

Holding Steady | Placements and Salaries Survey 2022

by [Andrew Gerber](#)

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For the past three years, *Library Journal's* Placements and Salaries survey has offered a snapshot of COVID-19's impact on the library field. Graduates of library and information science (LIS) programs in 2020 emerged with their diplomas into a highly disrupted industry, contending with library shutdowns, layoffs and furloughs, rescinded job offers, and fears for their safety. As shown in last year's survey, however, 2021 graduates were met with a recovering economy, a national vaccine program and improved personal protection measures, and a growing—although far from perfect—awareness of the need for more equity in the workplace. Starting salaries jumped by 7.9 percent, and the numbers of employed graduates with full-time positions returned to 2019 highs of 86 percent.

The 2023 Placements and Salaries survey, by comparison, showed only incremental improvements. The average full-time starting salary for 2022 grads was \$61,473, up only about \$500 from last year. Unemployment was down to 5 percent from 7 percent in 2022, and of those who are employed, 87 percent hold full-time positions. (It should also be noted that participation, with 1,256 people responding to the survey, was slightly down this year.)

But while not cause for bold-type headlines, 2023 survey results speak to a level of stability in a field that has seen more than its share of hardships. For recent graduates, these numbers represent a welcome development in still-uncertain times.

STATUS OF 2022 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	1,398	226	164	22	412	90%
Northeast	7	839	164	13	7	184	84%
South Central	7	1,133	181	26	9	216	90%
Southeast	6	683	175	15	15	205	90%
West (Pacific/Mountain)	6	1,222	199	27	13	239	78%
TOTAL	37	5,275	945	245	66	1,256	87%

*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 2023

THE CLASS OF 2022

This year's poll saw responses from graduates from 37 U.S.-based, American Library Association (ALA)-accredited institutions, up from last year's 35. All offered some variant of an MLIS (Master of Library and Information Science) degree, including information science, data science, school media specialty, bio/health informatics and other related degrees. The best-represented schools included the University of Michigan, with 183 respondents; another 155 earned their master's degrees from San José University.

PLACEMENTS & FULL-TIME SALARIES OF 2022 GRADUATES BY REGION

REGION	NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY				DIFFERENCE IN AVERAGE M/F SALARY
		Women	Men	Nonbinary*	All	
Midwest	221	\$54,608	\$64,680	\$49,634	\$56,665	-15.6%
Mountain	45	52,727	59,575	58,000	54,447	-11.5%
Northeast	185	61,802	60,883	57,896	61,110	1.5%
Pacific	121	75,644	71,069	71,701	74,320	6.4%
South Central	128	49,204	51,635	47,340	49,333	-4.7%
Southeast	170	55,045	60,709	71,367	56,895	-9.3%
International	9	59,167	75,500	-	67,667	-21.5%
Remote	83	86,886	92,945	62,000	88,922	-6.5%
TOTAL	962	60,316	66,277	59,726	61,473	-9.5%

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.

*THE NONBINARY SAMPLE IS TOO SMALL TO YIELD STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT RESULTS WHEN COMPARED TO PLACEMENTS AND SALARIES OF OTHER GENDERS. THEREFORE, ALL GENDER COMPARISONS SHOWN ARE MALE TO FEMALE ONLY.

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

Gender distribution was virtually unchanged this year. As in the past several surveys, some three-quarters of 2022 graduates identified as women—74 percent, only slightly down from 75 percent in 2021. Eighteen percent identified as male, as in 2021. Six percent self-identified as nonbinary/gender nonconforming, versus 2021's 5 percent, and 2 percent preferred not to disclose their gender, as in 2021. Results from the schools were consistent with the graduates' individual responses.

Of these, nearly three-quarters—74 percent—were white. While certainly a majority, as it has been historically, this was significantly lower than 2021's 84 percent. The 10 percent of respondents who were Asian (7 percent South Asian, 2 percent East Asian, and 1 percent Southeast Asian) represented a proportionally large increase from the class of 2021's 4 percent. Similar to last year's

numbers, 8 percent were Hispanic or Latine, 4 percent Black or African American, 3 percent of mixed race, and 2 percent Native American or Indigenous; these findings were similar to 2022. Five percent preferred not to state their race.

