	150,000
Simmons	37	58,203	56,000	33,000	110,000
Southern California	6	57,733	59,700	36,000	73,000
Southern Mississippi	15	44,240	35,600	21,000	142,000
St. John's	10	47,023	46,942	40,000	54,000
Tennessee	12	49,885	50,500	31,000	76,500
Texas Women's	23	52,176	54,000	33,280	68,444
Valdosta	34	49,270	50,000	21,000	80,000
Wayne State	30	57,402	49,000	33,000	150,000
Wisconsin Madison	16	54,725	55,850	38,000	71,000
Wisconsin Milwaukee	14	62,918	60,300	41,500	115,000
TOTAL	683	60,911	54,953	21,000	295,000

*SOME SCHOOLS CONDUCTED THEIR OWN SURVEY AND PROVIDE RAW DATA. TWO OF THESE, INDIANA BLOOMINGTON AND NC CHAPEL HILL, DID NOT SEND SALARY OR FULL-TIME INFORMATION.

ST. CATHERINE IS OMITTED BECAUSE ONLY ONE GRADUATE PROVIDED THEIR FULL-TIME SALARY.

THIS TABLE REPRESENTS PLACEMENTS AND SALARIES REPORTED AS FULL-TIME. SOME INDIVIDUALS OR SCHOOLS OMITTED INFORMATION, RENDERING INFORMATION UNUSABLE.

SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

Questions about work modalities were posed on the 2020 and 2021 surveys. While some 2021 graduates are working remotely or hybrid, these modalities are less prevalent now than they were last year. Of 2021 graduates employed full-time, 73 percent were working fully in-person, while 21 percent were employed in a hybrid mode. Only 6 percent were working exclusively remotely. Fully remote work was most common for those working in private industry (40 percent). Last year, 58 percent were working solely in person, 27 percent were hybrid, and 15 percent were fully remote.

Current graduates working full time via either a hybrid or fully remote modality were asked about their expectations of any change in modality in 2022. The great majority anticipate no change (80 percent), while 11 percent were unsure. Only 5 percent expect to change to a hybrid model, while 4 percent believe they will change to fully in-person. Going to a fully remote mode (1 percent) was considered extremely unlikely.

REBOUNDED SALARIES

After 2020's 4 percent dip in the overall average salary level, 2021 graduates' salary levels were apparently buoyed by the reopening economy, as the overall average bounced up 7.9 percent, to hit \$60,911. This was almost 4 percent higher than 2019's average. This year's median salary was \$54,953, up 7.8 percent from 2020, and 3.7 percent over 2019. It should be noted, however, that the 2021 inflation rate was itself 7 percent, compared with 1.4 percent in 2020, based on data from the Consumer Price Index.

AVERAGE SALARY FOR STARTING LIBRARY POSITIONS, 2012–21

YEAR	LIBRARY SCHOOLS REPRESENTED	AVG. Full-TIME STARTING SALARY	DIFFERENCE IN AVG. SALARY	PERCENTAGE CHANGE
2012	41	\$44,503	(\$62)	-0.14%
2013	40	\$45,650	\$1,147	2.58%
2014	39	\$46,987	\$1,337	2.93%
2015	39	\$48,371	\$1,384	2.95%
2016	40	\$51,798	\$3,427	7.08%
2017	41	\$52,152	\$354	0.68%
2018	41	\$55,357	\$3,205	6.15%
2019	36	\$58,655	\$3,298	5.96%
2020	36	\$56,453	(\$2,202)	-3.75%
2021	34	\$60,911	\$4,458	7.90%

SOURCE: L/ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

Although hourly wage levels lag well behind the annual salaries earned by graduates, they are at least rising. Only 14 percent of current graduates employed full-time are paid an hourly wage, averaging \$20.35 per hour, which is 82 cents an hour more than last year, and up more than 3 percent over 2019. The current hourly rate translates into an annual salary of \$42,328, a 4 percent increase over last year.

