

**Department of Information Science
Graduate School of Education
University at Buffalo**

Employer Survey

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Employer Survey: Spring 2023 Executive Summary

The survey was sent out on February 9, 2023 via a link included in an email (see Appendix for a copy of the email) either directly or via listserv to potential employers of graduates of the University at Buffalo Department of Library and Information Studies programs. The survey comprised 15 questions, many of which were multiple-choice or open ended when appropriate, asking for the respondents' feedback on certain issues. The survey closed on February 22, 2023.

Although several emails were sent directly to employers, some invitations were sent out via listservs. The number of respondents who answered the first question was 108, but only 18% (19) of these respondents had hired a program graduate in the past three years. The remaining 82% were immediately presented with a closing screen thanking them for their participation. Those who had hired a graduate within the specified time frame were presented with an additional 14 questions. Of those questions, the maximum of 19 was reached for most questions, with the rest of the questions receiving answers from fewer than this number as indicated in the detailed information included below. This report includes the number of different responses to all of the questions, shown in bar graphs, tables or lists of comments as appropriate. Following is a brief summary of the major findings:

Questions 2 through 4 sought information about the employers themselves. All 19 respondents provided details about the institutions/organizations where they work: 63% work in public libraries, 21% work in academic libraries, and the rest work in school libraries, health sciences libraries, or other organizations. Question 3 was optional and allowed respondents to put more specific information about themselves and their company, including name, email address, phone number, and the address of the company. For the sake of anonymity, their responses for that question do not appear in the report.

Questions 5 through 14 asked about the UB IS/SL students hired by the employer with the last question (Q15) providing an opportunity for additional comments. Response rates were high for these questions, even on the open-ended questions (Q7, Q11, Q12, Q14). Of the positions for which respondents had hired UB IS graduates, 74% (14) were for entry-level, 16% (3) were at mid-level, none were for a senior position and 16% (3) chose "other", specifying that one graduate was hired as a librarian, one was hired as a part-time librarian, and the other was hired as a special collections librarian.

When asked if the employees had the knowledge and skills to perform successfully in the positions for which they were hired, fifteen of nineteen respondents (79%) were in the affirmative and four (21%) were in the negative. When asked to provide comments, all 19 responded, specifically praising technological skills while citing the need for developing professional skills such as conflict resolution and program planning. Three of nineteen respondents had hired UB IS graduates into non-professional positions (into administrative and temporary positions).

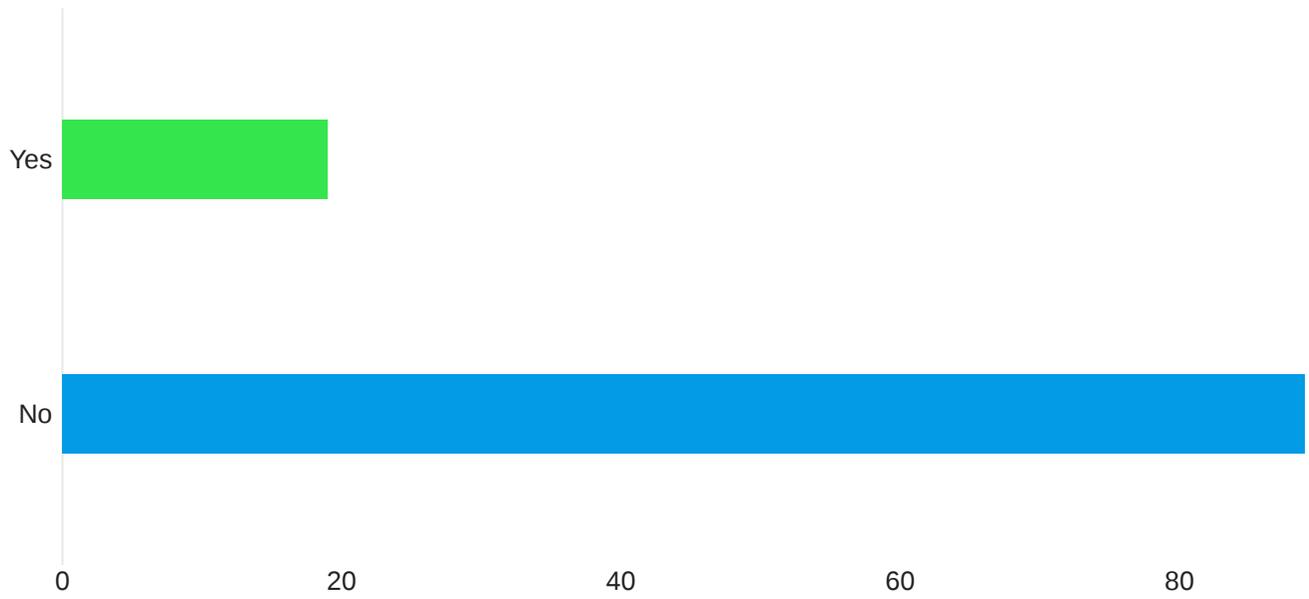
Questions 9 and 10 asked respondents to rate via a Likert scale qualities related to the program's fourth goal (although the goal itself was not explicitly mentioned) such as communication, leadership, and professional skills. Of the 19 responses for each question, the results were generally positive. The majority selected "always demonstrated this quality" or "sometimes demonstrated this quality," but there were a few IS graduates who did not meet expectations in some aspects. We highlight that respondents noted that for the quality of leadership, 31% (6) graduates "did not demonstrate this quality." Similarly, respondents indicated that 26% (5) did not model professional values and behaviors.

