More than Your MLIS: Experience and Continuing Education Recommendations for Emerging Public Library Leaders

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Summary Report

Executive Summary
In January 2017, American Library Association Emerging Leaders Project Group H was assigned a Public Library Association-sponsored project titled “More Than Your MLIS: Experience and Continuing Education Recommendations for Emerging Public Library Leaders.” The project focused on discovering what skills and competencies new public librarians—those with five or less years experience—felt they needed but did not learn through an ALA Accredited MLS/MLIS education. The project was assigned to Emerging Leader Project Team H: Kristin Amsden (Richland Library), Sarah Colombo (Livingston Parish Library), Casey McCoy (Boulder Public Library), Heather Novotny (The McGillis School), and Heather Thompson (Kenosha Public Library) at ALA Midwinter Conference 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia. Scott Allen (PLA Project Manager) and Michael Spelman (Madison Public Library, Public Library Association Unit Member) served as guides.

The initial challenge put forth to Emerging Leaders Project Group H was to identify key skills, experiences and knowledge needed for public library frontline and management work that may not be covered in MLIS programs; research and list potential internships or non-MLIS program coursework students might take to gain such skills during school; and identify postgraduate resources such as ALA/PLA continuing education, certificate programs, and more that could further build those skills and knowledge for working public librarians. With help from our guides, we decided to narrow the focus to identifying gaps and resources for new librarians.

Research Methods
To collect data about new librarians and their MLS/MLIS education, we sent surveys to new librarians across the country by using state library listservs, library school listservs, social media, and the Public Library Association’s email newsletter. We received 141 survey responses. We also surveyed MLS/MLIS advisors by sending a survey to all 60 accredited MLS/MLIS programs, with 21 responses. To protect the anonymity of individual respondents, as well as to more easily analyze results, we “coded” each answer by breaking down the response into one or more categories agreed upon by 2+ team members.

Findings
New Librarians
When asked “Did your MLS adequately prepare you for work in a public library?” 60% of new librarians said somewhat, 25% said yes, and 15% said no. When asked for specific areas in which they wished they had more training, the most frequent answers included management, event planning, social work, outreach, and communications. When asked what forms of continuing education they preferred, new librarians emphasized courses that they could take at their own pace, as well as courses that were free.
**MLS/MLIS Advisors**

When asked “Which MLIS classes or subjects do you wish your institution provided for MLIS students that are not currently offered?” advisors mentioned event planning, grant writing, technical services, and instruction. One advisor pointed out that the purpose of an MLS/MLIS education is not to prepare a student for every eventuality, but to instill them with the values and theory they will need while moving through their education: “We can provide the theory and hope to instill a sense of curiosity about the profession, but we can’t teach them everything.”

**Recommendations**

1. Since new librarians say time and money are barriers for continuing education, we recommend that the Public Library Association offer a series of free, archived webinars that are taught by new librarians who are more established in the field, have some presentation experience, and will not charge to teach.

2. We recommend that the Public Library Association create a resource page specifically geared toward new librarians with lists of free resources for continuing education (See Appendix C).

3. Due to the large amount of responses indicating a need for more management training, we recommend that MLS/MLIS advisors encourage future public librarians to enroll in management courses.

4. Library administration should encourage their librarians to take continuing education courses and provide them with the time to do so at work.

5. New librarians must embrace lifelong learning, knowing that the MLS/MLIS education is a foundation upon which they will continue building throughout their careers.

**Further Work**

We recommend that next year’s PLA-sponsored Emerging Leader team reach out to public library leaders in the United States and Canada to discover what gaps in professional preparation exist in the recent MLS/MLIS graduates they hire. Next year’s team should collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data from a representative sample of urban, rural, and tribal libraries in order to identify specific gaps in knowledge, skills, and abilities of new librarians. Results could be compared to work done by EL teams from 2016 and 2017 to yield a more thorough picture. PLA could use the information to create recommendations for MLIS programs at ALA accredited institutions.
New Librarians Report

Summary
To expand upon the previous Emerging Leader project, our team created a survey focusing on what knowledge gaps (if any) MLIS schools weren’t filling and what continuing education resources would be useful according to new librarians. The goal of the survey was to find what skills and experiences gained during the MLIS program were useful (or not) for new librarians working in a public library, what continuing education topics they would need to fill these gaps, and how current librarians, schools and professional organizations can help support continuing education.

A survey consisting of 23 short answer and multiple choice questions was constructed using Google Forms and sent via email to professional groups such as email listservs and social media groups affiliated with ALA divisions and state library associations. The survey was directed toward early career librarians (those with less than 5 years of professional public librarian experience) working in public libraries. 141 responses were received.

Of these 141 responses, 60% said upon graduating from an accredited MLIS program they felt “somewhat” prepared to work in a public library, 25% said they felt prepared, and 15% said they did not.

While only 32% of respondents said their MLIS program required students to complete a practicum, 42% of respondents attending a school that does not require a practicum still completed one, and 71% of the total respondents were employed at a public library before or during their MLIS program. According to the respondents, the top three positive outcomes of a practicum were: field experience, increased practical knowledge, and job opportunities.

Below are the results from several of our survey questions. Please consult Appendix A, located at the end of this report, to find the entire survey and results.
Survey One: New Librarians

Did your MLIS program require a practicum or internship to graduate?

If yes, did you find the practicum or internship helpful in preparing you for a public library job?

If yes, please explain why.

Another major finding resulted from asking new librarians what MLIS courses would have helped them do their current job more effectively, what continuing education topics would be most useful for their current position, and what continuing education topics would be useful in reaching their future professional development goals. While the top five answers varied slightly, the five most common results were: management, programming/events, communications, social work/issues, and outreach. Comparing these responses across all three questions
clearly showed management as being the number one topic missing or desired in each step of a public librarian’s career:

What MLIS courses would have helped you do your job more effectively?

What continuing education topics would be most useful for your job right now?

What continuing education topics would be most useful for reaching your professional development goals?

Finally, the survey asked what forms of continuing education are most convenient for new librarians, as well as what barriers are currently preventing them from accessing these resources. The most common preferred form of continuing education was archived webinars, while the two biggest barriers were time and money.
Which type of continuing education would be most convenient for you?