Gender pay disparities persist for the class of 2021; the average salary for women graduates was \$59,042, which is 15.5 percent lower than the average paid to men (\$69,845). This gender salary differential was larger than in 2020 (12.5 percent) but was more favorable to women than 2019's 20 percent imbalance. Another sign of disparity is that, although average salary levels went up for both men and women, the increase for men (up by 10.2 percent versus 2020) was much larger than the increase for women (6.5 percent). Interestingly, the smallest pay disparity favoring men over women was for remote workers (7.2 percent). Women did earn higher average salaries than men in two placement regions, the Southeast (12.1 percent higher), and Mountain (10.2 percent higher). The average salary for nonbinary graduates is lower than for either men or women, at \$53,360, and 13 percent below the overall average.

The type of organization is a prime factor in the salary level earned by an LIS graduate. This year, consulting was singled out of other mentions as a new category, which drew the highest average salary (\$95,682), pushing private industry (\$87,549) out of the top spot. Graduates employed by nonprofits (\$60,659) enjoyed the next largest paydays. 2021 brought interesting shifts in the rank order of libraries, with government libraries (\$55,378) and academic libraries (\$55,360) now paying slightly more than school libraries (\$55,028). Archives/special collections (\$49,762) still trail special libraries (\$53,924), but now pay more on average than public libraries (\$48,429). The 2021 salary levels for all organizational types were up an average of about \$4,000, with school and public library salary increases on the low end.

PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

More than half of the employed 2021 graduates stayed with the employer or position they held before or during their master's program (57 percent). This was a substantial drop from last year, when two-thirds of working 2020 graduates stayed put. Over half the 2021 graduates who remained with their current employer saw positive change from earning their master's degree, such as salary raises (30 percent), promotions (23 percent), or elevation from support staff to professional status (15 percent).

An alternative path after obtaining their LIS master's degree is to earn another advanced degree. The class of 2021 included 30 percent who indicated they would either probably or definitely take on another advanced degree program in the future, while only 15 percent definitely ruled it out. Fifty-five percent said they would probably not pursue another degree. Twenty-three percent already held an advanced degree before starting their LIS master's program, while 6 percent were in a dual-enrollment degree program while earning their LIS masters. These responses closely align with those of the 2020 graduates.

Although more than half of the employed 2021 graduates described themselves as a "librarian working for a library" (53 percent), use of this term declined for the fifth year in a row. Respondents who are "non-librarians working for a library" also declined sharply (14 percent, versus about 20 percent in recent years). An increase occurred in graduates calling themselves "non-librarians not working for a library" (27 percent, up from 19 percent). "Librarians not working for a library" remained the least frequent response (6 percent); these graduates mention using library-oriented skills such as metadata, research, records/archive management, and cataloging, while working mostly for nonprofit organizations or in private industry.

COMPARISON OF FULL-TIME SALARIES BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

	TOTAL PLACEMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Archives/Special Collections	17	\$49,762	\$48,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
College/University	156	55,360	51,890	24,000	150,000
Government Library	13	55,378	50,000	33,722	85,000
Nonprofit Organizations	23	60,6593	53,000	33,280	118,000
Private Industry	131	87,549	82,500	30,160	295,000
Public Library	186	48,429	48,490	21,000	86,000
School Library	82	55,028	54,500	32,000	90,000
Special Library	28	53,924	53,300	35,000	85,000
Other Organizations	41	64,121	56,000	31,000	150,000

THIS TABLE REPRESENTS ONLY FULL-TIME SALARIES AND ALL PLACEMENTS REPORTED BY TYPE. SOME INDIVIDUALS OMITTED PLACEMENT INFORMATION, RENDERING SOME INFORMATION UNUSABLE.

SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

Employed graduates used a list of typical LIS professional duties to indicate their primary job assignment. The top three responses were the same for 2021 and 2020 graduates: children’s services (11 percent), reference/information services (10 percent), and school librarian/school library media specialist (7 percent). Archival and preservation work (7 percent) broke into the top tier this year, followed by administration (6 percent). Employed graduates used the same list to select all duties that they perform in their current placement. The top five most frequently chosen assignments are classic functions in librarianship: reference/information services (49 percent), outreach (38 percent), collection development/acquisitions (37 percent), patron programming (33 percent), and circulation (33 percent). These same five activities also topped this list for 2020 graduates, although outreach has risen substantially in relative terms this year, from fifth to second place.

Only eight percent of employed 2021 graduates characterized their job as being in an emergent area of library services; this metric has decreased steadily over the past four years. In addition to virtual reality/augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, several current graduates work in digital asset management for NFTs.

THE PERFECT MATCH

A new open-ended question this year asked students, “What is the single most important thing you look for in an employer?” Graduates listed a broad array of priorities, topped by a positive, healthy, supportive workplace culture (32 percent). Many jobseekers focused on salary level (20 percent), emphasizing the importance of making a living wage, and to a lesser extent, full benefits like healthcare (8 percent). The next most-mentioned quality was a good work-life balance (11 percent), including some schedule flexibility, and the possibility of working remotely. Some respondents described what they wanted in their management/supervisor (11 percent), mentioning traits like leadership, good communication, management ability, vision, and mentoring. Other graduates (10 percent) honed in on finding a job that was the right fit for them, a good match for their skill sets and interests, or doing interesting work that had meaning and value. About 9 percent emphasized career advancement and growth potential, and the availability of professional development. Some respondents mentioned the importance of the job’s location (6 percent), good quality of life, community ties, or an easy commute close to home. Job security was the main concern of 5 percent, who want a permanent position with a stable, well-funded organization. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were prized by 4 percent of respondents, who seek a safe workplace offering acceptance. Some respondents mentioned BIPOC identities, queerness, and neurodivergence as aspects that must be welcome. One also noted that they wanted their tattoos to be accepted.

FULL-TIME SALARIES BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION AND GENDER

ORGANIZATION	TOTAL PLACEMENTS				AVERAGE SALARY			
	Women	Men	Nonbinary*	All	Women	Men	Nonbinary*	All
Archives/Special Collections	14	2	-	17	\$50,633	\$49,550	-	\$49,762
College/University	108	32	13	156	54,225	60,858	\$51,829	55,360
Consulting	7	3	-	11	94,286	106,667	-	95,682
Government Library	12	-	1	13	55,826	-	50,000	55,378
Nonprofit Organization	21	2	-	23	60,246	65,000	-	60,659
Private Industry	78	45	3	131	86,955	87,186	68,333	87,549
Public Library	149	25	12	186	47,780	53,321	46,299	48,429
School Library	75	6	1	82	54,980	52,467	74,000	55,028
Special Library	24	2	1	28	53,641	51,500	82,000	53,924

Other Organization	27	10	3	41	63,591	66,700	55,000	64,121
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*INCLUDES NONBINARY AND GENDER NONCONFORMING

SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2022

CHASING THEIR DREAM

This year's job hunters described their experiences searching for their new positions. On average, 2021 graduates initiated their search 4.8 months before graduation, somewhat later than last year's cohort (5.3 months), who faced a more difficult job market. Current graduates typically began looking for work between one and six months prior to graduation (57 percent), while about a quarter of this class started looking seven months or more ahead. Eighteen percent started their search after finishing their program.

Among current graduates, 38 percent were able to secure their placement prior to graduating. This is up slightly from 2020 (35 percent), but still trails well behind 2019 levels (46 percent). However, a more promising sign is that current job seekers had to wait an average of only 4.2 months post-graduation to be hired, the same as their 2019 counterparts, and more than a month sooner than in 2020 (5.4 months).