For Question 13, a question emphasizing the importance of providing students with the opportunity to gain practical experience during their program of study, we note that twelve out of nineteen respondents felt that IS graduates had a sufficient amount of professional preparation through practical and work experience for the positions into which they were hired.

Questions 7, 11, 12, 14, and 15 were all open-ended with varying responses so are not summarized here. Please see the full report for the response rate and full responses.

It is worth noting that multiple people sent in emails to provide feedback after they stated that they had not hired UB IS graduates in the last 3 years and thus were sent to the end of the survey. One respondent highlighted the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on libraries and information centers, stating that they have had to let go of a large portion of their staff and have not been able to hire UB IS graduates in the last few years, even though they would like to. Another respondent indicated the importance of professional skills development and helping students understand the difficulties of finding work after college, especially in light of the pandemic.

Q1 - Have you hired a graduate of the UB Information Science programs in the past three years?



Hiring	Choice Count
Yes	18% 19
No	82% 89
Total	108

Q2 - Role/position/title of person completing the survey:

Role/Position/Title	No. of Respondents
Library Director	6
Director	3
Librarian	2
CEO	1
Asst. Head of Reference	1
Associate Dean	1
Branch Manager	1
Research and Instruction Librarian	1
Research Assistant	1
School Library Media Specialist	1
Library Department Chairperson	1