Their ages ranged widely, with the average age of 35 unchanged from last year. Twelve percent were 25 or under, 54 percent between 26 and 35, 19 percent between 36 and 45, 11 percent between 46 and 56, 4 percent 56 or older, and 1 percent preferred not to answer.

About half (53 percent) stated that library and information science was the first professional career that they pursued. This is slightly higher than the previous several years' findings, where just under half were first-career librarians. Those who had changed fields had previous experience in disciplines including archaeology, the arts, business, communication, healthcare and medicine, information technology, journalism, law, marketing, psychology, publishing, retail, social work, and—most commonly—education, ranging from K–12 to higher ed.

The majority (91 percent) were not enrolled in another graduate or certificate concentration while completing their LIS degree. Among the 9 percent who were working toward dual degrees, certification in youth services was the most common. The majority (81 percent) did not have an advanced degree prior to starting their program. Most of the remaining 19 percent had degrees at the master's level.

Most 2022 grads had a variety of experience working in libraries before they received their master's—16 percent before entering their programs, 26 percent while earning their master's, and 39 percent employed in libraries both before and during their academic programs. Although a slight majority stated that they felt their master's degree changed their employment status for the better, most said they would “probably not” (54 percent) or “definitely not” (14 percent) be pursuing another advanced degree in the future. Twenty-six percent of participants said that they probably would, and 6 percent definitely plan to.

SUPPORT FROM SCHOOLS

Schools used a variety of methods for informing their graduates about job opportunities. By far, the most common were Listserv and email announcements. About half (51 percent) posted on social media accounts, and 46 percent shared job opening news through student groups and activities. Some schools offer formal placement services, 41 percent at the university level and 16 percent at the LIS school level. Over a quarter (27 percent) post job announcements on physical bulletin boards or in student areas.

In addition to letting degree earners know about existing opportunities, 22 percent of the institutions offered formal mentoring programs focused on professional development for graduates.

2022 LIS GRAD SNAPSHOT

\$61,473

Average full-time salary

87%
Working
full-time

76%
Satisfied
with current
placement

43%
Graduated
with no
student debt

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

Fewer than half of the schools—44 percent—reported that starting salaries were about the same as the previous year’s. No school stated that they were lower, and 17 percent found that starting salaries increased since 2021 (39 percent were unsure of any increases or decreases). Full-time positions outnumbered part-time ones, 76 percent to 24 percent. Most responding schools (89 percent) found that it took 2022 grads about the same amount of time to find placements as they did in 2021.

AVERAGE SALARY FOR STARTING LIBRARY POSITIONS, 2013–22

YEAR	LIBRARY SCHOOLS REPRESENTED	AVG. Full-TIME STARTING SALARY	DIFFERENCE IN AVG. SALARY	PERCENTAGE CHANGE
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%
2022	37	61,473	562	0.92%

SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

WHERE TO, AND HOW MUCH?

Most of the 2022 graduates have found employment. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) reported working in a library or other information science institution. Thirteen percent were employed in an information science capacity but not in a library, and 19 percent worked outside the field. Among the unemployed, 60 percent were seeking work in the field (down from 2022’s 65 percent), 19 percent had enrolled in other degree programs, 15 percent were taking time off for personal reasons, 10 percent were interning, and 18 percent selected “other.” Perhaps the most significant indicator of pandemic-era rebound is that for the second year in a row, none listed being furloughed as a reason for unemployment.

