Management Training in Library School: Do Graduate Programs Prepare an Individual for Real

World Demands?

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Abstract

This article examines the perception of management curriculum in library schools from the perspective of practicing professional librarians and information specialists with a master's degree in library science. The authors surveyed degreed librarians in academic, public, and special libraries in a variety of job types about their management training in library school, how useful they feel those courses were to them professionally, and whether they would have or wish they would have taken additional management courses if they had been offered. The results of this survey show that a decisive gap in management training is being felt by practicing librarians, and highlight the need for making management courses in library schools meet the real world demands of today – and tomorrow.

Methodology

The study[1] was conducted by creating a survey via SurveyMonkey and asking librarians to voluntarily respond. It targeted eight American Library Association (ALA) and Public Library Association (PLA) listservs[2] that serve general library interests as well as specialized management interests. The survey specifically targeted librarians who had been out of library school for at least one year.[3] In order to get a broad coverage of librarian types, surveys were sent out to listservs that serve library administrators, university librarians, college librarians, public librarians, and school librarians.

The survey was composed of 14 questions, the first five seeking demographic information on the individual responding and the last ten exploring their feelings about the library school management training they received and the management training they wish they had received with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. In order to get a wide variety and large number of respondents the majority of questions were multiple choice or "yes/no," and the survey was designed to be completed in a short time unless the responder wished to provide additional information.

Introduction

Librarians are managers. Even if they do not want to be, they are managing personnel, resources, budgets, public opinion, and time. Hours of each day are spent on human resources issues, managerial decision making, budgeting, marketing (both external and internal), and crisis management. They are expected to deal with the most difficult patrons with a smile, supervise employees with various levels of skills, experience and work ethics, prioritize the spending of limited budgets, deal with the possibility of violence in the workplace, design public and work spaces and possibly even buildings, and plan strategically.

Yet they do all this with a minimum of managerial training. Most librarians take the one required management course in library schools and focus on other areas of librarianship for in-depth study. Few have business or management degrees. They have little exposure to the legal, ethical and practical knowledge needed to manage resources, or more importantly, people. Library school does little to help

them gain these skills as the ALA accreditation process offers little to standardize the curriculum across schools for the one management class most librarians take, if indeed they even take one.

So the question arises: If library students will encounter a great deal of management duties and expectations when they start working as professionals, and if on average they have taken one course on library management, do they feel they have received the background they need once they enter "the real world"? This paper explores librarians' perceptions of their management education, both its completeness and, if they deem necessary, how they may be filling any gaps with continuing education.

Literature Review

The need for management skills in libraries is not one underestimated by professional librarians nor is it a new topic of contention. Arthur P. Young (2004) summarized more than seven decades of management literature in one publication – *Library Quarterly* – and found that as early as the 1930s libraries were looking at management issues involving human resources and best practices. In the seventies Thomas J. Galvin (1976) discussed new ways to look at management and how these changes were vital for the survival of managers and their libraries. In 1980, Charles McClure questioned the lack of training for managers in academic libraries: "Because the library manager has little training in management, he/she frequently fails to implement specific managerial techniques or implements them incorrectly" (p. 2391).

Current writings also support this need. Michael Gorman (2004) makes an excellent argument about how irrelevant LIS education is becoming to real world library work. He emphasizes that "it is instructive to look at what goes on in libraries and the areas in which a would-be librarian should be knowledgeable, if we are to devise a core curriculum that would apply to all schools" (p. 378). He listed a management class as one of the seven core courses that should be required by every library school. However, a recent study by Mackenzie and Smith (2009) indicated that 43.8% of the ALA-accredited graduate library education programs studied did not require any management-related courses. Only 2% of the programs surveyed required two courses. This deficit is particularly troubling when considering Rooney's (2010) study showing that 36% of first-time department heads had no formal management

training or mentorship other than what they received in library school. Furthermore, according to this study, 20% of all department heads did not receive any training other than that received in library school before being promoted to a middle management position.

<div align="center">**Findings**</div>

More than 1,000 librarians responded to the survey during a 3-week period in March 2011. One thousand one hundred forty-two participants began the survey and 1,093 fully completed the survey. For purposes of this study the questions answered by those who started but did not finish the study were still included in the summation of total responses. This sample represents 1.87% of ALA members[4] or 0.76% of the total population of librarians as estimated by ALA.[5] A sample this size is considered to be statistically accurate 99 percent of the time, within plus or minus four percent both for ALA members and for the estimated total librarian profession.