[Bar chart]

What barriers (if any) exist that prevent you from getting the continuing education you need?

[Bar chart]

*Charts generated from [https://beam.venngage.com/](https://beam.venngage.com/)*
MLIS Advisors Report

Summary
In addition to sending out a survey to young career professionals, our group also decided that it was necessary to survey MLIS school advisors. We wished to uncover, among other things, how advisors determine what classes would be most beneficial for their students, what classes or subjects they wished their institution offered that they do not currently offer, and if their institution allowed their students to take classes outside of the MLIS program. A survey consisting of 17 short answer and multiple choice questions was constructed using Google Forms and sent via email to advisors, program directors, or deans of all 60 programs offering ALA Accredited MLS/MLIS programs: 51 from the United States, 1 from Puerto Rico, and 8 from Canada. 21 responses were given (35% response rate).

94% of advisors responded that their students are allowed to take classes outside of the MLIS program and the classes that students are taking most frequently are business, education, and computer science courses. Another interesting finding was that 67% of the institutions did not require an internship or practicum in order to graduate the MLIS program. While this is not one of our formal recommendations, we do strongly encourage MLIS programs to require either an internship or practicum in order to graduate.

Below are the results from several of our survey questions. Please consult Appendix B, located at the end of this report, to find the entire survey and results.
As with the new librarian’s survey, we asked whether or not an internship or practicum was required by their institution in order to graduate. We found that the responses we received from the advisors mirrored those we received from the new librarians; internships and practicums are not widely required in order to graduate from MLIS programs.
When asked which classes or subjects advisors wished their institution provided for MLIS students that they do not currently offer, again we saw similar responses to our new librarians survey. Grantwriting/fundraising and specialized programming courses were the top responses, but both advisors and new librarians expressed the need for courses on information literacy, advocacy, and cataloging/metadata.

*Charts generated from https://beam.venngage.com/*
Appendix A

New Librarian’s Survey Results

Did your MLS adequately prepare you for work in a public library? 141 respondents.
- Somewhat: 84 (60%)
- Yes: 36 (25%)
- No: 21 (15%)

Which school did you attend for your MLIS? 141 respondents.
- Catholic University of America: 1
- Clarion University: 5
- Dalhousie University: 1
- Dominican University: 3
- Drexel University: 3
- Emporia State University: 1
- Florida State University: 3
- Indiana University - Bloomington: 3
- Indiana University - Indianapolis: 1
- Indiana University (unspecified): 1
- Kent State University: 2
- Louisiana State University: 5
- McGill University: 1
- North Carolina Central University: 1
- North Carolina (unspecified): 1
- Pratt Institute: 1
- Queens College: 1
- San Jose State University: 17
- Simmons College: 1
- St. Catherine University: 2
- Syracuse University: 1
- Texas Women's University: 1
- UCLA: 5
- University of Alabama: 1
- University at Albany - SUNY: 1
- University at Buffalo - SUNY: 1
- University of Arizona: 1
• University of Denver: 2
• University of Hawaii - Manoa: 1
• University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: 14
• University of Iowa: 2
• University of Kentucky: 4
• University of Maryland: 2
• University of Michigan: 1
• University of Missouri - Columbia: 1
• University of North Carolina - Greensboro: 1
• University of North Texas: 11
• University of Pittsburgh: 2
• University of Rhode Island: 2
• University of South Carolina: 5
• University of South Florida: 2
• University of Southern Mississippi: 2
• University of Tennessee: 1
• University of Texas - Austin: 1
• University of Washington: 4
• University of Wisconsin-Madison: 2
• University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: 9
• Valdosta State University: 3
• Vanderbilt University: 1
• Wayne State University: 1

Did your MLIS program require a practicum or internship to graduate? 141 respondents.

• No: 96 (68%)
• Yes: 45 (32%)

If yes, did you find the practicum or internship helpful in preparing you for a public library job? Please explain why or why not. 45 respondents.

Yes: 30 (67%)

• Field experience: 21
• Gained practical knowledge: 9
• Job opportunity: 5
• Changed original career focus: 3
• Unspecified: 2
• Skill enhancement: 1

Requirement waived because respondent was working in a library: 8 (18%)
No: 5 (11%)
  ● Focus not relevant to public libraries: 3
  ● Already worked in a public library, so didn't learn anything new: 1
  ● Unspecified: 1

Somewhat: 2 (4%)
  ● Focus not entirely relevant to public libraries: 2

If your MLIS program did not require a practicum or internship to graduate, did you take one anyway? 31 respondents.
  ● No: 18 (58%)
  ● Yes: 13 (42%)

  If yes, did you find the practicum or internship helpful in preparing you for a public library job? Please explain why or why not. 13 respondents.
  No Response: 7 (54%)

  Yes: 6 (46%)
    ● Field experience: 4
    ● Practical knowledge: 4
    ● Job opportunity: 2

  No: 0

By the time you graduated with your MLIS, had you ever been employed in a public library? 141 respondents.
  ● Yes: 100 (71%)
  ● No: 41 (29%)

If yes, how many years of experience did you have working in a public library at the time you graduated? 100 respondents.
  ● <1: 19 (19%)
  ● 1: 10 (10%)
  ● 2: 18 (18%)
  ● 3: 7 (7%)
  ● 4: 12 (12%)
  ● 5: 10 (10%)
  ● 6: 7 (7%)
Are there courses you wish had been taught or that you had taken during your MLIS program that would help you do your job more effectively? 141 respondents answered the question. 255 answers were given. Most respondents gave more than one answer.