Nonetheless, many graduates spoke of long, disheartening job searches. "Oh man, I wish I could just tell people 'don't give up, keep going!'," advised Chas Cassidy, curator at the Chicago Public Library. "What jobs you apply for really matter. I had three serious 'rounds' of multiple job interviews across different institutions, and my second/third set of potential jobs were much better than the first even though I had gained no more library experience—I just got better at writing cover letters and interviewing. Not applying for internships/part-time work when you need permanent, full-time work is also important. It's tough when 'success' leads you cyclically to another untenable situation."

LIS schools perceived that time-to-placement was about the same as in 2020 (88 percent) and were more likely to say it took longer this year (8 percent) rather than less time (4 percent).

This year, one fourth of employed graduates landed positions in the Midwest. Others were fairly evenly divided across the Northeast (19 percent), Southeast (15 percent), Pacific (14 percent), and South Central (13 percent) regions. Fewer current graduates are working in the Mountain

region (7 percent) or internationally (2 percent). Location is largely moot for the 5 percent working remotely.

Respondents indicated experiences or activities that were especially important or helpful for acquiring their first professional position. Previous employment experience (71 percent) was the most frequently chosen item, as in prior years. Graduates also recognized the value of technological skills (such as database searching, coding, and internet-based skills, 44 percent), and experience gained from internships/practicums/fieldwork (40 percent). Networking with active professionals (33 percent) and acquiring knowledge through subject specialization (28 percent) also contributed to their success. These findings are consistent with the past two years.

Some felt schools need to do more to support the job hunt. “Programs have got to spend more time helping students prepare for the job market. A final course, maybe one credit, should be focused on resume building, mock interviews, cover letter writing, how to judge an employer, what to do if you start a job and hate it, what to do if you accept a job out of state but then can’t find a place to move into,” said Elizabeth Wheeler, Prospect Research Analyst, University of Arizona Foundation, Tucson. “We are sending our next generation of library professionals to the wolves with this current job market. It was already bad pre-COVID, but now with the national housing crisis we cannot tell new grads to pick up and move for a position when these positions do not pay enough to secure housing. We also have to stress the importance [of] looking outside of traditional library jobs. My current role in prospect research wasn’t even something that I knew existed until I was contacted by a recruiter.”

In a noteworthy reversal of the prior year, a majority (54 percent) of the 2021 class did not engage in an internship or practicum as part of their LIS degree. About a third of current graduates took one internship/practicum, but only 14 percent completed two or more. Those who did complete at least one engaged in an average of 1.5 practical learning experiences. COVID-19 may have impacted not only the volume of internships taken but also forced a change in their modality. Among this year’s graduates who did internships, only 38 percent were fully in-person, as compared to 56 percent for 2020 graduates. There was an increase in fully remote internships for 2021 graduates (29 percent, versus only 11 percent for 2020 graduates). Hybrid work experiences remained constant (33 percent) for both sets of graduates. It follows that students graduating primarily in spring of 2021 may have been doing internships in mid to late 2020, when there were more shutdowns.

The class of 2021 enjoyed a smaller burden of student loan debt from their LIS program than the prior class of graduates, with 44 percent winding up debt-free, up from 39 percent for 2020. Among the 56 percent of current graduates carrying student loan debt, the average amount owed is \$33,600, which is 11.3 percent lower than the average for 2020 graduates.

Only 10 percent of the 2021 graduates owed more than \$50,000 in student debt. Again, these numbers do not include the \$10,000 in student loan forgiveness recently offered by the federal government.

New questions were posed this year about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF), and its impact on graduates' job choices. This federal program is available to people with student loan debt now working full time for qualifying employers (generally government and not-for-profit organizations), and who have made 120 qualifying monthly payments. The remaining balance on their student loan is then forgiven. Among the 2021 graduates who have student loan debt, 45 percent expect to receive this loan forgiveness. Almost half of the graduates who anticipate benefitting from the PSLF said it affected their job choice, meaning that they prioritized working for a qualifying employer.