Academic librarians were by far the largest participants in the survey with 49.1% of survey takers self-identifying as working in an academic library. Public librarians came in second at 26.9%. School librarians were the third largest category with 13.0%. The category of "Other" was a distant fourth at 7.0%. And special libraries (3.5%), and corporate libraries (0.5%) round out the library types. Almost a third (32.7%) of the respondents had been out of library school less than three years, more than 37% graduated between four and 12 years previously, 12.6% had been out between 13 and 20 years, and 17.6% had graduated library school more than 20 years earlier.

The authors were interested in how long individuals had been in their current position and were surprised that almost half (48.3%) had only been in their current position for 3 years or less. Since more than 40% of the sample had been out of library school for 8 years or longer, the authors were startled that the current job tenure was so short. This may show a bias in who subscribes to listservs – those newer in a position may need the support offered more than senior librarians – or it may show that newer hires have a bit more time to answer surveys. Only 4.1% had been in their position more than 20 years and future research may target this demographic to determine perceptions of senior librarians on junior librarian's management skills and knowledge.
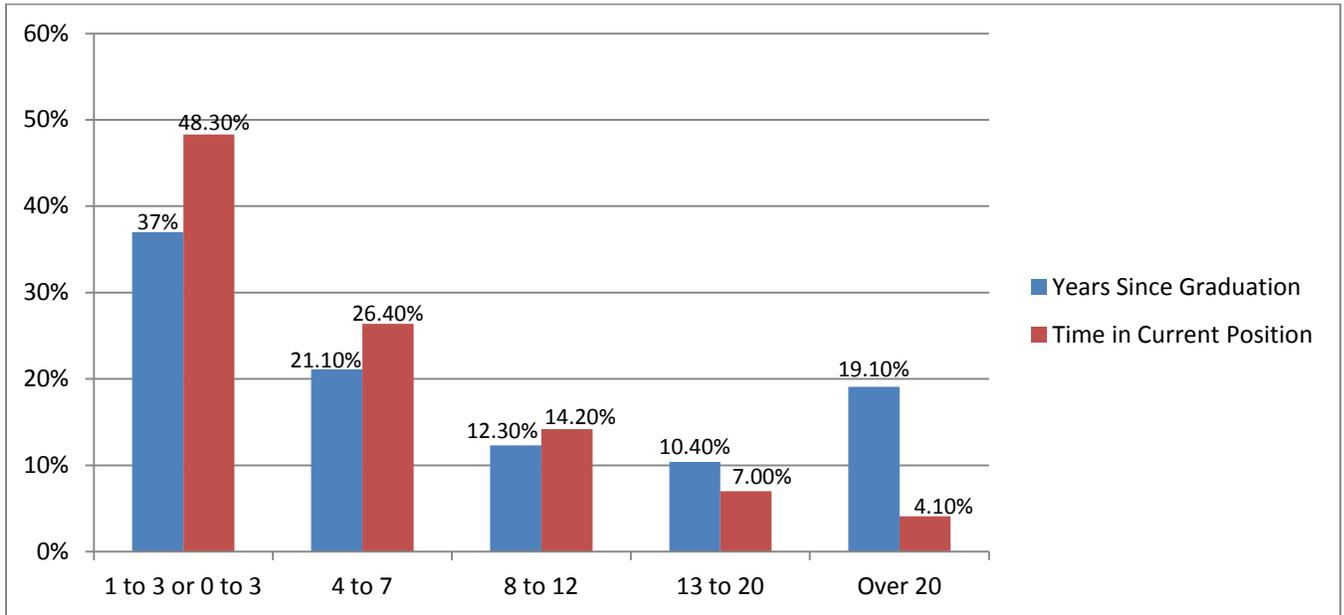
Figure 1: Years since Graduation Compared to Years in Current Position

The "management status" of each responder's position was important because the authors were interested in seeing how current managerial duties may or may not affect response, as well as in getting some idea what percentage of responders actually were, or at least considered themselves, managers. There was the following disclaimer on this question: "We know ALL professional jobs have some type of management of people or resources or services, but here we are asking about whether your job would be considered a traditional management position," which mirrors the belief that all librarians are managers whether they want to be or not. However, for purposes of this study the authors were looking at whether a responder's job description labeled them as a manager or not. About one third of the responders (32.2%) considered themselves to have no management responsibilities. This ties very closely with those responders who have only been out of library school less than three years (32.7%), but more research will have to be done as even many "entry level" position descriptions seem to include a great deal of management responsibility and there are librarians who have worked for years in non-managerial positions. About a quarter of the respondents (25.4%) considered themselves to be "lower level

management," about a quarter (25.8%) "middle management" and 16.6% identified themselves as having upper management responsibilities such as being a director or a dean of a library.

