Breaking in and breaking out: job satisfaction and quality of life among recent archives grads

Rebecca Goldman
Media and Digital Services Librarian,
La Salle University
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NASA:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/nasacommons/4940991512
Are archives programs admitting too many students?

Election night crowd, Wellington, 1931:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/nationallibrarynz_commons/3326203787
“What’s even more annoying about library schools [compared to law schools] is that they don’t have to produce any job placement statistics. In a random survey of ALA-accredited library schools, I found none that provided job placement statistics...

“I found several that had places where they told you were some of their graduates got jobs, but nothing that would count as evidence about job placements. The implication was that some of their students are getting jobs at decent places, so you should apply.”
Which archives grads should we consider “employed”?

- Currently working as an archivist?
- Employed full-time?
- Employed in a permanent position?
- Employed in a position that requires the MLS – or another master’s degree?
- Employed in a position that requires archival education?
"The profit-centered, corporation-based measures valued by Forbes suggest that pay rates and growth are the only valid reasons for selecting a career or seeking an advanced degree... for librarians the primary motivation is job satisfaction derived from the opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of others...

"Graduates of master’s of library and information science programs (now frequently known as ‘information schools’ or ‘I-schools’) have training in a range of competencies that can be successfully applied not only in librarianship, but also to careers in other fields.

"So, if you are looking for a rewarding career that will enable you to make a significant difference in the lives of others and contribute to the health and well-being of our communities (while providing a comfortable standard of living), a master’s degree in library and information science is an excellent choice.”
We need to look at career satisfaction among ALL archives grads...

...no matter where they end up.

Ren gets a bath by Richard Louissaint: http://www.flickr.com/photos/richlouis/1415291890
We need to look at career satisfaction at multiple points over the course of a career.
We need to look at career satisfaction in the context of overall life satisfaction.
Our survey

• 248 respondents, 193 finished the survey
  – Of 122 who described their current job, 34 are currently not working as archivists
• Asked about education, initial employment, current job search, current employment, and overall career satisfaction
• Shared on A&A, SNAP list, ArchivesNext, Twitter, a couple of grad school lists, and by word of mouth
• Most questions were optional, and most offered participants the opportunity to comment or explain their answer more fully
Different ways of measuring “employed” (2011 grads, 64 total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working (any field, FT or PT)</td>
<td>28/28</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time (any field, FT or PT)</td>
<td>28/29</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent (any field, FT or PT)</td>
<td>23/29</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in archives (FT or PT)</td>
<td>21/28</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working as an archivist or archives professional (FT or PT)</td>
<td>20/28</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job or jobs since graduation required degree</td>
<td>36/58</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job or jobs since graduation required archives concentration or coursework in archives</td>
<td>29/57</td>
<td>51%</td>
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Are you satisfied with the job or jobs you’ve had since graduating?
If you had the choice to make again, would you still choose to attend a graduate program in archives?
Imagine that a friend of yours is considering attending an archives program in the next year and asks for your opinion. Would you recommend it?
Are archives grads who don’t end up in archives, or who also do non-archives things, satisfied with their education?

Of 35 respondents working as “related professionals”:

• 76% said they were completely or very satisfied with their job(s) since graduation
• 100% said their archival education was completely, very, or somewhat useful
• 76% said they would definitely or probably attend an archives program if they had the choice to make again

Only 9 respondents working in “unrelated fields”
If you had the choice to make again, would you make any changes to your graduate education, such as attending a different program or taking different classes? 

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
What changes would respondents make?

- More digital: 45
- Different degree program: 20
- Different archives program: 16
- More hands-on/internships: 10
- More non-archives courses: 9
- More archives courses: 6
- Would not attend: 2
Effects of career choices on finances
(number of responses)
## Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My new professional position (earned thanks to my now holding an MLIS)</td>
<td>I am unemployed, living at home with my parents, and looking for temporary non-archives work so that I can start paying back my student loans while waiting to find an archives job.</td>
<td>My current position pays exceptionally well for an entry-level archives job...Paradoxically, I worry that these circumstances will leave me permanently stuck in my current job as the junior member of a three-person shop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>pays nearly double what my paraprofessional position paid, even though my projects and responsibilities for both positions are nearly identical.</td>
<td>I am still struggling to afford housing and monthly bills even with my salary. I have a fairly low salary for the area that I work in.</td>
<td>I make more than I though I was going to, but I don't currently see a ton of room for advancement pay-scale wise</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am very lucky to be in a position that allows me to pay my bills, which include relatively large student loans from both undergrad and grad school. I am also lucky that I do not have to provide for a family yet, so I can be more frugal in other areas while paying off these loans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Effects of career choices on personal and family life

- Positive: 20
- Negative: 100
- Mixed: 20
- Neutral: 50
## Examples

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</tr>
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<td>My decision to accept my current job has lead to good things in my personal life, overall. I <strong>met my current significant other while working here</strong>. I am close enough, but not too close, to my hometown and family.</td>
<td>We have <strong>had to cease trying to start a family</strong> ...I have had to relocate 7 hours from family, and my spouse has had to look for new employment.</td>
<td>The 3 years between grad and a full time job meant that I didn't want to ask my girlfriend to marry me. I <strong>couldn't in good conscious commit to a full partnership until I could pay for things equally in our household</strong>. Once I got that job, we were engaged within six months.</td>
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<td>I would have to say yes, but in a positive way. I'm the breadwinner. <strong>Yes, the archivist is the breadwinner!</strong></td>
<td>My temporary positions means I <strong>cannot make any permanent plans about housing or residency.</strong></td>
<td>I've moved across the country (literally coast to coast) two times in the past 3 years, including both closer to and farther away from my family.</td>
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Effects of career choices on other aspects of life outside of work

- Positive
- Negative
- Mixed
- Neutral
## Examples

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<td>Stable income contributed to <strong>decision to marry</strong> and <strong>purchase home</strong>.</td>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong> has affected my health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have <strong>made some really great friends</strong> as a result of this profession.</td>
<td>Because we relocated for my second job, I was the main bread-winner among my husband and I for some time, including the first year of our daughter's life. In a perfect world I <strong>would have preferred to work part time to stay with her longer</strong>.</td>
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<td>Over all I am <strong>far more satisfied with what I am doing</strong>, so I'm happier over all.</td>
<td>Yes, I am now working full time and taking coursework in digital libraries to keep up with the field, which leaves <strong>little time for other, non-professional activities</strong>.</td>
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<td>I have a <strong>more active social life with former classmates, faculty, and work colleagues</strong> than in my previous career.</td>
<td>I <strong>put my life on hold while I looked for a job</strong> because I didn't want to get involved in anything because I didn't want to get involved in anything</td>
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Overall findings

• New professionals report being generally satisfied with the jobs they’ve held and the education they received...

• ...but they also report that their educational and career choices have had negative effects on their finances and quality of life.
Is “too many grads” the real issue?

- Some respondents reported low salaries and long periods of unemployment.
  - (Partially) solved by having fewer archives grads.
- Respondents also complained about having to relocate, working temporary positions, and balancing working and family life.
  - Limiting the number of archives grads won’t fix these issues.
Let’s discuss!

• If we repeat our survey of recent grads, how can we make it better?
• Is there a better way to investigate the “too many grads” problem?
• Besides offering better salaries, how else can we improve the quality of life of recent grads?
• If temp positions and relocation are inevitable, how can we better support new grads through temporary work and help them move into permanent employment?
Thanks!

Rebecca Goldman
La Salle University

support.institutional.repositories@lasalle.edu

Support institutional repositories! Slides will be available from:

http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/libraryconf