An Examination of the Employment Scope of Recent Library and Information Science Masters Course Graduates in the Republic of Ireland

Dissertation submitted for the requirements of the MSc Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School

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Declaration: I, Daire O’Driscoll, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed: Daire O’Driscoll

Date: 21/08/2017
Abstract
The range of skills used by librarians on a day-to-day basis is continuously expanding due to constant developments in technology. As a result, recent LIS graduates need to be educated in a variety of skills in order to function as professionals in the modern day library environment.

The LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland, the Masters of Science Information and Library Management programme at Dublin Business School and the Masters in Library and Information Studies programme at University College Dublin, provide programmes which aim to train future LIS professionals with these required skills. Due to the aforementioned expansion of technology and the ever changing roles of librarians, the skills provided in these programmes are becoming ever more applicable to employment environments outside of the library sector. Both of these courses work to develop multi-skilled graduates, capable of securing employment both in the library and in a number of other organisation types that require the abilities of trained information professionals.

Based upon data gathered by means of a survey disseminated amongst graduates of LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland, this research will examine the scope of employment secured by these graduates, with the purpose of discovering what sectors recently qualified LIS professionals are currently seeking employment opportunities in.
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1. Introduction

Librarianship as a profession has always involved utilising a wide range of skills. From the historical perceptions of librarians as “guardians of truth” and libraries as “temples of knowledge” to a more modern understanding of librarians as information professionals, the profession has consistently pushed the individuals involved to assume a wide range of roles requiring multiple skills (Davis, 2008a, p. 59).

The range of skills utilised has continued to broaden since the 1990s, due to the rapid evolution of technology. Similarly to how libraries themselves have changed as institutions, the various roles of the staff working within them has also changed (Murray, 2014, p. 327).

In recent years there has been an increase in employment opportunities in environments outside of the library that are suited to employees possessing librarians’ skillsets. In the literature review of this proposal, some of these skillsets and environments will be discussed further.

In the Republic of Ireland there are currently 2 Library and Information Science (LIS) Masters courses available for individuals who wish to educate themselves with the skills involved in librarianship and to pursue a career within the profession. These courses are the Master of Science Information and Library Management programme at Dublin Business School and the Masters in Library and Information Studies programme at University College Dublin.

As will be examined in greater detail in the literature review of this dissertation, both courses aim to produce graduates educated in a broad range of topics, applicable to employment both in traditional librarianship and in a variety of other sectors that require the efficient management of information.

Modules included in these courses can be applied to work outside the traditional library environment, which for the purposes of this dissertation will refer to academic, public and school libraries, along with positions outside the library sector altogether. These programmes aim to produce LIS graduates who are equipped with skills which will enable them to pursue careers as both librarians and information professionals, inside and outside of the library sector.
This research primarily intends to assess the scope of employment opportunities successfully secured by recent graduates of these courses, both full-time and part-time, to determine whether the majority of LIS graduates are seeking employment inside or outside of the library sector, or taking advantage of opportunities in both. In conducting this research, this dissertation also aims to determine recent LIS graduates’ opinions on a number of topics, including the transferability of their skillsets to employment outside of the library sector and whether there are opportunities that exist for LIS graduates which they do not regularly apply for.

**Research Question:**

What is the scope of employment for graduates from LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland who have graduated since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive?

**Sub Questions:**

What employment roles have recent LIS graduates secured within the library sector?

Are there particular subjects studied during their LIS Masters course that graduates believe are or are not transferable to employment opportunities outside of the library sector?

Are there any subjects which LIS graduates feel should be added to the syllabus of future LIS programmes?

Are there employment opportunities outside of the library sector that LIS graduates believe they are capable of securing, which they are not applying for?

In conducting this research, I hope to examine whether LIS graduates in Ireland are maximising emerging opportunities in industries outside of the traditional library for which they might possess the relevant skills, or whether the majority of LIS graduates are pursuing careers within the library sector.
Additionally, I wish to examine what type of roles LIS graduates have secured when they have pursued a career within the library sector. Through this research I intend to examine whether completing their LIS course has enabled graduates to secure a professional role within the library sector.

This research intends to analyse the range of skills graduates from these LIS programmes feel they were equipped with and how they have applied them professionally. The research aims to determine what environments and organisations these individuals have worked in since graduating and whether they have found their education applicable to different employment sectors. This research will also assess how frequently graduates have attempted to find employment outside of the library sector and examine the reasoning behind their decisions, questioning whether graduates have an awareness of their own potential for working beyond this environment. Finally, this research intends to question whether there are skills that recent LIS graduates feel they have lacked when seeking employment opportunities outside of the library sector and whether there are any subjects which they believe it would be beneficial for future LIS courses to include in their syllabuses.

There is already a significant amount of existing research and literature regarding the changing roles of librarians in recent history. However, this research will introduce new information as it will deal with a specific group of library and information professionals who have graduated since the academic year 2011/2012 inclusive and focus solely on graduates from the Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland.

Practical benefits of this research may include DBS and UCD being able to produce documentation of positions graduates have filled after completing their courses. This may contribute to these educational institutions generating future business, as it may be possible to advertise their LIS programmes by displaying a range of roles secured by former students. It may also be beneficial to these schools if it serves to highlight particular topics or modules of the courses that have proven especially useful for graduates once they began seeking employment.

This research may also be of benefit to the LIS profession if it demonstrates that graduates of a librarianship course have successfully sought opportunities outside the library sector and to what extent they have maintained careers there. This may encourage the profession to
consider how it markets itself and encourage other individuals in the profession to widen their scope when considering career options. As discussed in the literature reviewed below, there is significant thought given to theories that librarians’ self-perception can have a limiting effect on the employment positions they believe they are capable of pursuing. Therefore, it is important for the profession, in terms of marketing and utilising skillsets, that librarians are taking advantage of opportunities beyond the library sector and that there is an awareness of the variety of employment potential for recent LIS graduates.