The authors were very interested in the question of what percentage of librarians went into their graduate education with the expectation of/desire to become managers in the future. The authors' bias was that most librarians went to library school with no intention of going into library management and the study seems to support this. Only 34.7% answered "Yes" to the question, "In library school did you have any long-range professional goals of getting into library management, i.e. you always knew you wanted to be a director or head of access services?" A further 50.3% replied "No," and a not insignificant 15.0% responded "Absolutely Not!"

One of the more surprising findings was the disconnect between the desire to receive management training in library school and the actual willingness to participate in it while in a graduate program. Sixty-three point nine percent stated they wished they had taken more management classes in library school; yet in response to another question asking them about what they would have done as students, as opposed to what they wished they had done with 20/20 hindsight, only 38.1% said that they would have taken more classes in management if they had been available. Thus, the survey exposed practitioners who wish they had had more management education while still in school, but who also recognized that they would not have attended additional management classes if they had been offered.

It is clear librarians are willing to further their management education and are already doing so. Seventy-one point one percent of the responders are interested in taking additional management courses and 64.5% of the responders are already furthering their management education through classes (139 respondents – 12.17%), conferences (562 respondents – 49.21%), seminars (496 respondents – 43.43%), web-based learning (540 respondents – 49.29%) and self-study (630 respondents – 55.16%.)

Conclusion

An overwhelming number of respondents either did not think library schools were providing enough management training to their students (40.0%), or were uncertain as to whether library schools were providing adequate training in management (45.6%.) Only 14.4% felt that library schools were

doing a good or adequate job training new librarians for the management duties they would encounter in the working world. With such a large gap between those who think the training is not or may not be adequate and those who think it is, it is clear that today's library schools are not meeting the challenge of training new managers. This survey is not alone in promoting this message. Mackenzie and Smith (2009) found that "… as a result of the lack of explicit guidance from ALA as to how the master's level curriculum should endure specific people-management learning outcomes, library managers enter the field at a disadvantage" (p. 140). And the need for management skills in librarianship is only increasing. In 2004, a group of British academic librarians presented a vision of the library in 2010. They felt library staff would increasingly need finance skills, marketing abilities and the ability to measure impact as well as provide for traditional information literacy (Parry 2007). Indeed there is little doubt that these skills are in higher demand today than they were even five years ago.

The disconnect between the availability of management classes and students' willingness to take them means that library schools must set the standard and insist all students have a strong core background in management. For anyone to assume that management is something that one can simply learn on the job at the expense of a well-run department or library seems impractical and detrimental to the profession. This article's authors submit that training in management while in library school, whether students plan to be managers or not, is essential to their professional success as librarians. Additionally, schools and professional organizations need to find inexpensive, open-access ways for librarians to get further training on management issues and best practices.

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[1] Survey and results can be found in the appendix.

[2] Listservs included:

March 1, 2011	libadmin@ala.org	lama-mmdg@ala.org
March 3, 2011	cjc-l@ala.org	collib-l@ala.org
March 4, 2011	uls-l@ala.org	
March 7, 2011	alsc-l@ala.org	publib@webjunction.org
March 16, 2011	aaslforum@ala.org	

[3] The e-mail sent to the various listservs including the following:"We are conducting a very short poll asking librarians/information specialist who have been out of library school at least one year to tell us their perception of the management training offered at their library school."