PLACEMENTS BY FULL-TIME SALARY OF REPORTING 2022 GRADUATES*

SCHOOLS	TOTAL PLACEMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Alabama	9	\$58,075	\$56,014	\$38,000	\$89,000
Arizona	8	71,696	55,250	42,000	198,000
Buffalo	12	56,317	58,000	39,500	75,000
Catholic	9	64,821	63,000	40,000	86,800
Chicago State	5	70,824	78,000	53,000	82,000
Denver	14	62,338	56,000	44,000	120,000
Emporia State	10	51,774	52,559	21,168	85,000
Hawai'i Mānoa	1	-	-	-	-
Illinois Urbana-Champaign	21	52,638	50,000	37,050	70,000
Indiana Purdue	19	51,900	47,000	30,160	100,000
Kent State*	14	45,845	43,515	24,000	84,000
Kentucky	17	48,197	45,534	27,000	106,000
Louisiana State	24	47,112	44,790	33,280	75,000
Maryland	15	59,646	58,500	38,000	78,000
Michigan*	78	102,191	97,500	32,000	200,000
Missouri	9	65,573	50,000	32,000	120,000
NC Chapel Hill*	17	60,245	62,400	20,400	90,000
NC Greensboro	33	52,742	50,000	31,200	103,500
North Texas	21	58,427	57,000	33,660	103,717
Pittsburgh	7	52,858	55,000	37,440	60,500
Pratt	12	60,703	62,250	48,000	77,000
Queens	15	65,980	60,570	44,000	130,000
Rutgers	25	61,195	58,000	38,500	120,000
San José*	52	64,314	60,500	30,000	155,000
Simmons	37	56,413	55,000	35,000	94,000

South Carolina*	11	45,909	45,000	29,000	58,000
Southern California	9	62,133	61,000	30,000	80,000
Southern Mississippi	35	48,733	48,000	21,600	92,000
St. Catherine	6	52,462	44,387	38,000	85,000
St. John's	9	51,722	52,000	40,000	60,000
Tennessee	24	53,521	53,500	32,000	75,000
Texas Women's	12	57,358	55,150	37,000	88,000
Valdosta	30	55,268	50,500	26,000	120,000
Washington	22	59,114	60,000	20,000	75,000
Wayne State	19	53,988	48,535	24,960	146,000
Wisconsin Madison	15	58,561	54,000	45,760	72,000
Wisconsin Milwaukee	17	49,670	48,000	34,000	67,000
TOTAL	693	61,473	56,000	20,000	200,000

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

*SOME SCHOOLS CONDUCTED THEIR OWN SURVEY AND PROVIDED RAW DATA.

HAWAII HAD ONLY ONE RESPONSE WITH FULL-TIME SALARY INFORMATION, WHICH WAS OMITTED IN SCHOOL ROW.

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

Of the 87 percent of graduates with full-time jobs, a significant majority (92 percent) of those positions are permanent. Part-time employees hold an average of 1.4 jobs—69 percent have one, 23 percent have two, and 8 percent have three or more. Most (84 percent) of these part-time jobs are in-person, 6 percent are fully remote, and 10 percent are hybrid. On the other hand, only 64 percent of the full-time positions are fully in-person, 27 percent are hybrid, and 9 percent fully remote. Ninety-one percent of those respondents with fully remote or hybrid full-time jobs do not expect their location status to change in the next year.

Only 11 percent of full-time employees work a second or third job, down from 2022's 14 percent. Among those additional jobs, 23 percent are library positions, 30 percent in education or another related field, and 58 percent unrelated to libraries or education.

For those who earned an annual salary in their post-graduation placement, the average was \$61,473, a 0.9 percent uptick from last year's average of \$60,911 and up a full 35 percent from 10 years ago. This is not as statistically significant as the 7.9 percentage increase seen in 2021 over 2020 grads' salaries, in which the loosening of pandemic restrictions likely played a role, and average starting salaries may not see such a jump again. Among those who are paid hourly, the average wage was \$22.05 per hour.

The gap between average salaries for men and women is still in evidence, but was smaller this year than last. Women's salaries averaged 9 percent less than men's in 2022, compared to 15.5 percent less in 2021.

Nearly one quarter—23 percent—took positions in the Midwest, closely followed by the Northeast. Only 1 percent took international jobs. Eighty-three percent said that the rise in remote jobs following the pandemic shutdowns did not lead them to apply beyond their local areas without intending to relocate.

Indeed, many did not have to move at all. Most respondents (85 percent, up from 2022's 81 percent) did not have to relocate. After graduation, 60 percent remained with an employer or position held before or during their master's programs—a slight increase from the 57 percent reported last year. Many of those who remained with their previous employers upon graduating in 2022 upgraded their situations: 31 percent received a raise, 23 percent were promoted, 20 percent were elevated from support to professional staff, 2 percent became eligible for tenure. "Licensure process allowed me to gain the title of Media Coordinator and no longer be on a probationary period," explained Star Baughman of North Carolina.