Total: 19

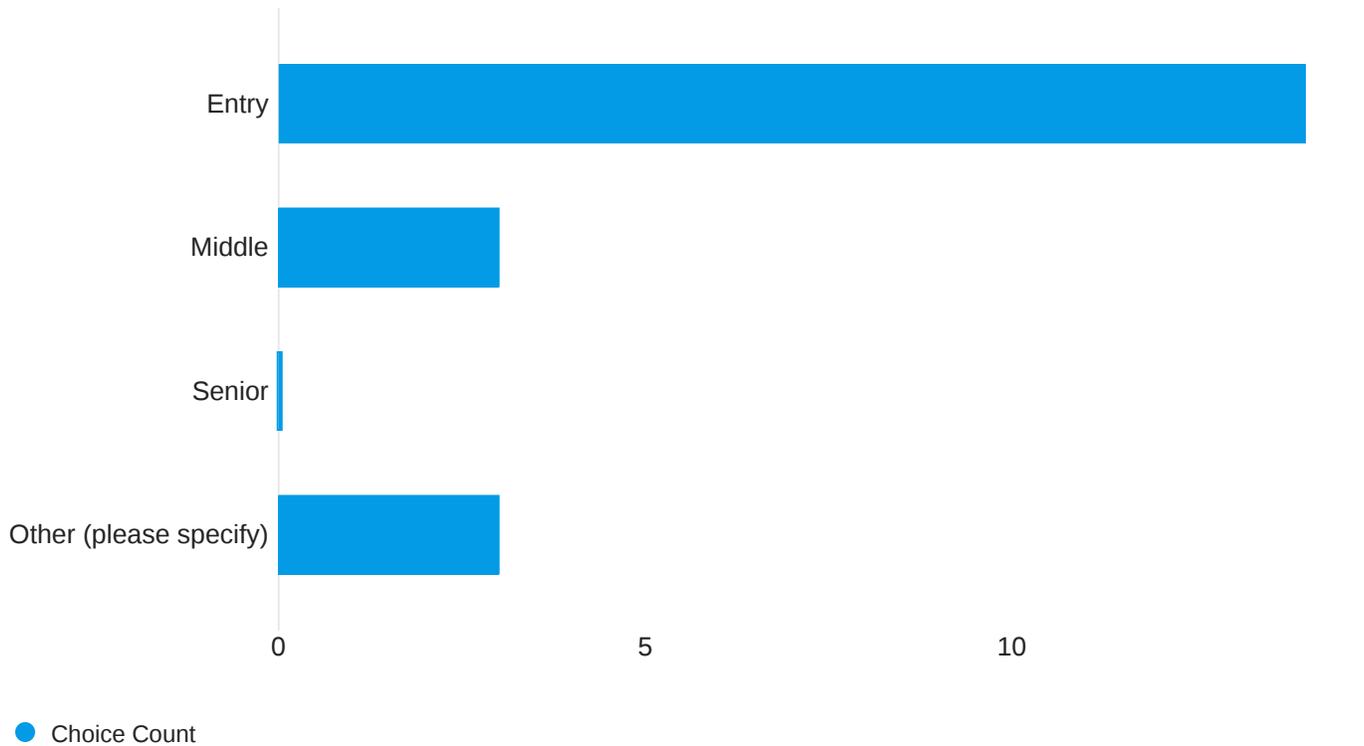
Q4 - What type of organization do you work in? Please select the option that best fits your organization.

Organization Type	Choice Count
Academic library	21% 4
Archives	0% 0
Computer industry	0% 0
Corporate library/information center	0% 0
Health sciences/medical library	5% 1
Information industry (e.g., information processing)	0% 0
Law library	0% 0
Library or information vendor	0% 0
Museum library	0% 0
Non-profit organization	0% 0
Public library	63% 12
School library	5% 1
Technology company	0% 0
Other (please specify)	5% 1
Total	19

Other (please specify):

Library/archive connected to a museum

Q5 - At what position levels were the UB IS graduates hired? (Check all that apply).



Position Level	Choice Count
Entry	74% 14
Middle	16% 3
Senior	0% 0
Other (please specify)	16% 3
Total	19

**Please note that the total shown corresponds to the number of respondents, and since respondents could select multiple options, the percentages may not add up to 100.