This dissertation will begin by discussing the literature reviewed which contributed to the research conducted. It will continue by explaining the methodology that was used to complete the research in question. This dissertation will then examine the analysis of the data gathered and the conclusions that can be drawn from it. This dissertation will conclude with a section reflecting on the personal learning experiences undergone while completing this LIS Masters and the writing of this dissertation.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review Introduction

This chapter will discuss the literature reviewed before this primary research was conducted. This chapter will begin by discussing the variety of skills that librarians’ utilise regularly as suggested by existing literature. It will continue by examining the applicability of these skillsets to work environments outside the traditional library environment and the library sector. This chapter will then review literature considering whether there are perceptions within the librarian profession that prevents librarians from seeking employment outside of the library environment. This chapter will conclude by reviewing the content and aims of the LIS courses in Dublin Business School and University College Dublin. It will discuss how these courses aim to provide graduates with the necessary, aforementioned skillsets for seeking employment both inside and outside of the library sector.

2.2 Literature Review Theme 1 – Skills Possessed by Modern Librarians

As a result of the aforementioned changing of libraries as institutions in recent decades, and the roles of the staff within them, librarians have had to develop a skillset suited to modern technology and the resultant changing needs of users. These skills, as suggested by the literature discussed below, are extremely varied and have a number of wide-ranging applications.

Tara Murray proposes that while the core values of libraries have not changed significantly, the specific roles they play within their communities have evolved. While a number of traditional library roles have disappeared completely, flexible librarians have survived by assuming new responsibilities (Murray, 2014, p. 327). Murray suggests that “today’s … librarians are managing intranets, digitizing collections, creating archives, synthesizing and analysing information, and embedding themselves in project teams” (Murray, 2014, p. 328).

Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh identify a number of further skills that modern library and information professionals are using, including IT skills and team-working skills (Hazeri,
Sarrafzadeh and Martin, 2007, pp. 168–175). They state that in a world where organisations are increasingly dependent on turning information into knowledge, librarians and information professionals are consistently required to utilise knowledge management skills and collaborate in the knowledge management community (Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh, 2006, p. 15). Katy Mahraj suggests that in acting as a professional providing educational information, librarians’ roles are often as diverse as “tutor, mentor, coach, navigator, consultant, collection developer, knowledge manager, instructional designer and participant” (Mahraj, 2012, p. 365).

A further variety of skills utilised by modern librarians as suggested by the literature examined includes research skills, providing information literacy instruction, information evaluation, managing human resources and managing network resources (Gordon, 2003, pp. 40–41), (Foutch, 2016, p. 80), (Andretta, 2005, p. 37).

The literature reviewed for this proposal is generally unanimous in the consideration that modern librarianship involves utilising a vast array of skills, along with consistently improving existing skills and developing further ones. Although some of these skills may be utilised more specifically by particular departments within librarianship (e.g. a teaching librarian would require more knowledge of information literacy instruction than a systems librarian), the suggestion remains that for the majority of modern librarians it is necessary to have a certain basic, working understanding of a wide range of different skillsets.

2.3 Literature Review Theme 2 – Transferability of Librarians’ Skills

The second theme of this chapter is to examine the literature that considers whether the skills discussed in the previous theme are transferable for use in working environments both outside the traditional library environment and outside of the library sector.

Katy Mahraj proposes that:

It is a truth not yet universally acknowledged that a venture based on information must be in want of a librarian. Librarians offer expertise in organizing and managing information, clarifying and supporting people’s information needs, and enhancing people’s information literacy skills. There
are innumerable endeavours today in education, health, business, government, and other domains that draw heavily on information resources (Mahraj, 2012, p. 360).

In her paper on the role played by an academic librarian in a faculty research team conducting a study on mental health and nutrition, Leslie Foutch discusses the advantages of the librarian working with other departments outside of the library. She identifies resulting benefits for both the librarian and the larger educational institution. Foutch notes that the faculty stated that having a librarian on the medical research team made the project more efficient. She concludes that it is imperative for librarians to demonstrate their values beyond the traditional core library services of the past (Foutch, 2016, pp. 80–83).

Derek Law discusses how the majority of large, modern organisations possess vast quantities of information and records which constantly need to be accessed, appraised and preserved by employees with specialist expertise (Law, 2014, p. 202). The literature reviewed above indicates that librarians are equipped with this type of expertise, suggesting that well-trained librarians should be in a position to realistically consider applying for roles at a wide range of organisations.

Hannah Spring proposes that librarians, specifically working in the health environment, should use their skills to become involved with the delivery of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). She states that this role is suited to those with librarians’ training, as MOOCs generate large quantities of information and librarians “at the simplest level, have the capacity to connect people with information” (Spring, 2016, p. 86). Spring also highlights how information literacy skills are essential for navigating the distribution of MOOCs across networks. She identifies the effective provision of information for people who need to manage their health as an emerging area in which the skills identified with librarianship can be utilised (Spring, 2016, p. 86). Not only can librarians provide an important service in the health sector through working in hospital or health record libraries, but they can contribute to the dissemination of important health information through other roles and methods. Similarly, MOOCs can be used to educate and provide information on almost any subject, so the transferable nature of librarians’ skills can be applied to a considerable number of different organisation types providing such courses.
Rachel Singer Gordon argues that many librarians who have assumed responsibility for computer technology in their libraries have had a limited amount of formal training in information technologies, but that their traditional library skills have prepared them with a background which makes them suited to assuming a role as systems personnel. She notes that many who have assumed the role of systems librarian in an institution have emerged from varied careers within librarianship (Gordon, 2003, pp. 1–4). If the applicability of librarianship skills here to a role closely related to information technology work is accurately portrayed, then it is perhaps not unreasonable to consider that graduates from courses such as those of DBS and UCD, which feature a significant focus on developing technological skills, may be able to apply the knowledge gained to other roles outside of the library sector, that require both technical skills and the management of information.

Further environments identified by the literature reviewed in which individuals who possess librarian skills can provide an effective service include areas as diverse as working in museum curation, providing support data for heritage site visitor centres and working in publishing and editing (Koot, 2001, p. 253), (Schuman, 1990, p. 88).

Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh write that many of the skills possessed by LIS graduates, such as information organisation, retrieval and analysis, along with competencies in user interaction and communication, are certainly valuable. However, their research suggests that LIS courses need to provide graduates with a greater level of business and management content, in order for LIS professionals to be fully equipped with the skills required for seeking employment outside traditional LIS environments (Hazeri, Sarrafzadeh and Martin, 2007, pp. 181–182).