Management: 54 (38%)
- Budgeting: 16
- Human Resources: 11
- General: 15
- Leadership: 5
- Project Management: 4
- Facilities: 2
- Time Management: 1

Technical Services: 28 (20%)
- Cataloging: 9
- Advanced Cataloging: 2
- Collection Development: 15
- General: 1
- Interlibrary Loan: 1

Social Work/Issues: 23 (16%)

Interpersonal Skills: 17 (12%)
- Conflict Resolution: 4
- Customer Service: 11
- General: 1
- Vendor Relations: 1

Programming: 17 (12%)
- Adult: 2
- Children: 1
- Early Literacy: 4
- Family: 1
- General: 8
- STEM: 1

Communications: 13 (9%)
- Graphic Design: 3
- Marketing: 9
- Social Media: 1

Literature: 13 (9%)
- Children’s Literature: 1
- Readers Advisory: 10
- Young Adult Literature: 2

Unspecified: 12 (8.5%)

Grant Writing: 11 (8%)

Libraries: 11 (8%)
- Public Libraries: 4
- Children’s Services: 2
- Young Adult Services: 2
- General: 1
- Nonprofit: 1
- Urban Libraries: 1

Technology Skills: 10 (7%)
- Coding: 2
- Emerging Technology: 6
- Website Management/Design: 2

Instruction: 9 (6%)
- General: 4
- Technology: 3
- Youth Media Literacy: 1
- Information Literacy: 1

No: 9 (6%)

Outreach - Partnerships: 9 (6%)
Public Administration: 8 (6%)

Political Advocacy: 6 (4%)

Reference: 6 (4%)

Safety in Public Libraries: 6 (4%)

Child Development: 5 (3.5%)

Practicum: 5 (3.5%)

Other: 3 (2%)
  ● Statistics: 2
  ● Foreign Language: 1

Professional Development: 3 (2%)
  ● Public Speaking: 3

Research: 3 (2%)
  ● Genealogy: 1
  ● Information Guides: 1
  ● Local History: 1

How have you addressed your professional knowledge/skill gaps in order to succeed at your job? 141 respondents.
Continuing Education Courses: 101 (72%)
  ● General/Unspecified: 13
  ● Post-Graduate Work: 1
  ● Online Classes: 16
  ● Seminars/Workshops: 29
  ● Webinars: 42

Self-Guided Study: 68 (48%)
  ● Blogs: 10
  ● Databases: 2
  ● Forums: 1
  ● General/Unspecified: 1
  ● Google Searches: 1
- Listservs: 2
- Research - General: 25
- Research - Professional Journals/Literature: 19
- Social Media: 6
- Wikihow: 1

**Asking Questions: 41 (29%)**
- Community Leaders: 1
- Colleagues: 28
- General/Unspecified: 1
- Library Resources: 2
- Supervisor: 7
- Outside Library Experts: 1
- Regional Consultants: 1

**Learning on the Job: 41 (29%)**

**Cultivating Relationships: 32 (23%)**
- Mentors: 16
- Networking: 5
- Professional Organizations: 11

**Conference Attendance: 26 (18%)**

**Other: 10 (7%)**
- Community Events: 1
- Local Professional Groups/Meetings: 2
- State Resources: 2
- Unspecified: 5

**Not Seeking Continuing Education Opportunities: 1 (0.50%)**

**Have you taken continuing education courses (specifically related to libraries or not) that have positively impacted your work and professional development within public libraries?** If yes, please list them (with links if possible). 141 respondents.

**Classes/Courses, Workshops, Webinars: 66 (47%)**
- Classes/Courses: 45
  - Classes: 11
Specific topics included: Photoshop, administration, homelessness in the library, leadership, services for Spanish speaking populations, STEAM storytimes, workplace productivity, marketing and communication, and Makey Makeys. Specific sources for classes included: State library systems.

- Courses: 13
  Specific topics included: Readers advisory, consumer health, cataloging, reference, collection development, acquisitions, library certification for support staff, American Sign Language for library staff, “how to” courses, grant writing, and project management. Specific sources for courses included: State library systems, Edelweiss, and Polaris.

- Online Courses: 21
  Specific topics included: Children’s services and programming, social media, outreach, collection development, dealing with difficult people, diverse books, distinguished picture books, and children’s collection development. Specific sources for online courses included: ALSC, ALA, TechSoup, InfoPeople, LibraryJournal, YALSA, LibraryJuice, and PLA.

Workshops: 7
  Specific topics included: Leadership, and dealing with difficult patrons. Specific sources for workshops included: State library systems.

Webinars: 14
  Specific topics included: Literacy, reader’s advisory, collection development, materials for young adults, mental health of young adults, management, and programming for children. Specific sources for webinars included: ALA and ALSC.

No Response: 51 (36%)

No: 28 (20%)

Conferences: 11 (8%)
  ● Digital Shift: 1
  ● National Conference - ALA: 2
  ● National Conference - PLA: 3
  ● National Pre-Conference - PLA: 1
  ● Unspecified: 4

Unspecified Topic/Format: 6 (4%)
  ● Through NEFLIN.org: 2
  ● Through SEFLIN.org: 1
  ● Through Black Belt Librarian: 1
● Through State Library: 2

Yes - Unspecified: 5 (3.5%)

Training: 4 (3%)
  ● Early Literacy (through employer): 1
  ● General/Unspecified: 1
  ● Non-Violent Crisis Intervention: 1
  ● Turning the Page (PLA): 1

Post-Graduate Certificate: 2 (1%)

Fellowship: 1 (0.50%)

Projects With Vendors: 1 (0.50%)

Unspecified Source/Format: 1 (0.50%)
  ● First Aid/CPR: 1

YALSA Mentoring Program: 1 (0.50%)

What kind of continuing education courses have NOT been useful for your work and professional development? Why? 141 respondents.
  ● No Response: 96 (68%)

  ● Courses Taken On Specific Topics from Unspecified Sources: 8 (6%)
    These topics included: Information Center Management, Cataloging and Classification, Services for the Homeless, Time Management, Orientation for New Library Workers, Services for Patrons With Mental Health Issues, Library Marketing, Social Media.