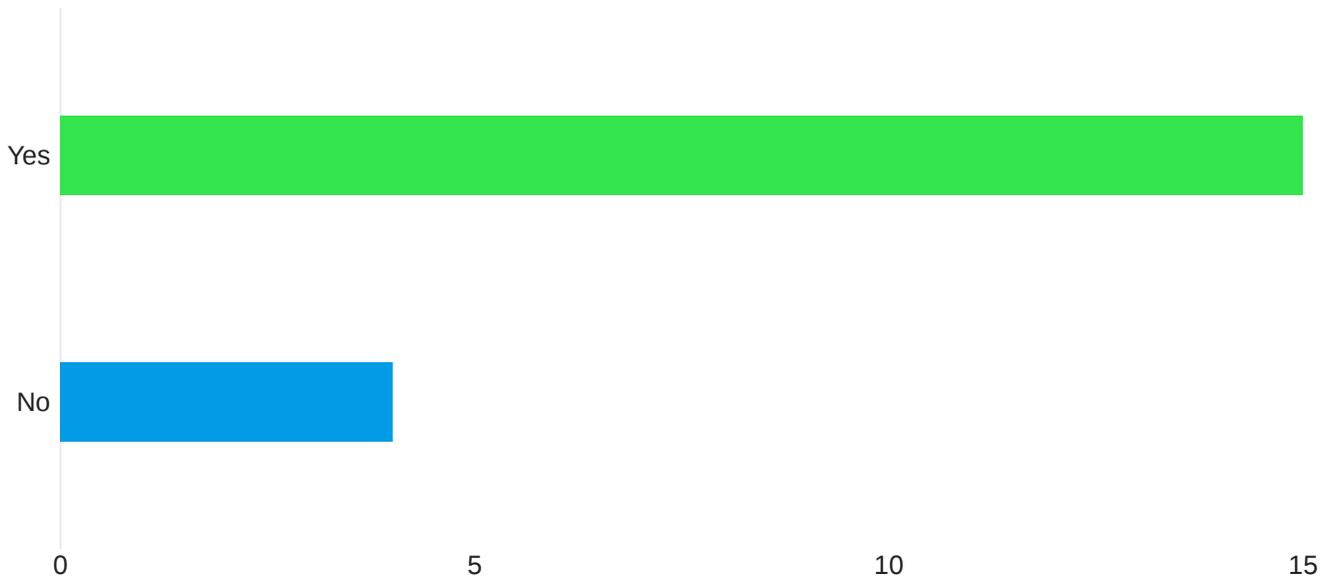
Other (please specify):

Special Collections Librarian

part time Lib 1

Librarian I

Q6 - Did the recent UB IS graduates you hired have the knowledge and skills to perform successfully in the positions for which they were hired?



Knowledge and Skills	Choice Count
Yes	79% 15
No	21% 4
Total	19

Q7 - Please comment on their knowledge and skills.

Graduate had already worked in our system as a Page. That was key.

The graduates who had some experienced in the working on public desks jumped in well. The new IS students needed more training in matching resources to outreach and programming.

This librarian is a music librarian and had done an internship with us. She is also doing digital work...she is less experienced at website maintenance but excels in information literacy, programming, supervising etc.

The UB IS graduate we hired to be a Special Collections Librarian has no experience with special collections. She also does not seem to like people or want to learn the skills necessary to do her job.

This staff has worked in other libraries in other capacities; so skills are vast & enhanced by UB.

The UB grads were completely lacking in the skills//knowledge needed to teach in a school.

Very little knowledge of balanced collections. Thought their personal politics trumped professionalism.

collection development, children's programming are excellent

good with technology, lacking in programming, training, and people managing skills

Was an online student, so did not have well developed people skills.

Good general preparation but thoroughly lacked the soft skills, managerial and leadership knowledge; is requiring a great deal of support and training to develop these skills.

The employee now teaches are technology classes.

The graduate gained a great deal of their knowledge and skills working at other libraries while she was in high school, an undergrad, and in graduate school.

great conflict resolution abilities

Seemed to lack knowledge of information literacy framework, instruction, and related topics.

