Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 2 (WILIS 2): Results from the Recent Graduates Survey

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Background

The WILIS 2 project aims to design and implement an alumni survey that all Library and Information Science (LIS) programs can potentially use. LIS programs have generally lacked the time and resources to systematically survey their alumni. As a result, stakeholders lack an adequate understanding of what happens to graduates. Educators, in particular, do not have ongoing data about the extent to which their programs meet students’ expectations, prepare them for the workplace or meet continuing learning needs. Such an understanding will assist in educating and managing the LIS workforce more effectively.

Methods

The WILIS 2 project builds on WILIS 1, a comprehensive study of career patterns of graduates of LIS programs in North Carolina. In WILIS 2, a community based participatory research approach was taken to revise the recent graduates portion of the WILIS 1 survey so that it is suitable for use by all LIS programs. The web-based survey gathers data on the perspectives of recent graduates about their LIS programs, educational and work histories, satisfaction with LIS as a career, and continuing education needs. The survey launched in three phases: a pilot phase of 8 programs (Spring 2009), a second phase of 20 programs (Fall 2009), and a third phase of 11 programs (Spring 2010). For a list of all participating programs please visit http://www.wilis.unc.edu.

Deans, directors, and chairs of participating programs have received de-identified datasets, a summary report of text responses, frequency tables for each survey question, and a graphical summary report that compares their results with those for all other programs combined.

Results from All 39 programs

- **Response rates**
  - Overall – 40.5% (N=3507)
  - Individual program response rates ranged from less than 20% to over 80%.

- **Demographic summary**
  - 78% female
  - 17% non-white
  - Age distribution:

![Demographic summary chart]

- **Highlights**
  - Most graduates (84%) rate their overall LIS program experience as “good” or “excellent.”
  - Most graduates (74%) find a job within 3 months after graduation.
  - The vast majority of LIS graduates (78%) are working in jobs that use their LIS skills/knowledge.

- **Most common current job settings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Setting</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic library</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School library media center</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special library</td>
<td>10%</td>
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- Other job settings
  - Technology company – 1%
  - Other company – 2%
  - Archives – 2%
  - Museum – 1%
  - Computer industry – <1%
  - Library vendor – <1%

- Nearly all LIS graduates (88%) are satisfied with LIS as a career and anticipate staying in the field over the next 3 years (91%).

- **Most common professional activities since graduation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member of professional association</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference attendee</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular participant in online professional discussion list</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizer/volunteer at conference</td>
<td>36%</td>
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- Other activities
  - Presenter at conference – 29%
  - Author of paper accepted for publication – 21%
  - Officer of professional association – 18%
  - Winner of a competitive grant – 17%
  - Winner of a work-related award – 16%
  - Leader in LIS practice innovations – 12%

- LIS graduates are interested in participating in continuing education via traditional modes (workshops and training sessions) and online modes (webinars, courses).

- **Implications**
  - Despite the economic downturn of the last few years, most recent graduates are employed and tend to work in the traditional library settings. These findings may be of interest to LIS workforce and educational planners.
  - The high level of interest by LIS programs in participating in the WILIS 2 study suggests that sustaining the WILIS model and sharing the data are essential next steps.

http://www.wilis.unc.edu/

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