Several respondents, however, expressed frustration that they have not found jobs that align with their degrees. Erica Kates of New York wrote of her position as a document specialist, "Although this is a full-time position which offers more money than I have previously earned, it is not directly archives- or LIS-related. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of full-time LIS opportunities where I live, and many require NY state certification, which I do not have."

2022 TOTAL GRADUATES AND FULL-TIME PLACEMENTS BY SCHOOL*

SCHOOLS	TOTAL 2022 GRADUATES**	TOTAL RESPONDENTS	EMPLOYED FULL-TIME			
			WOMEN	MEN	NONBINARY	ALL
Alabama	84	16	11	1	1	13
Arizona	72	14	7	2	0	10
Buffalo	81	15	12	1	0	13
Catholic	65	11	7	2	0	10

Chicago State	7	6	3	1	1	5
Denver	96	20	12	3	2	17
Emporia State	168	20	9	3	1	13
Hawai'i Mānoa	13	4	2	0	0	2
Illinois Urbana-Champaign	278	28	17	6	2	25
Indiana Purdue	108	31	23	3	1	28
Kent State*	128	29	18	3	0	21
Kentucky	111	27	15	5	1	22
Louisiana State	117	36	29	2	2	34
Maryland	105	24	15	2	2	19
Michigan*	231	183	121	45	3	172
Missouri	124	14	6	3	2	11
NC Chapel Hill*	67	56	29	9	4	42
NC Greensboro	155	56	40	6	3	49
North Texas	380	34	23	4	0	27
Pittsburgh	58	10	5	0	2	8
Pratt	60	18	11	1	3	15
Queens	118	25	12	4	3	19
Rutgers	198	40	21	9	1	31
San Jose*	679	155	68	11	6	98
Simmons	274	63	39	6	3	50
South Carolina*	165	13	8	4	1	13
Southern California	47	16	10	2	0	12
Southern Mississippi	87	51	35	9	1	46
St. Catherine	50	13	9	0	1	10
St. John's	50	13	7	2	3	12
Tennessee	120	28	18	6	2	27
Texas Woman's	234	24	17	0	1	18

Valdosta	126	45	27	7	3	38
Washington	315	30	20	3	3	27
Wayne State	112	34	18	5	2	25
Wisconsin Madison	80	24	13	3	4	20
Wisconsin Milwaukee	112	30	16	3	2	22
TOTAL	5,275	1,256	753	176	66	1,024

Tables do not always add up, individually or collectively, due to omitted data from schools and/or individuals.

*Some schools conducted their own survey and provided raw data. Comparison with other tables may show different numbers of placements.

** As reported by schools

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

WHAT DO PEOPLE DO ALL DAY?

The range of workplaces where recent grads landed did not differ significantly from previous years. Thirty-two percent of respondents found jobs in public libraries, similar to the 2022 survey's 33 percent. Academic library job placements increased slightly, with 24 percent of graduates working in college and university libraries—up from 19 percent—and 4 percent in other academic units. Private industries employed 15 percent of graduates, slightly down from the class of 2021's 17 percent. Nine percent worked in K–12 schools. Other organizations include non-academic archives and special collections, special libraries (e.g., medical, art, historical, corporate, and museum libraries that are not part of colleges or universities), government libraries or other government agencies, nonprofit organizations other than libraries, consulting, vendors (such as library automation and database companies), and others. Most of these, employing 2 or 3 percent of recent graduates, were similar to the 2022 survey's numbers.

Many of those who described themselves as “librarian[s] not working for a library” said that they were using the proficiencies acquired in their LIS programs in a variety of ways. “My information-seeking skills are extremely beneficial for the grant funding field,” wrote Catherine Davis, a research advancement coordinator in Baton Rouge, LA. “I am also learning the structure of university administration, which was included in my academic librarianship course during my graduate school work.”