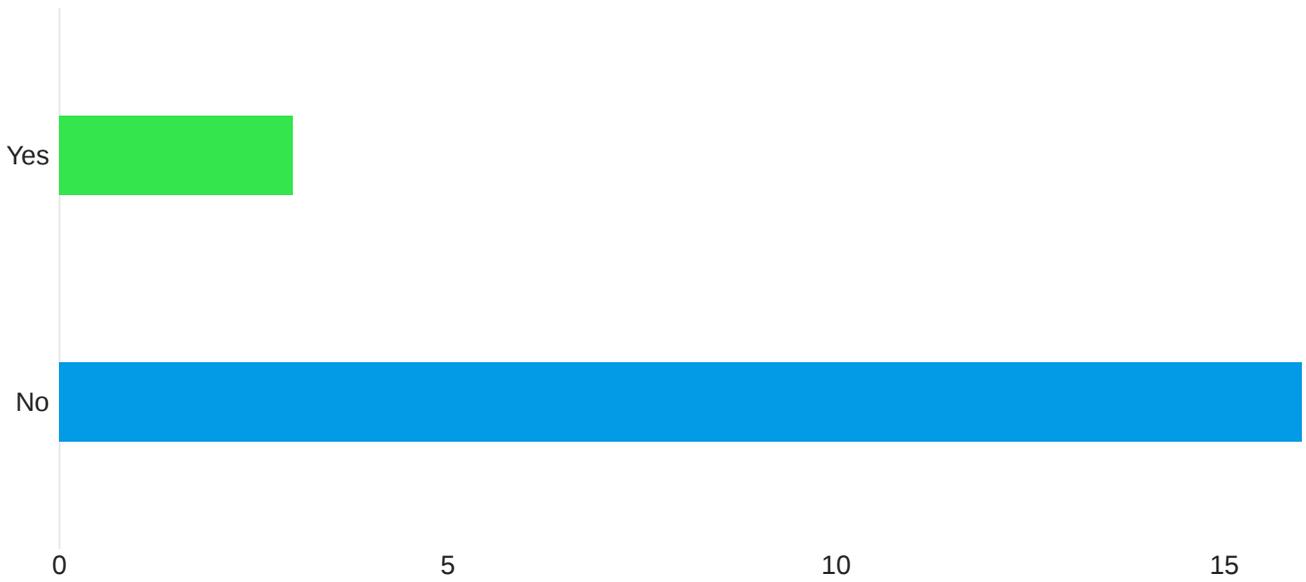
Building upon previous teaching experience obtained before their graduate program, they are able to perform classroom instruction, reference appointments, identify areas of growth and opportunity, take initiative to build community partnerships, identify continuing education opportunities

Very knowledgeable and more interested in theorizing than actual practical work.

High level skills, especially technology

I have two. One definitely had the skills and the other not as much.

Q8 - Have UB IS graduates been hired into non-professional positions at your company or organization?



Non-Professional Positions	Choice Count
Yes	16% 3
No	84% 16
Total	19

Q9 - UB IS graduates demonstrated:

Criteria	Always demonstrated this quality		Sometimes demonstrated this quality		Did not demonstrate this quality		Not applicable to position		Total
Ability to apply domain knowledge and skills required for the position	42.11%	8	47.37%	9	10.53%	2	0.00%	0	19
Leadership	21.05%	4	47.37%	9	31.58%	6	0.00%	0	19
Critical thinking	36.84%	7	42.11%	8	21.05%	4	0.00%	0	19
Inquiry/intellectual curiosity	47.37%	9	26.32%	5	21.05%	4	5.26%	1	19
Communication skills	36.84%	7	47.37%	9	15.79%	3	0.00%	0	19

Q10 - UB IS graduates can:

Criteria	Always demonstrated this quality		Sometimes demonstrated this quality		Did not demonstrate this quality		Not applicable to position		Total
Collaborate well with others	47.37%	9	36.84%	7	15.79%	3	0.00%	0	19
Engage in reflective practice	31.58%	6	63.16%	12	5.26%	1	0.00%	0	19
Adhere to ethical practice	68.42%	13	26.32%	5	5.26%	1	0.00%	0	19
Assume responsibility	47.37%	9	31.58%	6	21.05%	4	0.00%	0	19
Model professional values & behaviors	47.37%	9	26.32%	5	26.32%	5	0.00%	0	19

Q11 - What did you feel were the most relevant skills/theory/knowledge that UB IS graduates brought to your company/organization?

reader's advisory

The computer skills are very good learning the systems and operations of a public library is something they catch onto quickly.

Are flexible and willing to learn. Excellent in specialized Music librarianship and information literacy and outreach

Too soon to say;

Knowledge of library skills and databases.