Nonetheless, the majority of the literature reviewed suggests that there is work available for library professionals in a variety of fields outside of the library sector, due to the transferable nature of skills that many modern librarians possess.
2.4 Literature Review Theme 3 – Librarians’ Limiting Perception of their own Professional Potential

A certain amount of the literature reviewed indicates that library professionals are reluctant to risk embracing many of the potential opportunities in the different work sectors discussed in literature review theme 2. Although there is a significant amount of literature examining inaccurate external perceptions of librarianship as a profession, this theme intends to discuss how there may also be a certain limiting perception of the profession from within it.

As far back as 1990, Patricia Schumann stated that:

The image of the librarian engenders frequent discussion within the profession, but the focus is too often limited … The critical problem is a lack of awareness about what it is librarians can do. The increasing value placed on information offers an unparalleled opportunity to present the case for librarians (Schuman, 1990, p. 86).

Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh write that LIS professionals labour under a self-imposed handicap in seeking to exploit opportunities (Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh, 2006, p. 15). Murray argues that the biggest barrier to librarians’ contribution to the competitive intelligence industry (gathering, analysing, distributing intelligence to support decision-making in an organisation – work that is suited to individuals with the skillsets discussed in theme 1) is a perception by themselves that they lack the required business knowledge and analytical skills, even though they have a unique skillset to bring to the industry (Murray, 2014, pp. 332–333). She states that librarians must not be attempting to maintain control over lower level tasks that they may traditionally have been assigned to, but instead seize opportunities to take on roles seen by management as crucial and irreplaceable to organisations (Murray, 2014, p. 335).

Konsta and Gerolimos propose that many of the challenges that face librarians concerning the skills required for employment in the digital world are related to skills already traditionally possessed by librarians. They suggest that the most important aspect of changing with the modern world for librarians is to be able to adapt existing skills and the ability to remain
flexible in a working environment that is constantly changing (Gerolimos and Konsta, 2008, pp. 9–10).

In reference to leadership qualities in librarianship, Sue Roberts and Jennifer Rowley suggest that the library and information profession has been too narrow-minded and that the staff involved must examine the variety of skills and intelligences they utilise to undertake their work. To instigate a change in this self-perception they propose that a mental shift within the profession is necessary (Roberts and Rowley, 2008, p. 8). This lack of awareness of skills and abilities may be further indicative of a limiting self-perception.

Steve O’Connor writes that at times of extreme change and challenge within the library profession, entirely different perspectives are needed. He states that the library profession can have very narrow views which can “straightjacket the whole profession” (O’Connor, 2007, p. 64). Davis suggests that there is a deep insecurity and anxiety at the heart of the library profession. She writes that librarians have a negative self-image which “underscores their perception of their work, their perception of their workplaces and their perception of how their clients and the wider public value their professional contribution.” She concludes that the image the world may have of librarians will only change if librarians’ self-image changes first (Davis, 2008b, pp. 73–74).

Therefore, the literature reviewed gives serious consideration to this limiting self-perception. Despite the skillsets possessed by many librarians and their applicability to a wide range of environments, discussed in literature themes 1 and 2, there seems to be a serious possibility that librarians themselves are failing to take advantage of opportunities due to a limited perception of their own abilities. In an age when information is perhaps the most valuable commodity, librarians should be aware of themselves as professionals educated to solve education problems (Schuman, 1990, p. 87).
2.5 Literature Review Theme 4 – Course Content and Aims of the DBS and UCD LIS Masters Courses

The Master of Science (MSc) Information and Library Management programme at Dublin Business School (DBS) presents the following aims:

The programme is designed for graduates of all disciplines wishing to pursue a career in Information & Library Management on a professional level. The programme also enables existing library personnel to obtain a professional library qualification for promotional purposes (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).

Since 2014, the programme has been accredited by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). It awards a level 9 qualification from the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The course aims to provide graduates who complete it with the professional knowledge and competencies required within the information and library sector. The programme’s page on the DBS website states that graduates are equipped with “a rigorous academic foundation in and a systematic understanding of the principles, theory and application of information and library management incorporating a contemporary skill set central to the profession” (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).

The course aims to help graduates in attaining the ability to solve practical and complex problems within a variety of information and library environments. The programme additionally works towards providing graduates with knowledge and competencies that are transferrable to real world employment settings, through assessment of both individual and group-work projects (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).


The programme provides a technical and applied approach to delivery, with the intention of producing ready-to-work graduates. Students study theory and literature but also download

The MSc also includes a mandatory, credit-bearing 3-week work placement in a library and/or information management setting. Placements secured for previous students completing the programme include the libraries of the Irish Film Institute, National College of Ireland, Arthur Cox Solicitors, Dublin Dental Hospital, NUI Maynooth, RTÉ and the Irish Hospice Foundation. Once a student has successfully completed their classes, exams and work experience, they progress to the final dissertation stage of the programme where they gain practical experience in conducting research (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).

Applicants for the course must hold a minimum Second Class Honours Degree (2.2) in a Level 8 award in any discipline from a recognised third level institution. The full-time programme consists of 10 modules taught in 1 academic year, over 2 semesters. Students can also undergo a part-time commencement of the course, delivered over 4 taught semesters during week-day evenings (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).

The programme works towards producing graduates who can progress to fill roles as library managers, systems librarians, reader services managers, collection development managers, institutional repository managers and teaching librarians in a variety of settings, such as the medical, legal and public sectors. Graduates should also be qualified for information management roles in the corporate sector, such as records management and creation, management and promotion of digital content (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).

Graduates of the MSc at DBS have progressed to secure positions in a range of libraries and information services including Trinity College Dublin, An Bord Pleanála, Dublin Dental Hospital, the National College of Ireland and other large organisations such as Amazon. The DBS Careers Department states that, according to a recent survey, wider IT and business companies would be interested in recruiting graduates from the MSc, due to the IT and management involved in the completion of the course (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017).
The Masters in Library and Information Studies (MLIS) programme at University College Dublin (UCD) is “... designed to prepare university graduates for careers as information or library professionals.” (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017).