SCHOOLS SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Twenty-nine percent of responding LIS schools reported having a formal mentoring program for students' professional development, an increase over the past two years. Approaches included matching students with professionals/alumni, career development courses, and providing career services staff.

Schools on average made their students aware of 826 job opportunities this year, an enormous 115 percent increase over the paltry offerings in 2020. Email listserv announcements (92 percent) were the channel of choice to spread the word to students, but social media (46 percent) and student groups/activities (43 percent) also played a major part. Use of formal placement services/centers at the LIS school (24 percent) or parent university (27 percent) levels are up slightly from last year. Physical postings or bulletin boards (30 percent) continue to decline each year.

RETHINKING THE LIBRARY WORKPLACE

The Great Reassessment of work expectations, location, pay, and every other aspect of employment that COVID brought to U.S. society is impacting what new librarians want from their placements. The pronounced emphasis on culture, transparency, flexibility, and inclusion in the responses is evidence of that—as is the advice, alongside the usual networking and persistence, to know your worth, negotiate your salary, and interview your would-be employers about your prospective colleagues and culture.

Judging by the many responses which begin “I love my job!” graduates often find employers who meet those expectations. While the field still has further to go on pay, and pay equity, this year saw a significant step forward.

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METHODOLOGY

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The annual *LJ* Placements and Salaries survey provides the LIS community with year-to-year comparisons of the experiences and insights from the graduates of American Library Association (ALA)-accredited academic institutions, about both their search for employment and the preparation and support provided by their schools. *LJ* invited 55 of the ALA-accredited library and information science schools located in the United States to participate in the survey. Thirty-four schools responded by providing information about their 2021 graduates. Thirty of these schools participated by sending a link for the *LJ* online survey to all their 2021 graduates. Five participating schools performed their own independent assessment of their graduates, and then shared these results with *LJ*: San José State, University of Michigan, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Indiana University–Bloomington, and Kent State. The independent assessments conducted by these schools did not necessarily include all of the questions used in the *LJ* survey. The data analyzed for this article are the aggregation of responses from 27 percent of the 4,931 total graduates reported by this year's 34 participant schools. This year's respondent base was 9 percent larger than last year's, but yielded a 1 percent lower overall response rate.

There was a wide range of response rates among individual schools. Schools that sent their own surveys were rewarded with responses from as many as 78 percent of their graduates, or as few as 15 percent. Among the schools that forwarded the *LJ* survey to their graduates, response rates varied from a high of 72 percent to a low of 10 percent. *LJ* requires that a 10 percent threshold be met.

This year, 15 schools elected not to participate in the survey or failed to respond to calls for participation: University of California–Los Angeles, Catholic University, Clarion University, Dominican University, Drexel University, Florida State University, Long Island University, North Carolina Central University, Oklahoma University, University of Rhode Island, University of South Carolina, Southern Connecticut State University, University of South Florida, University of Texas–Austin, and the University of Washington. Data provided by four universities, SUNY–Albany, East Carolina, IUPUI, and Syracuse, were not included in the study because their survey response rate fell short of the required 10 percent threshold. The University of Iowa completed the institutional survey, but no 2021 graduates completed the survey.

Canadian LIS programs conduct their own assessments and do not participate in the *LJ* annual survey. This includes programs at Alberta, British Columbia, Dalhousie, McGill, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Western Ontario. The University of Puerto Rico also does not participate.

LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this report is to provide the LIS professions with a snapshot of graduates' experiences entering the job market, and to identify potential trends in comparison to prior years of the study. It is not a comprehensive examination of all employment outcomes. The applicability of the survey findings is limited because graduates' participation in the study is self-selected, rather than constituting a representative sample, and the survey questions on the independent surveys administered by some schools may vary somewhat. Data from some LIS schools may be incomplete, and other schools chose not to participate. Not all *LJ*-administered surveys were complete because graduates were allowed to skip any question on the survey or leave the survey.