  ● Webinars: 9 (6%)

Online Courses: 6 (4%)
  ● ALA Online Courses: 2
  ● InfoPeople Online Courses: 1
  ● Unspecified: 2
  ● YALSA Online Courses: 1

Conferences: 5 (3.5%)
  ● Misrepresented Program Content - General: 2
National: 1
National Pre-Conference: 1
State: 1

Classes That Focus on Theory, Not Practice: 3 (2%)

Additional Graduate Degree: 1 (0.50%)

Courses Not Specific to Special Libraries: 1 (0.50%)

Courses With a Narrow Focus: 1 (0.50%)

What are the continuing education topics that you would find most useful for doing your job right now? 141 respondents
Management: 63 (45%)
  • Management - General: 26
  • Budgeting: 10
  • Leadership: 6
  • Project Management: 5
  • Human Resources: 4
  • Conducting Staff Training: 3
  • Finance/Accounting: 3
  • Change Management: 2
  • Business: 1
  • Improving Staff Morale: 1
  • Mentoring Employees: 1
  • Volunteer Management: 1

Outreach: 39 (28%)
  • Outreach - Community Partnerships: 14
  • Outreach - General: 12
  • Reaching/Supporting Underserved Populations: 10
  • Community Engagement: 2
  • Civic Engagement: 1

Communications: 38 (27%)
  • Marketing: 15
  • Public Relations: 5
  • Communications: 4
- Graphic Design: 4
- Social Media: 4
- Public Speaking: 2
- Writing Policies: 2
- Business Writing: 1
- Photography: 1

Programming: 32 (23%)
- Program Planning - General: 14
- Program Planning - STEM: 6
- Program Planning - Children: 4
- Program Evaluation: 2
- Program Planning - Book Clubs: 1
- Program Planning - Innovative: 1
- Program Planning - Small Budget: 1
- Program Planning - Small Libraries: 1
- Program Planning - Summer Reading Program: 1
- Storytelling: 1

Social Work/Social Issues: 24 (17%)
- Social Work: 9
- Diversity Training: 5
- Politics of Information Access: 3
- Mental Health/Psychology: 2
- Social Justice: 2
- Counseling: 1
- Social Issues: 1
- Sociology: 1

Interpersonal Skills: 18 (13%)
- Conflict Resolution: 5
- Dealing With Difficult Patrons: 5
- Customer Service: 4
- Assertiveness Training: 1
- Confrontation: 1
- Intergenerational Workplace Communication: 1
- Vendor Relations: 1
Grants: 17 (12%)
- Grant Writing: 11
- Funding Opportunities: 5
- Grant Management: 1

Libraries: 14 (10%)
- Technology in Libraries: 10
- Public Service: 2
- Public Libraries - General: 1
- Young Adult Services: 1

Public Administration: 14 (10%)
- Navigating Local Politics/Government: 7
- Public Administration: 3
- Community Stakeholders: 1
- Legal Issues: 1
- Library System Operations: 1
- Strategic Planning: 1

Collections/Technical Services: 13 (9%)
- Collection Development - General: 6
- Cataloging - General: 2
- Collection Development - Digital Collections: 2
- Cataloging - Unusual or Novel Items: 1
- Collection Development - Diverse Collections: 1
- Collection Development - Special Populations: 1

Technology Skills: 13 (9%)
- Emerging Technologies: 7
- Coding: 2
- Digital Services: 1
- Microsoft Project: 1
- Raspberry Pi: 1
- Web Design: 1

Literature: 12 (8.5%)
- Readers Advisory - General: 8
- Readers Advisory - Fiction: 1
- Readers Advisory - Spanish Speakers: 1
- Readers Advisory - Young Adult Literature: 1
- Trends in Children’s Literature: 1

Advocacy: 7 (5%)
- Advocacy: 4
- Political Advocacy: 3

Child Development: 6 (4%)
- Child Development: 5
- Early Literacy: 1

Library Spaces: 6 (4%)
- Library Buildings and Design: 3
- Maker Spaces: 2
- Young Adult Spaces: 1

Professional Development: 6 (4%)
- Library Director Training: 2
- ALA Committee Involvement: 1
- Career Development: 1
- Presentation Skills: 1
- Salary Negotiation: 1

Instruction: 5 (3.5%)
- Information Literacy: 4
- Library Instruction: 1

Reference: 5 (3.5%)
- Reference - General: 3
- Job Search Assistance: 1
- Technology Reference: 1

Research: 4 (3%)
- Online Research Skills: 2
- Business Databases: 1
- Genealogy: 1

Safety in Public Libraries: 4 (3%)
• Self Defense: 3
• First Aid: 1

What are the continuing education topics that you would find most useful for reaching your professional development goals? 141 respondents

Management: 107 (76%)
• Business: 1
• Change Management: 1
• Leadership: 18
• Budgeting: 14
• Conducting Staff Training: 1
• Finance: 5
• Management - General: 51
• Human Resources: 8
• Mentoring: 1
• Project Management: 5
• Volunteer Management: 2

Other: 27 (19%)
• Unspecified: 8
• Time Management: 5
• Statistics: 5
• Evaluating Services: 3
• Ethics in Libraries: 1
• Fundraising: 1
• Future Library Service Trends: 1
• Organizational Skills: 1
• Spanish Language: 1
• Stress Management: 1

Public Administration: 22 (16%)
• Public Administration: 6
• Navigating Local Politics/Government: 5
• Strategic Planning: 5
• Library Board Relations: 2
• Community Stakeholders: 1
• FOIA and Email Communications: 1
• Library System Operations: 1
- Succession Planning: 1

Programming: 20 (14%)
- Program Planning - General: 7
- Program Evaluation: 4
- Program Planning - Children: 2
- Program Planning - Adult: 1
- Program Planning - Bilingual: 1
- Program Planning - Early Literacy: 1
- Program Planning - Innovative: 1
- Program Planning - Small Budget: 1
- Program Planning - STEM: 1
- Program Planning - Young Adult: 1

Communications: 19 (13%)
- Marketing: 8
- Graphic Design: 3
- Public Relations: 3
- Communications: 2
- Photography: 1
- Social Media: 1
- Writing Policies: 1

Outreach: 19 (13%)
- Outreach - Community Partnerships: 5
- Community Engagement: 4
- Outreach - General: 4
- Reaching/Supporting Underserved Populations: 4
- Community Assessment: 1
- Libraries Assisting in Crises: 1

Grants: 13 (9%)
- Funding Opportunities: 4
- Grant Writing: 9

Collections/Technical Services: 11 (8%)
- Collection Development: 5
- Cataloging: 3
- Collection Development - Children: 1
- Collection Development - Digital Collections: 1
- Metadata: 1

Interpersonal Skills: 11 (8%)
- Dealing With Difficult Patrons: 5
- Conflict Resolution: 4
- Assertiveness Training: 1
- Vendor Relations: 1