The UCD course aims to provide graduates with a wide range of careers in the information environment, including librarianship, along with providing graduates with the opportunity to gain experience in conducting research (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017). Recent graduates mentioned by the programme website have progressed to careers as chief information officers, library directors and knowledge managers (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017).


This programme also awards a level 9 qualification from the NFQ. The UCD MLIS programme offer options for both full-time and part-time undertaking of the course. Applicants for the course must hold a minimum of a primary degree in any subject with an overall score of 2.1
or higher (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017).

Instead of work experience following the conclusion of the final semester, the UCD MLIS requires potential students to have completed a minimum of 6 weeks of work experience prior to the commencement of the programme (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017). Graduates from the UCD MLIS have progressed to work in traditional librarianship positions, along with pursuing careers in other sectors as information managers, social media analysts and data analysts (Developing the professionals of the future, 2016, p. 14).

It is clear from the information presented by these LIS programmes that they intend to provide graduates with skills that will enable them to be capable of successfully pursuing employment in the library sector and in the wider modern information environment. Both of these courses provide graduates with a significant range of education in different subject types and skillsets. Many of these subjects and skills are the same, or closely related, to those referenced in the first 2 themes of this literature review, e.g. research skills, IT, digitisation, elements of instruction or teaching, managing network resources, archiving and records management, generally creating, synthesising and organising information. The suggestion of the literature provided by the college websites is that graduates of these Masters courses should possess skillsets that enable them to be valuable additions to a team of staff both inside and outside of the library sector, in a variety of organisation types where information needs to be managed.

Additionally, both of these Masters course contain modules directed at providing graduates with a greater knowledge of management than librarianship courses would traditionally have included, along with facilitating education in transferable professional skills such as leadership, advocacy, and general communication. Perhaps this is in reaction to LIS graduates traditionally not possessing sufficient skills in terms of management, highlighted by the research of Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh discussed earlier in the literature review (Hazeri, Sarrafzadeh and Martin, 2007, pp. 181–182). This may be a further indication that LIS courses intend to increase the likelihood of their graduates being capable of pursuing roles beyond traditional librarianship and outside of the library sector. The DBS MSc Information and

### 2.6 Literature Review Conclusion

This chapter considered the literature reviewed in preparation for undertaking this research. It began by examining the different skills that modern librarians possess. This chapter continued by looking at the transferable nature of these skills to different employment sectors outside of the library sector. It continued by discussing the content and aims of the LIS Masters courses in DBS and UCD. This chapter concluded by examining how these courses aim to provide their graduates with transferable and wide-ranging skillsets that should assist them in becoming suitable candidates for seeking employment both inside and outside of the library sector.
3. Methodology

3.1 Methodology Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology involved in carrying out the research conducted for this dissertation. It will begin by examining the research philosophies, approaches and strategies adopted for this research. This chapter will continue by discussing the group of respondents selected for sampling, before examining the methods of collecting and analysing the research data. This chapter will conclude by considering potential ethical issues or limitations involved in completing this research.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

The primary philosophy adopted for the purpose of this dissertation was positivism. This dissertation and the questions it asks, evolved from theories and ideas that were developed as different literature was reviewed. I believe this approach was the most suitable for this research topic due to there being a reasonable amount of existing literature on the subjects discussed. As highlighted by the literature review, there are a significant number of works related to librarians’ skillsets, the applicability of these skillsets to other work environments and possible reasons for librarians not taking advantage of these opportunities. However, there has not been published research regarding these subject as they apply to the specific group of graduates that I have selected for my target population – namely graduates from the DBS and UCD LIS Masters courses who have graduated since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive. Therefore, the most suitable research philosophy to adopt was to review the existing work related to the research topic, in order to generate new ideas, theories and questions, before applying them specifically to the demographic I am focusing on (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 15).

Positivism is further suited to this research due to the main focus being on quantifiable data that lends itself to statistical analysis. The data was gathered through an online survey and in
the form of measurable statistics that can be processed to form deductions (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 43–44).

This research also followed the positivism philosophy by adopting an impartial, objective approach. The research question was not posed with the intent of gathering data to support any particular opinion or prove that recent LIS graduates are finding employment in one sector more than they are in any other. The aim was to collect observations in an objective manner that did not seek to prove pre-existing theories regarding the employment scope of these LIS graduates (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 15). The research conducted was open to exploring any different patterns or theories that the analysis of the respondents’ data suggested (Saunders, 2012, p. 134).

This research also adopted elements of the interpretivist philosophy. The questionnaires completed by respondents included several open ended questions as follow-up stages to closed questions. These were intended to allow respondents to elaborate on their opinions. Through this method of interaction with respondents it was possible to gather more information of an individualistic nature. These opportunities to provide essay style responses allowed participants to explain why they had answered the closed questions as they had, often resulting in more in-depth data than a closed question alone would have afforded (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 16). This allowed a greater value to be placed on information relating to why particular individuals chose certain career paths and their opinions on the librarian profession, offering insight into experiences inside the library sector from LIS graduates (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 44–45). Saunders says it is important to “… explore the subjective meanings motivating the actions of social actors in order for the researcher to be able to understand these actions” (Saunders, 2012, p. 137).

### 3.2.2 Research Approach

The primary research approach adopted for this dissertation was deductive. This approach was the most suitable for this research, as the methodology was planned in advance of contacting potential respondents. The research question was developed and strategies were chosen to examine it, based upon questions generated in the process of reviewing the existing literature. This resulted in the questionnaire that was disseminated to the target population.
Once a sufficient foundation of literature was reviewed and aims for the research developed, a planned methodology was structured based upon the time available for conducting this research, with the intention of sticking to a planned schedule as closely as possible (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 27), (Saunders, 2012, p. 145).

As previously mentioned, the research conducted was objective. There was no intention to prove a particular point or to lend support to a specific theory. Rather this research aimed to produce objective information based upon an unbiased analysis of the data gathered (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 27).

However, this research was also conducted in a manner that remained open to the possibility of elements of an inductive approach being ideal in certain situations. During the process of gathering and analysing the data, new and unanticipated theories were developed based upon some of the more unexpected findings. This research project was open to the possibility that the data gathered may contribute to the development of new ideas that were not generated or given due consideration in the literature review. For this research, an openness to new theories and ideas was particularly applicable to the open-ended questions, where respondents often provided data related to personal opinions and thoughts that could not have been suggested or pre-empted by the literature reviewed (Saunders, 2012, p. 146).