The most common job assignments that graduates were responsible for in their positions included reference and information services (50 percent); collection development and acquisitions (36 percent); circulation (34 percent); outreach (33 percent); patron programming (33 percent); public services (30 percent); readers' advisory (30 percent); teaching, training and instruction (27 percent); access services (24 percent); metadata, cataloging, and taxonomy (22 percent); children's services (21 percent); and information technology (21 percent).

When respondents narrowed these down to their primary job assignments, reference and information services was still the top answer. Other principal responsibilities for all positions included children's services (9 percent), school librarian or library media specialist (9 percent), administration (6 percent), circulation (6 percent), and adult services (6 percent). Among full-time positions, the most common besides reference and information services were school librarian or library media specialist (9 percent); children's services (9 percent); administration (7 percent); and metadata, cataloging, and taxonomy (6 percent). These differ from 2022's results, which listed children's services in first place, reference and information services second, and school librarian and library media specialist duties third.

Nine percent of respondents considered their positions to fall under "emerging library services." While this may seem a small fraction given recent innovations in artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and other technologies, this marks the highest percentage in the past five years, slightly up from last year's 8 percent. These emerging services include disciplines such as AI, data management, linked data, and open knowledge systems. "I'm working on special projects at Rider University with librarians who are [involved in] emerging technologies," said Marissa Stinson, a part-time reference librarian in West Windsor, NJ, who works with VR, Chatbot on LibApps, and Credo Information Literacy. "I was hired to help them primarily as the library at Rider is currently understaffed for full-timers."

Alondra Gil said that at her medical library, "All materials are transitioning to become available digitally and via the website only." Other librarians are using new technology for patron programs, especially in teen services.

FULL-TIME SALARIES OF REPORTING PROFESSIONALS BY PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT

PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT	NO. RECEIVED	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Reference/Information Services	64	56,715	\$53,250	\$21,168	\$95,000
School Librarian/School Library Media Specialist	59	57,497	55,000	33,000	108,000
Children's services	46	52,705	52,094	24,960	82,000
Administration	38	60,360	55,000	27,040	120,000
Metadata, Cataloging & Taxonomy	33	54,383	50,000	28,000	120,000

Training, Teaching & Instruction	31	55,482	57,000	30,000	82,000
Archival And Preservation	30	51,430	52,000	35,000	73,000
Adult Services	27	51,083	50,000	24,000	92,000
Access Services	23	54,769	55,000	32,000	80,000
YA/Teen Services	22	52,653	57,250	30,000	63,000
Circulation	20	44,132	40,500	25,000	70,000
Public services	20	49,083	50,500	34,000	89,000
Digital Content Management	17	61,526	60,000	40,000	78,000
Collection development/Acquisitions	14	52,290	51,800	29,000	70,000
Outreach	14	56,059	55,000	43,899	72,180
Technical services	12	51,508	48,984	34,000	80,000
Patron programming	10	48,839	50,329	21,600	74,000
Information technology	8	55,084	47,500	20,000	94,000
Knowledge management	8	68,842	61,367	43,000	120,000
Records management	8	56,745	56,000	37,461	73,000
Data Curation & Management	7	57,122	58,956	40,000	70,500
Data Analytics	6	84,286	72,500	68,000	120,000
Communications, PR, and social media	5	59,756	58,500	45,000	75,000
Government documents	5	43,237	34,584	33,000	80,000
User experience/Usability analysis	5	49,600	52,000	25,000	90,000
Solo librarian	4	66,392	60,785	60,000	84,000
Systems technology	4	74,500	70,000	58,000	100,000
Assessment	2	114,000	114,000	73,000	155,000
Budgeting/Finance	2	80,560	80,560	80,000	81,120
Grant writing	2	44,000	44,000	38,000	50,000
Website design	2	71,000	71,000	62,000	80,000
GIS	1	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Market intelligence/Business research	1	52,000	52,000	52,000	52,000

Other	32	57,231	57,108	29,532	130,000
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THIS TABLE REPRESENTS FULL-TIME PLACEMENTS REPORTED BY PRIMARY JOB ASSIGNMENT.