[4] Based upon a 61,000 member estimation – including librarians, publishers and other parties interested in libraries. http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/governance/annualreport/annualreport/aboutala/aboutala.cfm

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[5] Based upon a 150,296 total population estimation.
http://www.ala.org/ala/professionalresources/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet02.cfm

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Gorman. M. (2004). Whither library education? *New Library World, 105*(9/10), 376-380. doi:10.1108/03074800410557330

Hibberd, B. J. & Blankson-Hemans, L. (2004). An assessment of LIS curricula and the field of practice in the commercial sector. *New Library World, 105*(7/8), 269-280. doi:10.1108/03074800410551020

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Mackenzie, M. L., & Smith, J. P. (2009). Management education for library directors: Are

graduate library programs providing future library directors with the skills and

knowledge they will need? *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science,*

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McClure, C. R. (1980) Library management: Can they manage? Will they lead? *Library Journal*

105(20), 2388-2391.

Parry, J. (2008). Librarians do fly: Strategies for staying aloft. *Library Management, 29*(1/2), 41

50. doi:10.1108/01435120810844630

Rooney, M. P. (2010). The current state of middle management preparation, training, and

development in academic libraries. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 36*(5), 383-393.

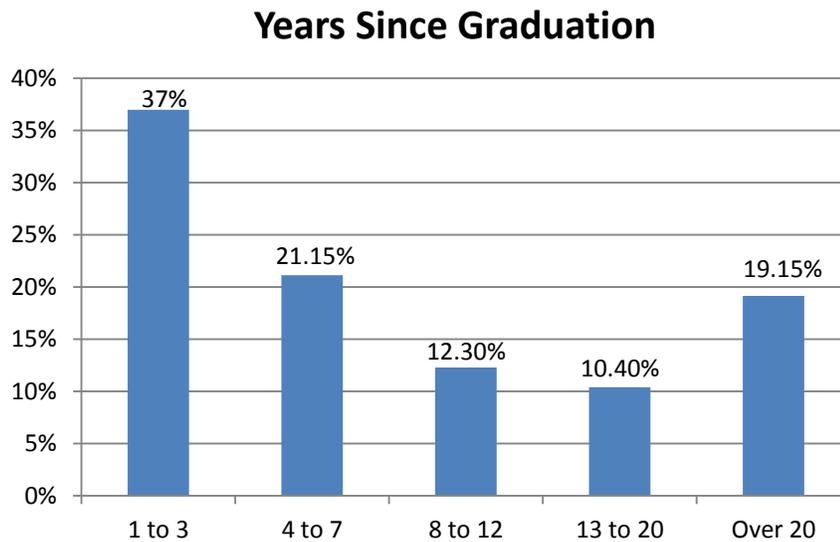Young, A. P. (2006). Library Quarterly management literature, 1931-2004. *Library Quarterly,*

76(1), 58-80.

Appendix

Survey and Results

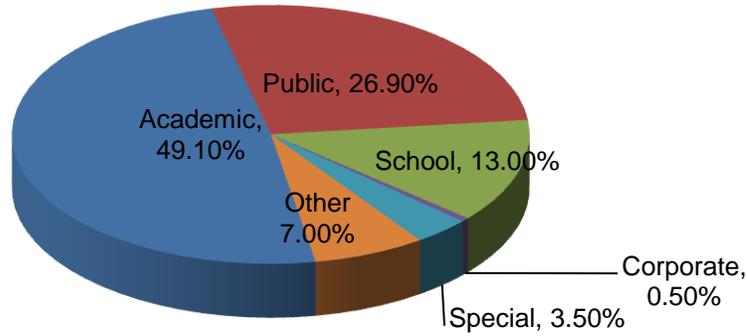1.) How long has it been since you graduated library school?

    a.   1-3 Years

    b.   4-7 Years

    c.   8-12 Years

    d.   13-20 Years

    e.   Over 20 Years

Years Since Graduation

Category	Percentage
1 to 3	37%
4 to 7	21.15%
8 to 12	12.30%
13 to 20	10.40%
Over 20	19.15%

2.) What kind of library do you work in?