3.2.3 Research Strategy

For the purpose of this dissertation, the research strategy of conducting a survey was used to gather mostly quantitative data. The majority of information gathered for this research was in response to closed questions, based upon employment opportunities and career paths considered by the graduates. Many of these questions required a simple Yes/No answer or a limited multiple choice selection to be made by respondents. This type of data lent itself to quantitative statistical analysis rather than qualitative analysis.

This research strategy of using a survey was ideal for the circumstances of this dissertation. Only a limited time period (approximately 3 months) was available to prepare questions, design a practical survey, contact potential participants, gather the respondents’ data, analyse the data and write up the findings. Therefore, surveying seemed the most suitable
strategy, as it was the most practical method of collecting data from as many participants as possible in a relatively brief period of time. This provided the possibility of gathering a wider range of data than other more time consuming methods that may not have allowed for making contact with as great a number of potential respondents (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, p. 221).

During the proposal for this research project, consideration was given to conducting a select number of interviews in order to gather qualitative data from individuals who have a history of working closely with the LIS courses in question, e.g. programme leaders, lecturers, etc. This was with the intention of gaining a more rounded view of the experience of recent LIS graduates. However, at a later stage the research focus was narrowed so that the target population was reduced to include only LIS course graduates. Nonetheless, it was preferable to include a certain amount of qualitative data so that respondents could express opinions more effectively than with the opportunities afforded by closed questions. As there was not sufficient time to conduct interviews along with conducting the survey, the questionnaire included open-ended question sections, along with an option at the end of the questionnaire for respondents to add any further thoughts or comments.

This qualitative data provided more fully-rounded answers than the quantitative data alone. This mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research, enabled a more complete picture to be drawn and allowed access to a greater range of data (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 28), (Sale et al (mixed-methods) 2002.pdf, no date, p. 44), (Mason, 2006, p. 2006). This contributed to the data analysis process, providing a clearer understanding of why individual respondents had answered particular questions the way they had, as opposed to simply adding the quantitative figures generated by their answers to the larger body of data.

3.3 Sampling – Selecting Respondents

The sampling section for this research was relatively straightforward due to the nature of the research question. Respondents were all graduates of the DBS MSc Information and Library Management and the UCD Masters in Information and Library Studies, who have graduated since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive, from both the full-time and part-time streams. As
this dissertation only sought to gather data from the graduates of these particular courses from a certain limited number of years there was no need to consider any further sample population. I was able to identify the entire main population so it was not necessary for this research that I determined a specific representative sample population (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 51).

I contacted staff involved with the LIS programmes in both DBS and UCD in order to determine how many students in total had graduated from each course since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive. This was done with the intention of being able to determine how reflective of the larger population the data gathered from the completed questionnaires I received would be. I was informed that a total of 37 students have graduated from the DBS MSc Information and Library Management since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive. I was not provided with any exact figures regarding the UCD Masters in Library and Information Studies but was given a rough estimate of 200 graduates as a number to work from.

I attempted to contact as many of these graduates as possible, both full-time and part-time. As I could identify the entire population I was able to use probability sampling. I hoped that I would receive responses from a majority of the population but was confident that, if I did not, I would still be able to infer reasonably accurate data, reflective of the larger group, from the answers provided by those that did respond (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 175–180), (Saunders, 2012, p. 262).

3.4 Data Collection

The method of data collection utilised for this research was a self-administered, internet-mediated questionnaire. Setting a limited amount of questions, both closed and open-ended, assisted with establishing a structure for the analysis, providing data that was ready to be measured and analysed. See Appendix 1 for the full list of the survey questions.

I designed and disseminated this questionnaire using the free software available through the SurveyPlanet website (SurveyPlanet, 2017). In using this method of data collection I hoped to reach as large a number of the population as possible in the limited time available (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, pp. 228–229).
I assumed that a number of graduates may no longer be in Dublin, or even Ireland. Using an internet-mediated questionnaire allowed the possibility of making contact with those who have moved abroad and may be in different time zones. This proved to be the case, as the final body of respondents included graduates currently living in England, North America and Asia.

An internet-mediated questionnaire is more appropriate than one delivered by post. The postage costs of contacting graduates in different locations would be high, along with potentially meaning a longer time waiting for responses. Attempting to conduct face-to-face questionnaires would also be impractical as the body of graduates will assumedly not be in a unified location at any time (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 205–206). An internet-mediated questionnaire is cheap and fast compared to other methods of collecting data. Therefore, I decided this method was the most practical for the particular research intended for this dissertation.

There was no discernible advantage to attempting to conduct observational data collection for this research. As I aimed to collect information on career paths graduates have chosen, there was very little practical applicability in this case to the method of observing (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, pp. 230–239). Likewise, there was very limited practical application to conducting an experiment for the purposes this particular research.

In order to contact potential respondents, I utilised elements of the snowball method of sampling. I contacted a small group of relevant people and organisations connected with the profession concerned in the research, some of whom were themselves members of the target population. In turn, I asked them to help me spread awareness of my questionnaire and establish contact with a greater number of recent LIS graduates (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 192–193).

Initially I contacted a number of professional organisations connected to the LIS world. I asked them with help disseminating my questionnaire amongst potential participants they knew of, along with generally raising awareness of it. These groups included New Professionals Day Ireland (NPD Ireland), Student Librarians and Information Professionals Ireland (SLIP Ireland) and the Library Association of Ireland (LAI).
Both NPD and SLIP helped to promote the survey by posting about it on social media forums. Additionally, SLIP asked me to write a blogpost which they published on their website, in order to help draw further attention to my research. See Appendix 2 for the blogpost published by SLIP.

The LAI helped by promoting my survey through their own social media forums while also sending it out in an email to all LAI members. I additionally contacted library departments where I knew that recent LIS graduates had found employment since completing their course, such as Trinity College Dublin, Maynooth University and Dublin City University. I asked members of staff in each of these institutions to help spread the questionnaire amongst any relevant LIS graduates. As a result of utilising these different channels, I was confident that my survey would reach a sufficient number of potential respondents to provide data that would be reasonably reflective of the larger group.