SOURCE: *LJ* PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

THE JOB SEARCH

Graduates began looking for work an average of 4.9 months before receiving their diplomas, although 14 percent noted that they began a year or more prior to graduation. The most popular window, reported by 34 percent of respondents, was four to six months before graduation; 22 percent started looking one to three months before. Twelve percent waited until graduation to begin looking for work, and 7 percent began their searches more than a month later. Getting an early start may have helped: 45 percent found employment prior to graduation, up from 38 percent for the class of 2021. Among the remaining respondents, an average of four months elapsed between graduation and placement.

“I recommend starting early, about one year before graduation, because of how long it takes to find employment,” librarian Erin Andreassi offered. “You’ll also save time and be more organized in the long run by keeping a log of all applications that you have submitted and the employers’ response to you. Also, don’t be afraid to negotiate salary! For my first librarian job, which was part-time at a medical library, the hospital offered me \$23.50 an hour. I asked for \$28 an hour and they agreed to pay me \$27.”

Others have had different experiences. Youth services librarian Christina Burgos recalled, “I got my job offer while I was about to walk for my graduation ceremony.”

Job hunters used the time-honored strategies of networking and word-of-mouth as well as employment websites, the most popular of which were Indeed, Archives Gig, ALA’s job listing page, and LinkedIn. Other respondents cited Glassdoor, Google, GovernmentJobs, Handshake, HigherEdJobs, INALJ, and USA Jobs as sources.

COMPARISON OF FULL-TIME SALARIES BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

	TOTAL PLACEMENTS	AVERAGE SALARY	MEDIAN SALARY	LOW SALARY	HIGH SALARY
Archives/Special Collections	22	\$50,687	\$51,000	\$34,600	\$78,000
College/University	209	55,670	56,000	24,000	120,000
Consulting	14	86,141	86,250	41,000	155,000

Government	16	49,929	43,900	33,000	78,592
Nonprofit Organizations	17	51,082	50,000	20,400	78,000
Private Industry	96	95,857	90,000	30,000	200,000
Public Library	195	52,524	50,500	20,000	130,000
School Library	76	57,741	55,500	33,000	108,000
Special Library	19	65,118	60,000	45,000	120,000
Other Organizations	35	65,018	61,900	34,584	198,000

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

SOURCE: LJ PLACEMENTS & SALARIES SURVEY 2023

Sixty-four percent of respondents cited previous employment experience, including internships, fieldwork, and practicum experience, as an important component in landing their first professional positions. Nearly half (45 percent) completed at least one internship while earning their degrees (9 percent did two, and 3 percent managed three or more). Half were in-person, 25 percent remote, and the remaining quarter were hybrid.

“Get your foot in the door before you graduate,” youth services librarian Emily Lail advised. “Almost every full-time interview I had asked about job experience.” Information services assistant branch manager Portia Montoy agreed, noting that “having library experience/work is just as important as having the MLS.”

The emphasis placed on prior experience by potential employers can be frustrating, however: Graduates can’t get a job without experience, and they can’t get experience without a job. “I am currently looking for a position at a library, but I’m struggling to find something that requires a master’s but doesn’t require years of experience,” said Rose Pendleton, who is currently employed as a case management/marketing manager. “Most positions that I tried to pursue prior to getting my master’s required a master’s. And now that I have my master’s, I can’t find positions that don’t require lots of experience that I don’t have because I didn’t already work at a library.”

Volunteer experience was also cited as an option, but not everyone felt it was a good one. Reference librarian Amelia Foster felt that paid work of any type was more advisable than volunteering. “There is a lot of stigma among some professionals about taking ‘paraprofessional’ positions once you have your MLIS,” she wrote. “In my experience, the paraprofessional, grant-funded, and temporary work

was essential experience that led to obtaining full-time professional employment. It's absurd to suggest someone would be better off volunteering to do professional work rather than make an hourly wage. Volunteering to do professional work devalues the entire field."

Thirty-five percent attributed their successes at least partially to networking with professionals in the field. "It really is about who you know and have formed relationships with," wrote business manager Kayl Parker. "I only have the job I have now because of previous professional connections. I'm an introvert, and networking is a skill I had to build up (and that was not easy)—but it is mandatory, in my opinion."