Professional Development: 10 (7%)
- Career Development: 2
- Networking: 2
- Transitioning to Management: 2
- How Library Skills Translate to Other Job Settings: 1
- National Committee Involvement: 1
- Presentation Skills: 1
- Salary Negotiation: 1

Libraries: 8 (6%)
- Technology in Libraries: 4
- International Librarianship: 1
- Public Libraries - General: 1
- Tribal and Indigenous Population Services: 1
- Young Adult Services: 1

Technology Skills: 8 (6%)
- Emerging Technologies: 3
- Coding: 2
- Databases: 1
- Digital Stewardship: 1
- Website Management/Design: 1

Literature: 6 (4%)
- Readers Advisory - General: 4
- Book Evaluation: 1
- Middle Grade Literature: 1

Social Work/Social Issues: 6 (4%)
- Diversity Training: 3
- Social Work: 3

Instruction: 5 (3.5%)
- Instruction: 4
- Childhood Education: 1

Child Development: 4 (3%)
- Child Development: 3
- Early Literacy: 1

Reference: 3 (2%)
- Reference - General: 3

Advocacy: 2 (1.5%)
- Advocacy: 1
- Political Advocacy: 1

Library Spaces: 2 (1.5%)
- Library Buildings and Design: 2

Research: 1 (1%)
- Research Methods: 1

Safety in Public Libraries: 1 (1%)
- Self Defense: 1

**Which type of continuing education would be most convenient for you?** 141 respondents.

- Live Webinar: 62 (44%)
- Archived Webinar: 108 (77%)
- Live Online Course (6 sessions or fewer): 44 (31%)
- Live Online Course (7 sessions or more): 10 (7%)
- Asynchronous Online Course (6 sessions or fewer): 72 (51%)
- Asynchronous Online Course (7 sessions or more): 24 (17%)
- In-Person Graduate Course: 16 (11%)
- Post-Graduate Certificate: 23 (16%)
- Mentoring: 85 (60%)
- Job Shadowing: 33 (23%)
- Conference Sessions (State or National): 98 (70%)
What barriers (if any) exist that prevent you from getting the continuing education you need?
141 respondents.
Time: 87 (62%)
Funding: 86 (61%)
- General/Unspecified: 75
- No continuing education budget: 3
- Small continuing education budget: 4
- Limited funding for part-time Librarians: 4
Location: 9 (6%)
Course Selection: 7 (5%)
- Lack of relevant topics: 3
- Courses are only online: 1
- Courses are too basic: 1
- Courses are too broad: 1
- There are not enough courses from which to choose: 1
None: 10 (7%)
Personal Priorities: 7 (5%)
Employer Support: 6 (4%)
Other: 6 (4%)
Staff Coverage: 5 (3.5%)
Student Loan Debt: 4 (3%)
Unspecified: 1 (0.71%)

Do you have skill sets learned from jobs, experiences, or education outside of libraries that have informed your abilities as a public librarian? If yes, please explain. 141 respondents (some listed more than one skill, some did not respond).
No Response: 29 (20.5%)
Customer Service: 61 (43.26%)
- General: 45
- Dealing with Difficult Customers: 8
- Food Service: 5
- Hospitality: 2
- Cash Handling: 1

Marketing - 38 (26.95%)
- Communications - 23
  - General - 1
  - Communications Classes - 2
- Writing - 9
  - General - 3
  - News reporter - 1
  - Editing - 1
  - Grant Writing - 1
  - Creative Writing Degree - 1
  - Public Speaking - 4
- Interpersonal - 7
- Public Relations - 5
- Graphic Design - 4
- General - 4
- Marketing Degree - 1
- Social Media - 1

Retail: 34 (24.11%)
- General: 26
- Inventory Management: 5
- Sales: 2
- Displays: 1

Other - 26 (18.44%)
- Degree - 7
  - Law - 1
  - Liberal Studies - 1
  - History - 1
  - General - 1
  - Music - 1
  - Sociology - 1
  - Psychology - 1
• Self-Study - 3
  o General - 1
  o Literature - 1
  o Crafts - 1
• Empathy - 3
• Adult Care - 2
• Grocery Store - 2
• Language - 2
  o Bilingual - 1
  o Linguistic Training - 1
• Scientist - 1
• Factory Work - 1
• Law - 1
• Fundraising - 1
• Travel Industry - 1
• Martial Arts - 1
• Different Cultures - 1

Management - 11 (7.8%)
  • General - 8
  • Creating partnerships - 1
  • Public service - 1
  • Social issues - 1

Problem Solving - 21 (14.89%)
  • General - 2
  • Conflict resolution - 1
  • Handling crises - 1
  • Budgeting - 5
  • Leadership - 2
  • Training Staff - 2
  • Volunteers - 2
  • Supervision - 1
  • Human Resources - 1
  • Stretching Resources - 1
  • Scheduling - 1
  • Team Building - 1
  • Logistics - 1
Education - 22 (15.60%)
- General - 20
- STEM - 1
- Instruction 1

Library Work - 15 (10.64%)
- General - 6
- Collection development - 3
- Readers’ advisory - 2
- Information organization and access - 1
- Government archives - 1
- Special collections - 1
- Archival - 1

Technology - 12 (8.51%)
- General - 3
- Instruction - 3
- Database management - 1
- Web design - 1
- Coding - 1
- Technical support - 1
- Theater - 1
- Software support - 1

Children - 11 (7.80%)
- Child care - 7
- Child development - 2
- Early literacy - 1
- Children’s literacy degree - 1

Clerical Work - 9 (6.38%)
- General - 8
- Bookkeeping - 1

Community - 9 (6.38%)
- Volunteer - 4
  - Education - 1
General - 3
- Community organizing - 2
- Nonprofits - 4
- Outreach - 1

Arts - 9 (6.38%)
- General - 3
- Public Performance - 5
  - General - 2
  - Theater - 2
  - Musician - 1
- Fine Arts Degree - 1

Organization - 8 (5.67%)
- Project management - 5
- Time management - 2
- Workflow - 1