    a.   Academic

    b.   Public

    c.   School

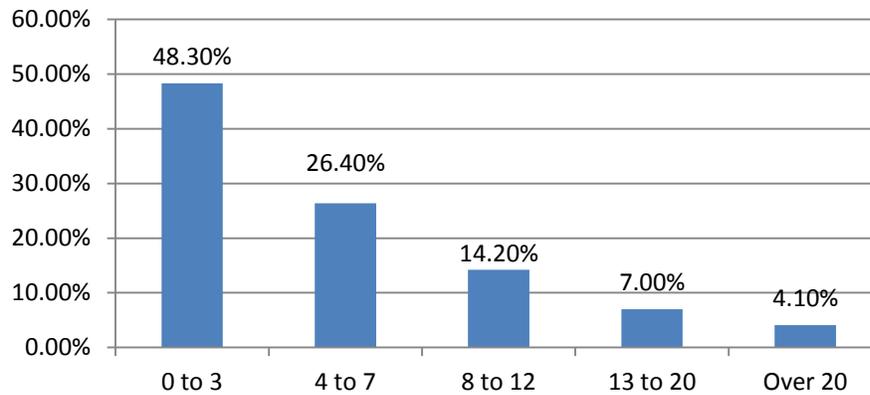   d.   Corporate

    e.   Special

    f.   Other

Type of Library


3.) How long have you been in your current position? If you are not currently employed, how long were you in your last position?

    a.   1-3 Years

    b.   4-7 Years

    c.   8-12 Years

    d.   13-20 Years

    e.   Over 20 Years

Years in Current Position

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4.) What is the "management status" of your current or most recent position? (*We know ALL professional jobs have some type of management of people or resources or services, but here we are asking about whether your job would be considered a traditional management position.)

    a. No management responsibilities. (Entry level or no supervisory duties.)

    b. Lower level management responsibilities. (Unit management. Supervising student employees.)

    c. Middle management responsibilities. (Department head.)

    d. Upper management responsibilities. (Director. Dean.)

Management Status

- Upper Management 16.6%
- Middle Management 25.8%
- No Management 32.2%
- Lower Level Management 25.4%
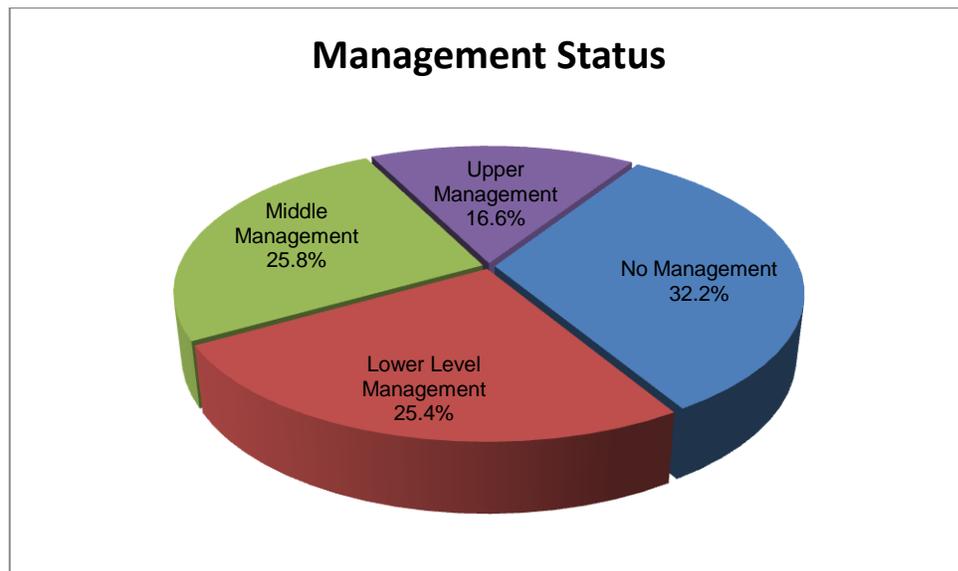
5.) In library school did you have any long-range professional goals of getting into library management, i.e. you always knew you wanted to be a director or head of access services?

    a. Yes   34.7%

    b. No   50.3%

    c. Absolutely Not!   15.0%

6.) Do you think your graduate program provided adequate coursework in management?

    a. Yes   41.5%

    b. No   58.5%

7.) Would you have taken additional courses in management if they had been offered knowing your feelings about management education AT THAT TIME?

    a. Yes, even as a student I wanted more management training.   38.1%

    b. No, I was focused on other aspects of librarianship.   61.9%

8.) If you could go back in time to library school now would you take more management classes?

    a. Yes.   63.9%

   b. No.   36.1%

9.) As a working professional would you take additional courses in management now if you had the opportunity?

    a. Yes.   71.1%

    b. No.   28.9%

10.) Have you furthered your management education since library school graduation? (Please select all that apply.)

    a. Yes, I've taken classes.

    b. Yes, I've attended seminars and workshops on management issues

    c. Yes, I've read management oriented literature and/or other forms of self-teaching.

    d. No, I've focused on areas outside of management.