Networking can take multiple forms, noted adult services librarian Micah Flores. "[R]each out to any connections you may have in the field!" she wrote. "I had several of my colleagues work with me to polish my résumé [and] cover letter, and even do a couple of mock interviews. This helped me become more comfortable in speaking to my experience, accomplishments, and marketing myself in general to prospective employers." She added, "If you do not have a personal network to consult with, there are a variety of online librarian groups/forums that you can use to connect with others in your field."

MONEY MATTERS

President Joe Biden's SAVE (Saving on a Valuable Education) plan is set to resume this month as interest begins to accrue on federal student loans after a pandemic-driven pause. However, loan forgiveness will take at least 10 years of regular payments to take effect, and more for larger loans, so paying off student debt is still a major concern for 57 percent of 2022 graduates.

Among those with debt, the average was \$35,100 (up from last year's \$33,600) and the median \$30,000. Seven percent owed less than \$10,000 at the time they responded to the survey, 16 percent between \$10,000 and \$24,999, 19 percent between \$25,000 and \$49,999, 8 percent between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and 4 percent \$75,000 or more. About half (53 percent) of those with student debt expected to receive public service loan forgiveness, and 50 percent of that group said that this factored into their career choices.

In answer to the question "What was/is the single most important thing you look for in an employer?" common answers included a respectful, supportive environment that values librarians; opportunities for professional development and advancement; and location. Metadata QA associate Abigail Robinson explained her strategy for determining a workplace's suitability: "I speak to other employees and see how they feel about the company. If the employees are treated well, then it's usually a good employer to work for." Teacher librarian Diana Marques looks for "aligned values (pro-LGBTQ, proactively culturally responsive, proactively anti-bullying, anti-racist)."

As with any job, a living wage was the bottom line for many respondents. "Librarians have martyred themselves so much that their pay is meager despite the price of tuition for the required master's degree necessary," Library ILL assistant Olivia Pexton wrote. "It is not a field of equality. We are the

part of government, expected to do all the work of other failed [government] programs and services, yet paid a fraction of a fraction of what other service professionals are paid.”

Among all the small shifts in numbers from one year to the next, one factor doesn't change: a decent salary not only offers enough to live on but demonstrates respect. “A welcoming company culture is very important to me,” Erika Dawson, a children’s librarian, wrote. “A salary that reflects the necessity of my degree and allows me to support myself and my family is also important.”

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	4	3	22	\$48,433	\$53,750	\$61,353	\$50,687
College/University	137	48	21	209	54,471	58,678	59,090	55,670
Consulting	9	5	-	14	86,720	85,100	-	86,141
Government Library	14	1	1	16	51,233	48,000	33,600	49,929
Nonprofit	12	3	1	17	53,750	42,467	42,000	51,082
Private Industry	69	21	2	96	93,075	101,696	113,500	95,857
Public Library	141	35	15	195	50,472	58,418	54,458	52,524
School Library	71	3	1	76	57,297	50,667	105,210	57,741
Special Library	16	1	1	19	67,105	60,569	48,000	65,118
Other Organizations	29	2	4	35	67,056	60,750	52,371	65,018

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 2023

ARE THEY HAPPY?

Just over three-quarters of participants said they were satisfied with their placements. This was unchanged from 2022, which had represented a significant increase from 2021's 65 percent. In this year's survey, many expressed gratitude for finding either dream careers or “stepping-stone” jobs.

“I have the opportunity to perform archival management while establishing roots in Native American community archiving, which was my main focus during my master’s program,” wrote Kelsie Flack, a curating Indigenous digital collections fellow in Wisconsin. “I am passionate about what I do, and I know that the work that I am doing is benefitting the larger narrative of Indigenous information issues.”

Still, the road to finding those good jobs is not always straightforward, and many expressed frustration with the job-seeking process—and in that way as well, 2023 is not so different from 2022—or any other time. The desire to find fulfilling work with a sufficient salary and respectful workplace culture doesn’t change. But as the field continues to find its footing after the turmoil of the early pandemic years, many other factors will.

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Placements and Salaries Survey 2023

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