Research - 7 (4.96%)
- General - 5
- Data Analysis - 1
- Statistics - 1

Museums - 5 (3.55%)
- General - 4
- Museum studies degree - 1

Program planning - 5 (3.55%)
- General - 3
- Event Planning - 2

What is your job title? 141 respondents.
Librarian: 98 (69%)
- Adult Services: 13
- Collection/Technical Services: 2
- Digital Services: 5
- General/Unspecified: 39
- Outreach Services: 7
• Young Adult Services: 12
• Youth Services: 20

Manager: 21 (15%)
• Branch Manager: 4
• Assistant Branch Manager: 3
• Manager/Department Head (Unspecified): 5
• Manager/Department Head (Adult Services): 2
• Manager/Department Head (Circulation): 1
• Manager/Department Head (Collection/Technical Services): 2
• Manager/Department Head (Outreach Services): 2
• Manager/Department Head (Young Adult Services): 1
• Manager/Department Head (Youth Services): 1

Director: 15 (11%)
• Director: 13
• Assistant Director: 2

Reference/Library Assistant: 4 (3%)

Library Associate: 2 (1.5%)

Intern: 1 (.50%)

Where is your library? 141 respondents.
Alabama: 3
Arizona: 2
Arkansas: 1
California: 38
Colorado: 2
Florida: 5
Georgia: 2
Hawaii: 2
Idaho: 1
Illinois: 19
Indiana: 3
Iowa: 2
Kansas: 1
Kentucky: 2
Louisiana: 8
Maine: 1
Maryland: 1
Michigan: 3
Minnesota: 2
Missouri: 2
Montana: 1
Nebraska: 1
New York: 4
Ohio: 2
Oregon: 2
Outside of the U.S.: 1
Pennsylvania: 3
Rhode Island: 2
South Carolina: 6
South Dakota: 2
Tennessee: 3
Texas: 4
Virginia: 3
Washington: 2
Washington D.C.: 1
Wisconsin: 4

**What type of public library do you work in?** 141 respondents.
- Suburban: 66 (47%)
- Urban: 48 (34%)
- Rural: 26 (18%)
- Tribal: 1 (1%)

**What is your library’s service population?** 141 respondents.
- <9,999: 14 (10%)
- 10,000 - 49,999: 39 (28%)
- 50,000 - 249,999: 53 (37%)
- 250,000 - 999,999: 21 (15%)
- 1,000,000+: 14 (10%)

**Are you a personal member of PLA?** 141 respondents.
- No: 87 (62%)
Yes: 54 (38%)

**Please add any other comments you have regarding your MLIS education and/or your first few years as a library professional.** 47 respondents, 58 responses

Necessary to combine MLIS with practical experience: 40% (23 respondents)

Classes are outdated: 7% (4 responses)

Classes not specific to public librarianship: 5% (3 responses)

Would have preferred in-person MLIS to online MLIS program: 3% (2 responses)

MLIS programs are what you make of them: 3% (2 responses)

Strong mentors are important: 3% (2 responses)

MLIS degree is expensive: 3% (2 responses)

2% (1 response):
Theoretical knowledge in MLS is useful, internship wouldn't have been helpful, more focus on public administration and management needed.

More focus on public administration and management needed.

More of a focus on public administration/management needed.

Satisfied with MLIS education.

Public librarian mentorship would have been helpful.

Started out in academic libraries, moved to public libraries.

Reality of public librarianship is different from expectations.

Online MLIS programs are unhelpful because they don't emphasize interpersonal communications.

MLIS programs should have standardized courses for specializing in public libraries.

Grad schools should hire instructors with public library experience.
Theoretical knowledge from MLIS program was helpful.

It's impossible to prepare for every library job.

If you have an MLS, you should only take jobs that require an MLS or you will risk being under-utilized and under-valued.

It was very difficult to obtain first librarian position.

Should be a Bachelor's instead of a Master's degree.

Obtaining an MLIS degree is time-consuming.

There are a lack of jobs for MLIS-holders.

Intended to go into academic librarianship, but couldn't find a job, so moved to public libraries.

Professional organizations should have more affordable dues for new librarians.

Important to realize that public service means never being above doing any aspect of library work, even if you have an MLS.
Appendix B

MLIS Advisor Survey Results

How do you determine which classes are most beneficial for MLIS students preparing for a public librarian career? 18 responses were given. Most responses contained more than one category of answer.

- Assessment of individual student based on needs, interest, and skill gaps: 6
- Input from faculty, including library school-created recommended course lists: 5
- Advisor’s experience, expertise, and understanding of public library’s needs: 5
- Monitoring trends in by attending conferences and reading professional literature: 4
- Feedback from public librarians & public library leaders: 3
- Monitoring trends in job ads/job descriptions: 2
- Feedback from recent graduates: 2
- Feedback from advisory board: 2

Which MLIS classes or subjects do you wish your institution provided for MLIS students that are not currently offered? 17 advisors responded to the questions; 27 responses were given. Most contained more than one category of answer.

- Grantwriting & Fundraising: 4
- Programming: specialized for adults, teens, and children: 4
- Information Literacy & Library Instruction: 2
- Advocacy: 2
- Cataloging & Metadata: 3
- No additional courses: 3
- Additional courses in management, including managing reference services: 2
- Digital Collections: 1
- Analytics for decision making: 1
- User Experience Design: 1
- Budgeting: 1
- Interpersonal skills/dealing with difficult people: 1
- Outreach: 1
- Social media: 1

Why do you think this class or subject would be helpful for MLIS students? 12 responses were given.
- Needed skill in a public library 10: 83%
- Student feedback: 2: 17%
- No response: 9

Are students at your institution allowed to take classes outside of the MLIS program (i.e. business, management, computer science, etc.)? 18 responses were given.
- Yes: 17 (94%)
- No: 1 (6%)
- No response: 3

If yes, which outside departments do MLIS students most often utilize? 13 responses were given. Most responses contained more than one category of answer
- Computer Science: 8
- Education: 8
- Liberal Arts & Social Sciences: 6
- Business: 4
- Decision Sciences/Information Sciences: 2
- Communications: 1
- Social Work: 1

Which non-LIS departments do you wish MLIS students took more classes in? Why? 14 responses were given. Some contained more than one recommendation.
- Any department/department unspecified: gain greater perspective (1), enhanced learning environment (1); gain interpersonal skills (1), gain management skills (1)
- Computer Science: acquire needed skills (1), understand basics of computer programming (2)
- Liberal Arts & Social Sciences: Gain interpersonal skills/understand patrons better (3), Understand social science research methodology (1)
- Public Administration: unspecified (1)
- Business: gain skills in: statistics & data analytics for decision making (1)
- Education: provide library instruction (1)
- Journalism: assist with current storytelling trend in public libraries (1)

Are students in your MLIS program required to participate in a practicum or internship? 18 responses were given.
- No: 12: 66 ⅔ %
- Yes: 6: 33 ⅓%
- No response: 3
If you answered yes, what do you think is most beneficial to the students from this requirement that differs from a classroom setting? 8 responses were given. Most responses contained more than one answer.

