

# Landing Your First Academic Job

## A Cohort Study of Recent Graduates from the UNC at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science

Outside of your coursework, what else did you do while in graduate school?

**Did you have an LIS related job?**

Paid LIS Position (library assistant, graduate assistant, etc.) 100%

Unpaid LIS Position (volunteer, field experience, practicum, etc.) 73.3%

**Did you engage with the LIS community?**

Professional organization involvement & conference attendance 46.6%

Leadership position in a student organization 73.3%

Kept up with professional literature, websites, and blogs 13.3%

Scholarly activity: posters, presentations, and publications 13.3%

**What else did you do while in graduate school?**

"Employers do not care about your classes - they care about your job experience"

"Job allowed me to determine if this was an area I was interested in"

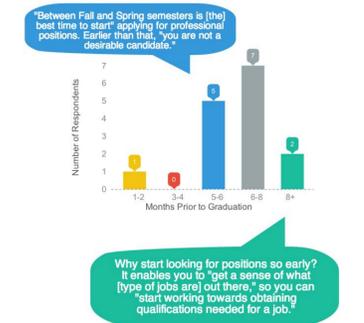
"Field experiences provide the opportunity to gain experience in different areas than work allows"

"Did not do a field experience because I had a moral stance against paying for experience"

"Serving as an officer gave me a chance to experience leadership"

"Student group roles was helpful for networking opportunities"

How long before your anticipated graduation did you begin searching for professional positions?

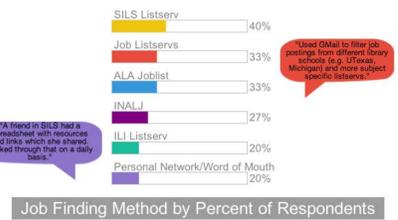


In this pilot study of 15 recent MLS graduates from UNC SILS, participants were interviewed using video chat or telephone on topics relating to the job search process. Questions attempted to create a holistic image of the academic job search for an early career librarian: how they conducted their search; how they prepared for interviews; and how they navigated the process of accepting a position. Lessons learned via this pilot will allow us to improve our survey instrument and recruit a representative national sample of first time academic job seekers. It is believed that results from the final survey will provide a guide of best practices for current and future first time job seekers.

Did you limit your job search geographically?



What methods did you use to find job vacancies?



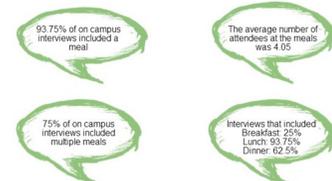
## Advice for Future Job Seekers

- Start your first year by looking at job descriptions to see what skills to acquire.
- Get practical experience. Work in the field is what employers care most about.
- Have confidence in your abilities and be yourself during interviews.
- Be persistent and don't get frustrated by rejections.
- Be selective with the jobs you apply for. Your excitement will show in a cover letter.
- Start applying to jobs early, don't wait until the last few months before graduation.
- Take advantage of the knowledge and experience of the people you work with. Ask for advice and if they will review your application materials.

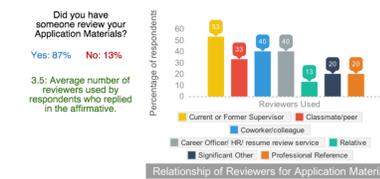
Professional References



Meals During the On Campus Interview



Review of Application Materials



How Many Applications Did You Submit During Your Search?

Min: 3 Average: 20.27  
Max: 35 Median: 15

Accepting a Job Offer



Did you accept a professional position prior to graduation?

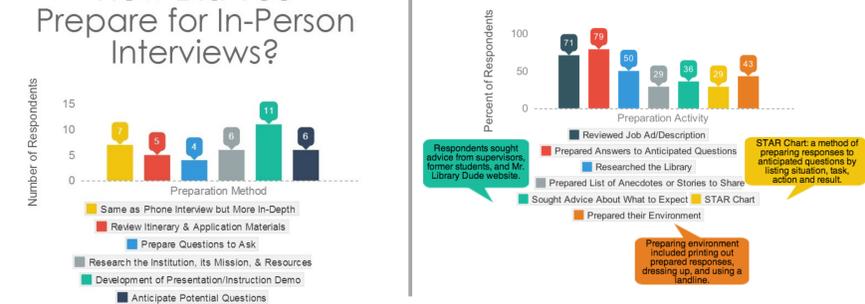


How much time elapsed between your first application and your first job offer?

Average time elapsed: 31.5 weeks  
Median time elapsed: 29.25 weeks



Phone Interview Preparation



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UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



### The Bottom Line

The academic job market for entry level librarians remains highly competitive, and students should begin preparing themselves for the job market from the moment they are accepted into an LIS program. Lag time in selecting applicants for academic positions remains high, so students should begin the process of applying for positions well in advance of their anticipated graduation date. To prepare for this competitive job market, LIS students should expect to dedicate a significant amount of time engaging with the profession outside of the classroom, including paid LIS-related work, for-credit practicums, scholarly creativity, attending conferences, and becoming involved with professional organizations. For LIS students that supplement coursework with these activities, academic librarianship remains a viable path of employment for entry level candidates. However, job placement can remain difficult for candidates interested in very specific positions or in limited geographic areas, even for well qualified LIS graduates.