That's difficult to answer.

Collection development

technology

Library theory

EDI, social engagement

Our employee technology skill set is very strong.

I can speak mostly to skills, and the graduate has excellent communication and organizational skills, which are highly useful skills in almost all aspects of their job.

background in social justice/ conflict resolution skills, and an ability to understand/empathize with other cultures

Navigating research tools, providing reference services, familiarity with new and emerging technology.

Ability to assess and respond to student needs, though this could be from prior teaching experience

Great ideas from other libraries and the skills necessary to bring them to this library

Very good reference desk skills, high level technology skills

Tech skills and skills related to advocacy and marketing

Q12 - Are there particular skills, knowledge, qualities, or attitudes that you expected from UB IS graduates that they apparently lacked, based on their performance at your company/organization?

Management, supervision, customer service skills, and how to handle challenging situations - "First Amendment Auditors", irate patrons, and patron medical emergencies.

More experience as public speakers and project/programing managers. Many are suprised how much they will be teaching how to use resources in a classroom/computer room setting and just advocating for the library

More web design knowledge and what to expect from day to day in the job. Less theory and more applied learning

Cataloguing experience, special collections experience, leadership qualities

Not at this point.

In addition to library skills (cataloging, collection development, etc), School Media Specialists need to be able to effectively teach.

I'd expect an ability to order what is in demand. Not difficult. Bookstore clerks can manage.

This hire is exemplary!

problem solving, initiative, strong work ethic

Ability to interact with the public on a professional level.

Lack of management / leadership skills, critical thinking, professional understanding of how libraries work and engage with the community.

I am surprised at how little this graduate and others I've worked with know about the basics of intellectual freedom, collection development, and policies and policy issues around things like community room use, displays, and events. This graduate and others I've talked to don't know the basic fields of a MARC record, why one might want to know that, and how that might help them searching databases. We've done internal training around these things.

too many "I love books" candidates. Not enough, I want to better peoples' lives candidates

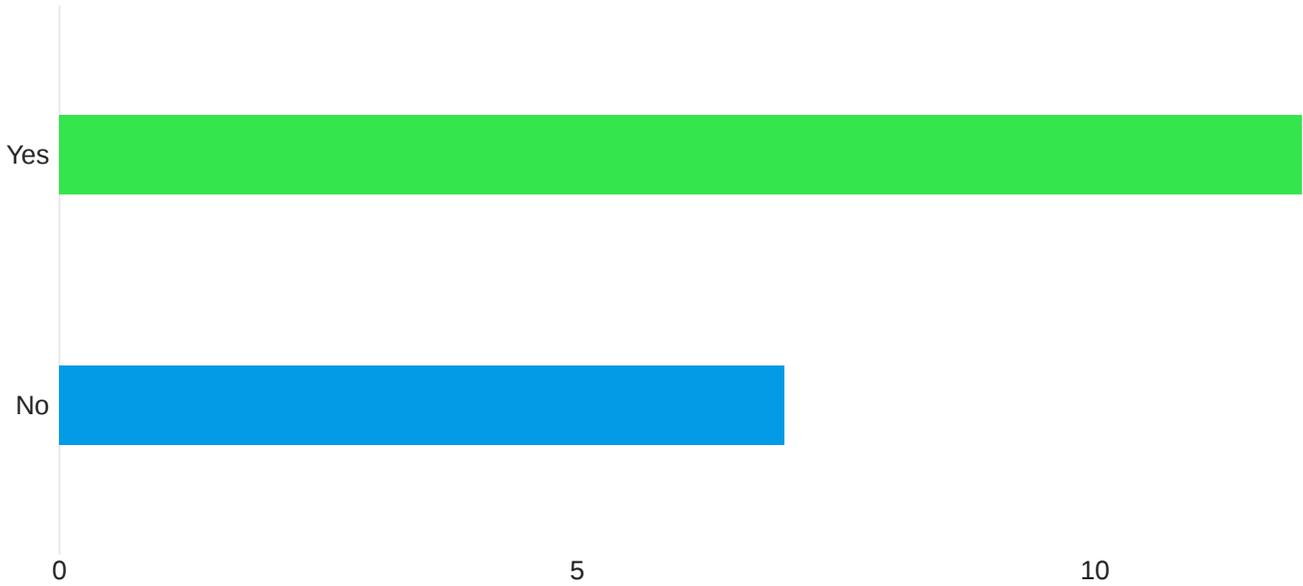
More hard skills such as programming experience, database management, foundational information literacy theories. Very heavy focus on equity and diversity, which should not be lessened so much as balanced with more data management skill sets