Futher Management Education
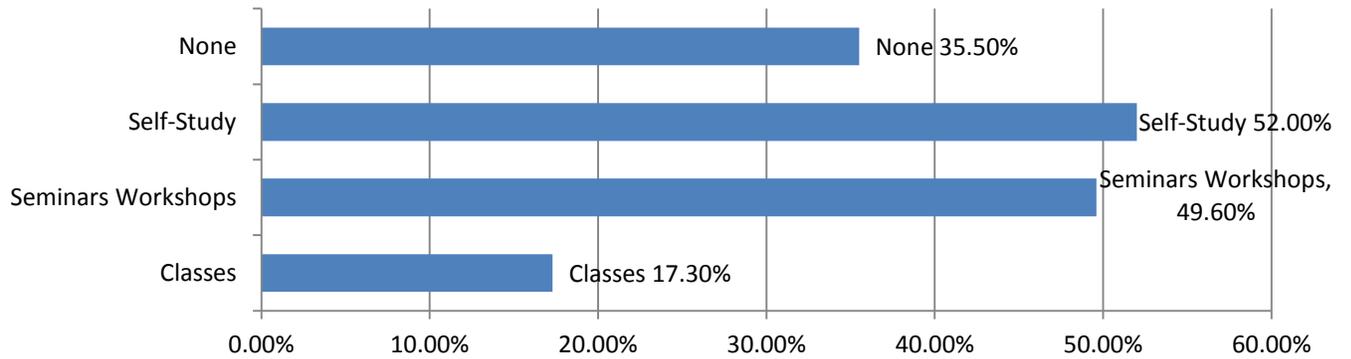
11.) If you continue your management education how do you usually receive it? (Check all that apply.)

    a.   Formal Classwork

    b.   Conferences.

    c.   Training Seminars.

    d.   Webinars and online education.

    e.   Self-study.
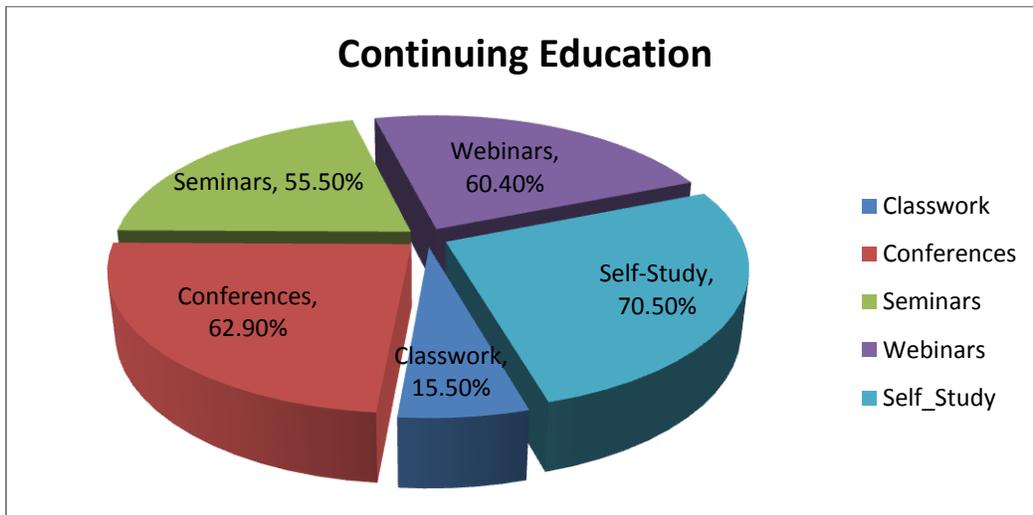
12.) Do you think library school today is properly training new librarians for the management

duties/issues they will face in the working world?

    a. Yes   14.4%

    b. No   40.0%

    c. Unknown   45.6%

13.) If your answer to the previous question was "No" could you give us some examples of

topics/issues/training that are being neglected? 426 Responses

    *These responses will be analyzed in a later article.

14.) Is there anything else you would like to comment on about how library school prepared you to be a

manager? 392 Responses

15.) If you would like to receive the results of the survey and article, or if you would like the authors to

contact you, please leave your email address and a quick note about your interests. 167 Responses