3.5 Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to complete analysis on the quantitative data gathered for this research. This software is a suitable tool for quantitative data analysis as it allows for a wide range of different methods of examining data, along with simple functions for counting figures and cross tabulating answers to different sections of the questionnaire. It also provides a user-friendly means of compiling all of the quantitative data gathered together in one place. I created a coding table to allow readers to interpret the raw data through the figures I used to represent it.

For qualitative data gathered through the open-ended questions, I found Microsoft Word to be a suitable software. Considering many of the open-ended questions were left unanswered by a number of respondents, there was not an overly large amount of qualitative data to be analysed. I copied and pasted all of the qualitative data from the open-ended questions into a separate Microsoft Word document for each question. Having all of the answers to each question listed in order on a single page at once allowed me to easily search for any similarities and patterns that might exist within the data, along with any contradictions.
Finally, I assigned numbers to represent certain answers that occurred regularly in the qualitative data (e.g. types of libraries that respondents currently work in, list of employment roles they have assumed since graduating). This allowed me to analyse these essay style answers quantitatively and to compare figures, percentages, etc. using Microsoft Excel. The details of this process are discussed further in the data analysis chapter.

3.6 Research Ethics

The potential for ethical issues to arise in relation to this research was mostly limited to issues that are generally associated with research.

All participants were voluntary and took part in the survey of their own accord. The first page of the questionnaire served as both an information sheet for participants and as an informed consent form (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 32). This page outlined to potential respondents exactly what the aims of the research being conducted are and how the gathered data would be utilised. Respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously. Therefore, any ethical issues regarding respondents openly discussing their employers and considerations for their future careers, in terms of changing profession or applying for other positions, etc., were removed (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 130–136), (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 32–33). See Appendix 3 for the survey’s information sheet/consent form.

In the event that the UCD or DBS LIS schools wished to conduct further research based upon the data gathered in this research project, participants were asked in the final part of the questionnaire to select Yes or No to Question 30. This question states “Please select Yes if you are willing to allow your anonymised data to be passed on to University College Dublin and Dublin Business School for the purpose of informing developments in their library schools.” Participants who selected No to this question were assured that their data would be used solely for the purpose of this dissertation. See Appendix 1 for the full details of Question 30.

The entire target population of potential respondents are adult graduates either of the DBS MSc Information and Library Management or the UCD Masters in Library and Information Studies. As a result there were no relevant ethical concerns regarding child participation. After
consulting the DBS Guidelines on Ethical Approval it was clear that none of my potential respondents were within the listed potentially vulnerable groups.

This dissertation has included any further required forms as stated by the Postgraduate Business Dissertation Guidebook Summer 2017 provided by Dublin Business School (e.g. declaration statement).

### 3.7 Limitations of Methodology

The limitation that had the most potential for seriously impeding this research was the rather limited size of the total population. Although I attempted to contact all graduates of the LIS programmes, both part-time and full-time, who have graduated in the preceding 5 academic years, the total number is still relatively low. My primary concern was that if only a limited number of the population responded, it could be difficult to infer any definitive deductions from a small pool of data.

It was possible that this issue would be further compounded by the fact that the questionnaire is gathering data about the graduates’ professional careers, information some potential participants may not wish to discuss openly. I attempted to alleviate these concerns by allowing the questionnaires to be completed anonymously and assuring respondents that, unless permission is given in Question 30 to share the information with the relevant schools, their data will not be used for any purpose beyond this dissertation (Collis and Hussey, 2014, pp. 32–33).

A more general concern was that many graduates might be on holidays over the summer and may either ignore, forget or be completely unaware of the survey. After my survey had been active for a week, I sent a follow up email to NPD, SLIP and the LAI asking them to post online regarding my survey and send it to their members once more. This was so that my survey might come to the attention of any potential respondents who may have missed it the first time these organisations posted about it (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014, pp. 222–223).

The following limitation was more specific to my methodology. For the purpose of gathering data, I made contact with as many relevant professional bodies as possible in the time
available. However, the majority of the organisations that, in an Irish context, have the potential to spread awareness of a survey to recent LIS graduates, are institutions or communities closely linked to the library profession. These organisations and their members are mostly individuals who are involved or interested in the library community in Ireland. Due to having established contact with the majority of respondents through these organisations, it is likely that many of the respondents are also involved or interested in the library community. As a result, the data gathered may less accurately reflect the employment scope of those who do not maintain any connection with the library community. I recognise this as a potential limitation to my findings. If future, similar research were conducted with less restrictions in terms of time, it would perhaps be beneficial to the study to include other methods of contacting potential participants.

3.8 Methodology Conclusion
This chapter examined the methodology involved in carrying out the research conducted for this dissertation. It began with a discussion of the research philosophies, approaches and strategies that were adopted for this research. This chapter continued by considering the target population selected for sampling, before examining the data collection methodology. This chapter concluded by considering potential ethical issues and limitations that were involved in completing this research.
4. Data Analysis

4.1 Data Analysis Introduction

This chapter will discuss the data analysed in completing this research and the findings that resulted from it. It will begin by explaining some decisions that were made concerning unclear or invalid data. This chapter will continue by examining the answers provided to different stages of the questionnaire and analysing the gathered data. This chapter will finish with a general conclusion on the findings suggested by the data analysed, including some considerations for possible future research.

4.2 Preliminary Information

The survey for this dissertation was active for potential participants to complete on SurveyPlanet from Monday, 17th July until Monday, 31st July, the deadline stated in the questionnaire’s information and consent page.

By the time I changed the survey to an inactive status, there were a total of 38 completed questionnaires. After due consideration, I have deemed 2 of these to be invalid as they are not within the target population outlined for the purposes of this research. Respondent 21 is an LIS graduate who graduated in 2012, but who completed the course MSc Information and Library Studies at RGU (Robert Gordon University) at Aberdeen, Scotland. Therefore, the respondent does not count as a graduate of LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland.

The other respondent in question, number 25, provided unclear dates for their educational history. The respondent stated that they graduated from UCD’s MLIS and selected 2016 as the year of their graduation. However, for Question 6 they answered “I have a level 8 BA in Heritage Studies from GMIT, Galway. I graduated in November 2016. I then was accepted into the MLIS 1 year programme at UCD, and I have just finished that (May 2017).” This leads me to believe that the respondent only completed the classes for their Masters course in May 2017 and, as a result, is not within the time period I have selected for this research.