They did not seem prepared for the amount of work a Full-Time job required.

Professionalism, communication, responsibility

One lacked advocacy skills

Q13 - Do you feel that UB IS graduates had sufficient practical experience that may have been gained by a practicum, internship, or other work experience to prepare them for their role in your company/organization?



Practical Experience	Choice Count
Yes	63.16% 12
No	36.84% 7
Total	19

Q14 - Please elaborate on the previous question:

Practical experience is most important.

The practicums can be specific and sometimes isolating so working in a Public Library can still be missed. Interns or trainees I have worked with always received overviews that can show them lots of aspects on at a public library. One UB student just left Central as a Sr. Page to work at Niagara Falls as a Trainee. Though the Sr. Page position was non-professional he was on the floor and learned a lot more by helping and interacting in a Central City library. Glad he was chosen as a trainee he would get professional experience credit on the Civil Service exam that will help him in the future. I would recommend internships here at Central we can show the day to day (sometimes heart when you cant helpwork while letting students

The semester before graduate we did an internship specific to music librarianship. She has excelled here, but there is learning curve on how to take this knowledge and apply it more generally. It also took a while for them to adjust to the day-to-day job, and realizing that an Academic position is not 9-5

No special collections experience

As stated; they went to UB and joined us after working for 10+ years at other libraries.

The grads do not seem to know how to set up a lesson plan or how to effectively teach in a library.

A year or two working in bookstore would help students understand they serve a community, not an ideology.

This graduate worked as a librarian trainee prior to being hired as a librarian.

I would like to see a partnership with local libraries/UB IS to place students in a library to gain experience/credits...a natural win-win scenario

Employee had no practical library experience

See previous answers.

Graduate did have some previous experience at another library.

Yes, I think this graduate's work experience is what set them apart in the field of candidates for their job.

ones with the life skills to operate effectively outside their own culture do best.

Local graduates tend to have worked at libraries in other capacities (page, paraprofessional, etc.). Practicum or internship experiences help graduates as job candidates rank higher in hiring process over new graduates without.

Again much of this is a marriage of employee's previous professional experience. They are not a new professional or a stranger to high ed, so it's difficult to assess what was gained through the program and what was being built upon. But practicum experience did provide networking, so that was a plus

They seemed to have all the skills required to plan, prepare, and lead programs. They just lacked the motivation to do more than one or two at a time without being overwhelmed.

I think they were taught the skills, they just didn't understand that it takes time to become full time, etc.

Was familiar with libraries, not necessarily in this setting. UB is weak on the health sciences.

Q15 - Please provide any other comments or suggestions that you have about the curriculum of the UB IS programs that may help us better prepare graduates for professional employment at your organization.

We need graduates with people skills.

Learning what a community is comprised of and focusing on bringing resources that are beneficial. Also, programming and how to Network with the community. Knowing the resources and creating programs or just experience with bringing in agencies that serve the needs of the community.

Stress the importance of actually working in a library with internships. That not all interactions will be online, and work from home may not be possible. Also, librarians will not be able to sit and read all day, they need to be outgoing and will be, in smaller libraries, multitasking. Also, if they are interested in Academic librarianship, they will need to publish/present etc. This is not a 9-5 job. So more practical experience or using theoretical knowledge in practical situations. Also, they need to know typical sources. I've had to train all of my new librarians, except for a Magill graduate, on basic library resources (databases, world cat etc.)