- Gain hands-on experience (2)
- Networking opportunity (2)
- Learn what it’s like to be part of a professional staff (1)
- Better understand the complexity of working with the public (4)
  - Be responsible for dealing with complex real-world issues
  - Learn the importance of soft skills
  - Appreciate the unpredictability of public service
- Apply classroom learning (1)
- Gain skills not taught in the classroom (1)

If you answered no, do you receive feedback or notice any differences in skills or preparedness between students who choose to take practicums or internships versus those who do not? 11 responses were given.

- Yes, feedback indicates that students who choose practicums are better prepared (3)
- Somewhat: depends on prior experience. Students with previous relevant work experience do not see a benefit from an internship (3)
- No (2)
- No data (1)
- Response indicates the school intends to require an internship based on positive experience of students who took elective internships (1)
- Response indicating need for better collaboration between library schools and employers:
  - “We sometimes hear from professionals that students should have more hands-on training but when pressed for specifics these are often skills that aren’t taught in classes. We need to have a more structured dialogue between LIS educators and professionals to establish a more seamless continuum of instruction. But teaching students what to do in a master's program is less useful than teaching them why something is done. The how changes so they would be left with obsolete knowledge in one instance but they could figure out the changes with the latter.” (1)

Does your institution offer post-MLIS continuing education courses or programs? 21 responses were given.

- Yes: 15: 71%
- No: 3: 16.5%
- No response: 3: 16.5%
If yes, please give examples of the topics.

- Continuing Ed students take regular coursework (5)
- Certificates in:
  - Digital Humanities
  - Archives
  - Archival Management
  - Health Informatics
  - Medical Librarianship
  - Rural Librarianship
  - Youth Services
  - Storytelling
  - Digital Curation (3)
  - Digital Content Management
  - Digital Libraries
  - Advanced Management
  - Archival Management
  - Informatics
  - Management

- Courses in:
  - Metadata (2)
  - Programming: Running a Coding Club
  - Information Visualization
  - Large variety of courses available (3)
  - Event Planning
  - User Experience Design
  - Data Analytics
  - Digital & Media Literacy
  - Using Twitter
  - Leadership
  - Website Design

- Continuing Education program is being developed
- PhD in Library Science

Are these courses utilized by professional librarians? 17 responses were given.

- Yes: 17: 100%
- No response 4
How frequently? 15 responses were given.

- Very frequently: 6: 40%
- Somewhat frequently: 6: 40%
- Every once in awhile: 3: 30%
- No response: 6

Which continuing education courses or programs outside of your institution do you recommend for students or new professionals? 10 responses were given. Many respondents offered more than one answer.

- Professional conferences (2)
- Local & regional workshops (1)
- Webinars
- ALA one-day seminars
- Regional leadership programs such as NELLS
- Use Lynda.com
- Do your own gap analysis & take action to fill gaps
- Build skills in:
  - Data Management
  - Data Analytics
  - Entrepreneurism
  - Project Management
  - Excel

Please share any anecdotes about how the MLIS education particularly contributed to a student's success. 6 responses were given.

- "Wow; this is a long question! Happily, I can say that I'm getting fewer and fewer statements like "I wish you had taught us about this in library school." My colleagues here who work with the school and public library folks have been very diligent to develop a curriculum that covers as many bases as possible. One class even has a "dark side of librarianship" lecture. I did have a former student contact me to thank me for all of those children's literature review assignments saying that because of them she had the courage to apply to School Library Journal as a book reviewer (she was accepted using a piece she had written for one of my classes)."
- "My favorites are the ones where graduates shamefacedly admit to me that an assignment I gave them that they hated was key to their success. Public-speaking assignments often come up in this context; so do group projects with explicit project-management requirements; so does basic HTML."
- "Involvement is a key to a student's success, since our program is primarily a distance program this can be a challenge for many. However, when students search for opportunities to get
involved in the profession, it can really enhance their educational experience and provide them with career paths once they complete the program. I’ve heard of students that participate in our study abroad program, being offered jobs while they are there, in an international library working.”

- “Most often I hear back from students who have had an opportunity to use skills related to the Reference and/or Resources classes. Generally, they write to tell me how a question or work assignment was easily handled because they had exposure to it in one of my classes.”
- “This is better asked of students but I have heard about graduates succeeding at things like grant writing, programming successes, dealing with management issues, etc.”
- “We recently heard from an alumna who said, "I credit the storytelling class with helping me get over my stage fright when speaking to groups on the recruitment trail. We have spoken to groups as small at two people and as large as 300. I don't think I could have done it without that class.” “

If you are willing to be contacted with any follow-up questions we may have, please provide your email address.

- Four advisors supplied email addresses for purposes of follow-up.

Please share any anecdotes where you saw gaps in a student’s MLIS education. 6 responses were given:

- “I don’t really have one; I’ve never had a student come back saying "I wish I had known this." Not that we have a perfect curriculum but that we emphasize that we can't teach them everything; we can provide the theory and hope to instill a sense of curiosity about the profession, but we can't teach them everything.
- “Students tend to trust me, so they do come back with these. Gaps sometimes result from students being afraid to take a course that would have been useful to them -- often students in this fix didn't take the course because they overemphasize high grades over useful skills and knowledge. No matter how often we say that employers don't care about perfect grades but DO care about applicable skills and knowledge, a few just never get that message.”
- With some non-traditional students who are not as comfortable with technology, they sometimes avoid taking courses that would stretch or challenge them, and play it safe or take the more "fun" courses. The world only needs so many librarians that have taken Storytelling, but could perhaps use more that know how to develop and maintain a website.
- “I’ve mentioned basic programming in an earlier response. Python would be helpful to most students.”
- “The children’s services folks found the children’s and YA materials courses taught by school media faculty to not be as useful as those taught by no SLM faculty. They didn't need a big book
club of adult fans of the lit as they did the opportunity to think of programming, child
development and other benefits of access to these materials.”

