

Title: Insights into the transition from LIS to academic librarianship

Authors: Catherine McGoveran & Laura Thorne

Mini abstract:

This poster presents the results of a research study examining the transition process between library and information studies (LIS) and academic librarianship in Canada. Using surveys and interviews, the study analyzes data collected from LIS students and recent graduates, new academic librarians, and hiring managers and supervisors.

Extended abstract:

This research study explores the transition process, as a continuum through time, between graduate library and information studies (LIS) and academic librarianship in the Canadian context. Using surveys and interviews, the study analyzes data collected from LIS students and recent graduates, new academic librarians, and hiring managers and supervisors.

Academic librarians play an important role in post-secondary education institutions, supporting scholarship, teaching, and research, promoting skill development, and providing access to crucial resources and services. The job responsibilities of academic librarians can vary significantly, with a range of potential duties related to reference, collections development, systems, technical services, data management, scholarly communications, assessment, outreach, subject specialization, and more (Detmering 2012). Additionally, academic librarians at many institutions in Canada are members of the faculty association, with obligations towards conducting research and contributing to scholarship.

The employment landscape for academic librarians is continuing to change rapidly, with contract and part-time employment becoming regular occurrences in the first years of an academic librarian's career. Although new graduates often maintain a diverse range of skills acquired through academic programs and previous work experiences, and continue to develop their skills as new professionals outside of school, many recent graduates struggle to find full-time, permanent employment. Furthermore, the transition from student to new academic librarian may present the individual with experiences and challenges different than those expected; they may still feel unprepared or unsure while navigating their new roles. When employment is secured, some employers offer support to new professional librarians in the form of mentorship and opportunities for professional development. The existence of professional mentorship programs demonstrates an understanding in the library profession that new graduates require additional support as they develop their skills and evolve from student to professional.

Though literature covering the transition from LIS student to professional academic librarian exists, it tends to focus on specific periods, such as the library and information studies experience, the recruitment process, or the process of new employee orientation. Except for a few key studies (Oud 2008; Harrington 2014), there is also a lack of literature covering the continuum of the transition from student to academic librarian as a whole, particularly for the Canadian context. This study seeks to work towards filling this gap, while addressing several key questions:

- Are new LIS graduates being prepared with the skills needed to obtain full-time employment?
- What are the biggest challenges faced by new librarians when beginning careers in academic librarianship?
- How can current students or recent graduates interested in pursuing academic librarianship better prepare for a professional academic library position?

The researchers hope that the results of this study will impact the integration process of new academic librarians into the workplace and the profession. By identifying gaps in education, expectations, and experiences, the education and academic library communities can then begin to address and reduce these gaps. The poster presents the results of this research study examining the transition process between LIS and academic librarianship in Canada.

References

Detmering, Robert, and Sproles, Claudene. 2012. "Forget the desk job: Current roles and responsibilities in entry-level reference job advertisements." *College & Research Libraries* 73 (6): 543-555.

Harrington, Marni, and Marshall, Elizabeth. 2014. "Analysis of mentoring expectations, activities and support in Canadian academic libraries." *College & Research Libraries* 75 (6): 763-790. doi:10.5860/crl.75.6.763.

Oud, Joanne. 2008. "Adjusting to the workplace: Transitions faced by new academic librarians." *College & Research Libraries* 69 (3): 252-266. doi:10.5860/crl.69.3.252