I think that the program is an online one, but there should be a hands-on component to the program, if there isn't already. Students need to actually work with physical collections (especially special collections, archives, manuscripts, etc.) in order to care for them and to teach patrons how to work with the collections.

Appreciate you asking but I am not sure yet. This is our first experience with a UB grad but we have two other PT'ers who are in your program now.

The weakness of the UB program when it comes to School Media Specialists would be the teaching end of the profession. They also still need to be able to catalog as acquisitions occasionally come in that you cannot use copy cataloging with.

Even while I was a student at UB -- 30 years ago -- a student was allowed to remain in the program when they admitted in a public forum (An Introduction to Library Science course) that they'd censor if it would keep their board on their side.

If there is a track for public librarianship that curriculum should include some social work courses. Social work is a large part of being a librarian in a public library.

see previous answer

More work on online student development

Please remember that even though you are an I-School, I would guess over 70% of your graduates will end up working in a library and most of these positions are in managerial / leadership positions. The graduates (of all LIS programs) are poorly prepared in this regard. It is setting your students up to fail and causing the employer to do extra work to get the graduate up to speed to be effective in their position. Also, in addition to teaching them about EDI and engagement which they should be exposed to, teach them the practical ways that it is achieved and not the pie in the sky, full scale culture warrior philosophy that we are seeing in graduates. Not everyone is in a blue state and just because there are issues (as the graduate sees it) with a community, does not give them the right to initiate a hostile attack on the community. They have to work with the community to invoke change; not just yell at them for being bad. Give them practical skills to engage in change and in general to be leaders in the library and the community. This is a message that I and many of my colleagues have been sharing for many years with no response from programs or accrediting agencies. Many of us have had it and will be working to create our own programs to teach the skills we really need that you do not teach.

From a public libraries perspective, it would be helpful to have a robust public libraries course for students who intend to work in public libraries. I know there used to be a course like this at UB, but I don't think it's offered anymore. I can't help but think a course like this would be popular.

develop critical thinking skills related to overcoming adversity/ability to recognize their own prejudices

I would suggest adding a track that prepares graduates for "Systems Librarian"-type positions managing electronic resources/services/software, etc. I see there's consistently openings and I notice in our entry level college librarian applicants pool, almost none of them have relevant knowledge/experience/skills.

Equity and Diversity needs to be less conceptual and more hands-on, with measurable outcomes, and more integration of theory. Foundational concepts of information literacy should also be reinforced, as this is a term that's been used for decades yet most students don't have much experience hearing the term even during their own primary and secondary education. We should also be completely honest with students about the realities of public librarianship, how part-time work might not be counted towards a higher Civil Service score. Erie County should be more involved with the program and be completely transparent about what graduates will have to achieve in order to have a successful career in public librarianship.

As much hands on experience as possible.

Some of the soft skills are lacking, this is only based on one individual

E resource management is a must.

APPENDIX A: Invitation to Participate

Message Subject: University at Buffalo: Employer Survey

Date Sent: 2/9/2023, 11:19am

From: Kaufman, Shannen

Message Text:

Greetings from the Department of Information Science,

We need your feedback! We strive to continually improve our MS curriculum--for both the Information & Library Science and the School Librarianship programs--to ensure that our graduates are prepared to begin their careers in the ever changing library and information job market.

The perspectives of the employers of our graduates are critical to inform these improvements, and to assist our accreditation process. Please take 10 minutes to complete this online survey: https://ubgse.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3yFtTkiPypLR19M.

We would appreciate a response by **Wednesday, February 22**. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me (sakaufma@buffalo.edu), or the department chair, Dan Albertson (dalbert@buffalo.edu).

My apologies if you have already received this request through other channels. We appreciate your willingness to help us improve our program. If you know anyone who has employed UB graduates from the **Information & Library Science and/or School Librarianship** MS programs in the last 3 years, please feel free to send them the link to the survey.

Sincere thanks,

Shannen Kaufman
Assistant, Department of Information Science, University at Buffalo