For these reasons, I decided not to include the data provided by either of these respondents in this research. This left data from a total of 36 respondents to analyse.
Other respondents provided unclear data, for which it was necessary to decide how to interpret the information while maintaining the accuracy of the data analysis. For Question 9, respondent 5 selected information manager, but also selected the option Other and wrote “Information Resources Manager”. A number of other respondents selected Other and wrote “Both”, or a similar answer, in the essay-box provided by the questionnaire. For the purposes of analysing the data, I have placed respondent 5’s answers under the category of Other and have grouped them with other respondents who answered that they described themselves professionally using more than one term.

For Question 10, respondent 12 selected No, indicating that the first position of employment they secured after graduating was not in the library sector. However, they answered Question 11, which is only to be answered if one answered Yes to Question 10, and selected that their first appointed post after graduating was as a library assistant. At this point it was seems that the respondent had either misread one of these questions or clicked the wrong answer by mistake. However, the respondent did not answer Question 12, regarding the first position of employment secured after graduating if it was not in the library sector. Therefore, it seems most likely that the respondent’s first post after graduating was in the library sector, as a library assistant, and that they mistakenly selected No for Question 10. I decided to mark Question 10 as a Yes answer for respondent 12.

Included in the data analysis below some charts are used to display data. All the remaining data and analysis I have completed during this research that is not directly referenced in this dissertation can be found in the separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and Microsoft Word documents which I am uploading to Moodle along with this dissertation.

At the top of each section of the data analysis, I have written out in full each question beside its number for reference. At each further mention of particular questions, I refer to them by number alone.
4.3 Questions 1-8: Introductory Analysis – Demographic and Background Data

Q 1. Which age group do you belong to?

Q 2. What gender are you?

Q 3. What nationality are you?

Q 4. Which LIS Masters course have you completed since the academic year 2011/21 inclusive?

Q 5. In which year did you graduate from your LIS Masters course?

Q 6. Please provide the details of the undergraduate education you completed before commencing your LIS Masters course.

Q 7. Have you completed any other accredited educational course(s) since graduating from your LIS Masters course?

Q 8. If you answered Yes to Question 7, please explain which other educational course(s) you have completed since graduating from your LIS Masters course.

**Age Group of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vast majority of respondents fall between the age brackets of 18-30 and 31-40, making up 89% of the respondents. 14 respondents are between 18-30 years of age, while 18 answered 31-40. Only 8% are in the 41-50 age group, while only a single respondent selected 51-60. No respondents are currently in the 61+ category.

![Gender of Respondents](image)

30 of the respondents (83%) are female, leaving 6 male respondents.

28 respondents are of Irish nationality. The remaining 7 respondents who answered Question 3 are all of different nationalities - Finnish/Canadian, Canadian/Belgian, Irish/American, Polish, American, Italian and one selected “Non-Irish”. 1 respondent did not answer this question.
Of the 36 respondents, 75% completed the MLIS at University College Dublin, while the remaining 25% completed the MSc Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School. No respondents selected the Other answer. I included this option in the event that there was any other course I had not been aware of during my secondary research or in the event that a respondent had completed the Masters programmes at both UCD and DBS.
The respondents were spread relatively evenly across the years of graduation chosen for this research. I included this question to use as a variable with data included later in the questionnaire, to determine whether there are noticeable differences in the career paths or opinions, regarding LIS graduates’ skillsets, between respondents who graduated several years ago or those who graduated more recently.

The respondents displayed a noteworthy degree of similarity in their answers to Question 6. 50% of respondents have previously completed a Bachelor of Arts in English alongside another subject. Some respondents did not answer beyond stating that they have completed a BA or a degree in Arts, so it is possible that an even higher percentage may have included a speciality in English. Furthermore, 22% of the overall respondents completed a BA in English and History.

The majority of respondents who completed undergraduate degrees in different subjects were still mostly focused on English, the arts or history. 2 or more respondents have completed undergraduate education in each of the following subjects – philosophy, media studies, journalism, language/linguistics, literature, religions/theology, education and sociology. Backgrounds such as these are perhaps unsurprising for respondents who would continue on to complete a Masters in librarianship. However, they are not necessarily subjects that would indicate interest in pursuing a career path focusing on information management or the more technical elements included in the LIS Masters courses discussed in the literature reviewed for this dissertation.

This data may be an early indication of the career paths many of these graduates later followed after their Masters courses, as the data analysis below will show that the majority of respondents have found employment in the library sector and consider themselves primarily as librarians, more so than information managers in terms of professional description. The similarity displayed in the undergraduate backgrounds of respondents, is an early indication of further similarity, in terms of professional career paths followed and work environments, that is largely present throughout the data provided.

Other subjects studied include music, heritage studies, human resources management, international business, law, community work, European studies and anthropology.
For Question 7, 89% of respondents answered that they have not completed any other accredited educational course(s) since completing their LIS Masters course. This may suggest that most of these graduates are primarily interested in working in a field, namely librarianship, that could be considered a natural progression from their undergraduate degrees and that they are satisfied with the current roles or sector that they are located in, as opposed to wishing to complete further educational courses which may be utilised for securing employment outside of the library sector. This will be further discussed when analysing the data referring to the jobs that respondents have held since graduating and the frequency with which they apply for positions outside of the library sector.

The figure for those who have completed an accredited educational course since graduating from their LIS course is too small to indicate any sort of a pattern (11%), but the following are the subjects they have studied – web design, local government studies, FETAC 5 occupational first aid, diplomas in management studies and project management.

4.4 Questions 9-18: Professional Career since Graduation

Q 9. Which term do you feel most accurately represents you as a professional?
It is not unusual that the vast majority of a group of respondents consisting of graduates of LIS Masters courses selected that the term librarian most accurately represents them as professionals (61%). However, considering the skills taught in the UCD and DBS LIS, along with the variety of skills utilised in everyday librarianship and the transferability of these skills discussed in the literature reviewed for this dissertation, as first there seems to be an unusually limited amount of respondents who feel the term information manager most accurately describes themselves as professionals (6%).