● “I have seen some students who have focused heavily on technology classes and/or online
classes whose communication skills (i.e., interpersonal) were lacking. Our students feel our
education is too heavily focused on theory, but they often respond years later that that
foundation has proved invaluable (even more than the skills they learned).”
Appendix C

Continuing Education Resources

We recommend that PLA create a professional development webpage for new librarians. Here is an initial list of resources that we, and other early career librarians, have found valuable for addressing knowledge gaps.

Free Online Webinars

- WebJunction:
  - http://www.webjunction.org/events/webjunction.html
  - Free webinars are archived to listen to on your own time and all participants receive a certificate of completion after each webinar.
- Infopeople:
  - https://infopeople.org/training/view/webinar
  - Free webinars are archived to listen to on your own time.
- School Library Journal Webcasts:
  - http://www.slj.com/category/webcasts/
- EdWeb.net:
  - http://home.edweb.net/
- UW-Madison SLIS Free Webinars:
  - https://slis.wisc.edu/continuing-education/free-webinars/
- Missouri State Library Recorded Webinars Archive:
  - https://mostatelibrary.watch.more.net/#/media/videos/category/578b2539-e15a-4ba0-bad4-b29b1a9861a3
- VolunteerMatch.org Webinars:
  - http://learn.voluteermatch.org/training-topics
- Nebraska Library Commission: NCompass Live Webinar Archive:
- GrantSpace.org:
  - http://grantspace.org/training/calendar/online
- Colorado State Library: CSL In Session: Archived Webinars:
  - http://cslinsession.cvlites.org/category/past/
- TechSoup:
  - https://techsoup.course.tc/catalog
- Utah State Library Workshops:
  - https://heritage.utah.gov/library/workshops
- Utah State Library Webinars:
  - https://heritage.utah.gov/library/webinars
- Idaho Commission for Libraries: Info2Go Webinars:
  - http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/info2go
- LiLI.org:
- Firespring.org: Webinars for Nonprofits:
Free Online Courses

- WI Department of Public Instruction: Digital Storytime: Kids, Apps & Libraries:

- Idaho Commission for Libraries: MARC Tutorial:
  - [http://lili.org/forlibs/ce/able/course8/02objectives.htm](http://lili.org/forlibs/ce/able/course8/02objectives.htm)

- Codecademy:
  - [https://www.codecademy.com/](https://www.codecademy.com/)

- Khan Academy:
  - [https://www.khanacademy.org/](https://www.khanacademy.org/)

- TechBoomers.org:
  - [https://techboomers.com/](https://techboomers.com/)

- PLA Webinars:
  - [http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/ondemand](http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/ondemand)

- Public Library Financial Management Guide:

- Collection Development Training:

- Book Repair Manual (document):

- Colorado Virtual Library: Create Your Own Path to Learning:
  - [http://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/](http://create.coloradovirtuallibrary.org/)

- Nicolet Federated Library System: Archived Webinars:
• http://www.nfls.lib.wi.us/recordings.html
• Library Link NJ: Archived Webinars:
  • http://librarylinknj.org/ce/past-classes
• WebJunction:
  • http://learn.webjunction.org/
  • Free self-paced courses on a wide range of topics such as library management, customer service and social media.
• Idaho State Library ABLE:
  • http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/able
  • The Alternative Basic Library Education program offers online tutorials for free that cover all basic library related skills.
• Library of Congress Professional Development Workshops:
  • http://www.loc.gov/teachers/
  • These online modules are offered by the most famous library in the country and cover a wide range of different topics. Possible courses to choose from include: primary sources, basic technology, and more.

Fee-Based Online Courses and Webinars:
• UW-Madison SLIS Continuing Education Courses:
  • https://slis.wisc.edu/continuing-education/
• Library Juice Academy:
  • http://libraryjuiceacademy.com/
  • Asynchronous online courses providing continuing education in practical skills where you earn CEUs at completion of a course.
• Early Childhood Webinars:
  • http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/
• ALSC Webinars:
  • http://www.ala.org/alsc/elearning/webinararchive
  • Free for ALSC Members
• PLA Webinars On Demand:
  • http://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/ondemand
• Ohio Library Council:
  • http://olc.org/resources/education/webinars-online-learning/
  • Free for OLC members
• University of Massachusetts - Amherst:
  • http://www.umass.edu/cpe/
  • Courses offered include child development, developmental psychology, and social work.
• UW-Madison - Ed2Go:
  • https://www.ed2go.com/uwslis/
  • Courses offered include grant writing, accounting, team building, web design, working with difficult people, public speaking, project management, and customer service.
• San Jose State University:
  • http://ischool.sjsu.edu/programs/post-masters-certificate
  • Courses offered include digital services and emerging technologies, and leadership and management.
- **TechSoup:**
  - [https://techsoup.course.tc/catalog](https://techsoup.course.tc/catalog)

- **Udemy**
  - [https://www.udemy.com](https://www.udemy.com)
  - Courses offered include human resources, storytelling, public speaking, leadership skills, stress management, and instruction.

- **Ed2Go**
  - [https://www.ed2go.com](https://www.ed2go.com)
  - Courses offered include assertiveness, programming, business marketing, and understanding adolescents.

- **Lyrasis:**
  - [http://www.lyrasis.org/Pages/Events.aspx](http://www.lyrasis.org/Pages/Events.aspx)

- **Infopeople:** [https://infopeople.org/training/view/online](https://infopeople.org/training/view/online)
  - [https://infopeople.org/content/infopeople-lssc-approved-courses](https://infopeople.org/content/infopeople-lssc-approved-courses)
  - Asynchronous online courses are part of ALA's national Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC) program, which allows support staff to demonstrate competencies and receive a ALA certification.