When the data provided in the essay-box option beneath the Other answer is taken into consideration, the results are more evenly divided. A number of respondents answered that they considered both librarian and information manager to be accurate representations of themselves as professionals, or that they consider more than one representation of themselves as professionals to be accurate. In the Other category a number of individual titles are specified, but could be considered to fall under the umbrella term of information manager e.g. information resources manager, information professional, information specialist, knowledge manager.

If the respondents who answered these specific roles are counted under the term information manager, along with those who answered more than one answer including information manager, then the group who consider themselves, amongst other titles, as information managers rises to 22%.

However, considering that this is reflective of the respondents’ views of themselves, it is possibly inaccurate to include those who have specifically selected more particular roles than information manager. If the figures are adjusted to only include those who answered information manager and those who wrote both information manager and librarian under Other, then this group falls to 14%.

If respondent 4, who answered Other and wrote library assistant, is added to those who selected librarian, (along with respondent 28, who answered “Underpaid, Underappreciated Public Library Assistant” beneath Other) then the number who feel librarian most accurately represents them as professionals rises to 67%. In this case it is accurate to group this respondent with those who answered librarian. Even though this question is concerned with how the respondents themselves feel represented, I believe respondent 4 wanted to specify
their role as a librarian, rather than the general term that represented them. There is an opportunity to select individual roles within the library at a later stage of the questionnaire.

Further answers submitted in the essay-box attached to Other include administrator, web archivist, and secondary school teacher. There are less specified answers provided beneath Other than there are respondents who currently work outside of the library sector, perhaps indicating that despite current employment situations, these respondents still consider themselves primarily as librarians or information managers.

The number of respondents who answered librarian is still significantly higher than any alternative answers provided. The answers to Question 9 seemed somewhat limited to this single description after considering the literature reviewed for this dissertation. This similarity in the opinions of respondents, and their inclination towards work in the library sector, continues to be reflected further in the data analysis when the employment history of respondents after graduating is discussed.

It must be taken into account that this disproportionate number may mostly represent the respondents’ current positions of employment – the majority of which are currently in the library sector. It would be possible to speculate that their descriptions of themselves as professionals may vary if they became employed outside of the library sector. This discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation but could potentially be an element included in future research.

Q 10. Was the first position of employment you secured, after graduating from your LIS Masters course, in the library sector?

Q 11. If you answered Yes to Question 10, what type of position was it?

Q 12. If you answered No to Question 10, what type of employment position did you first secure after graduating from your LIS Masters course?

Of the 36 respondents, 24 (67%) answered Yes to their first position of employment after graduating being in the library sector, while the remaining 12 (33%) answered No.
Of the 24 respondents (67% of the total group) who answered Yes to Question 10, 63% of these specified in Question 11 that they began their post-graduation career in the role of library assistant. This is typically a non-professional role, for which a Masters qualification is not strictly necessary. Although it is probable that these respondents were assisted in the job application process by possessing their Masters qualification, it is also possible to speculate that these positions they secured could have been acquired without having attained an LIS Masters qualification.

Furthermore, none of the 5 respondents who answered Other for Question 11 specified that their first role after graduating was a professional one. The roles they listed are “unpaid internship in a special library (6 months)”, “professional knowledge assistant”, “library intern”, “branch librarian” and “JobBridge intern in a library (assistant librarian level)”. Although the latter role, an assistant librarian, is traditionally a professional role, in this case it is only a JobBridge internship. If these are added to the existing number of respondents who answered library assistant to Question 11, then a total of 83% of those whose first employment position after graduating was in a library were working in a non-professional role in said position.
Question 30 at the end of the questionnaire provided an opportunity for respondents to add any further thoughts or comments that they believed to be relevant. Commenting on roles available to recent LIS graduates in Ireland, respondent 38 offered the following opinion:

There is a dearth of assistant librarian positions in Ireland there are many of in other countries, e.g. the UK, Canada and USA. These positions in Ireland have largely been de-professionalised and under-valued. Library graduates now are also less likely to have worked in libraries before completing the degree as opposed to the prior tradition of being sent to do the library course after working as a library assistant for a few years and working your way up the ladder. So, it means that library grads like me need to learn the ropes as library assistants before we can get professional jobs. However, making that jump between paraprofessional and professional is proving difficult because of the lack of those entry level management positions e.g. assistant librarian. It is now harder to get professional jobs because the ones advertised require more experience at a higher level, which, in a catch-22, is harder to acquire.

It is difficult to draw a definitive, significant conclusion or determine any pattern from the 12 respondents who answered No to Question 10, due to both the small number of this group and the diversity of their first employment assumed after graduating. 2 of these positions can be taken as a progression from the graduates’ LIS courses as the subjects are related to modules within the courses - “records management at insurance company” and “project archivist”.

More common, however, are positions of employment which may have been assisted by possessing an LIS Masters but are not inherently connected to possessing the qualification (“admin role at university”, “arts administrator at Kilkenny Arts Office”, “administrative assistant”, “student assistance specialist at National Universities Association”, “academic tutor”) or are not at all related to possessing a LIS Masters qualification (“customer support”, “retail assistant”, “call centre”). Respondent 17 did not acquire any employment after completing their LIS Masters course, as they continued on to pursue a PhD. Respondent 35 answered that they had returned to a teaching career after years of looking for a library job, stating that the only library jobs offered had been unpaid.
After the answers provided for the Other option are taken into account, a rather small number of the total body of respondents (11%) acquired what are regarded as professional librarian roles as their first position of employment after graduating from their LIS Masters course.

Q 13. Are you currently employed in the library sector?

Q 14. If you answered Yes to Question 13, please state the name of the library and your position within it.

Q 15. If you answered No to Question 13, please provide the name of the sector you work in, the organisation and your position within it.

This set of questions moves away from respondents’ first careers since graduating to their present employment situation. The data gathered in response to Question 13 shows that the large majority of these recent LIS graduates are currently employed in the library sector. This is not unexpected considering the significant leaning towards the library sector already indicated by Question 10, but in this case the number of respondents who answered Yes is even higher. The number answering Yes from Question 10 to Question 13 rises from 24 (67%)
to 29 (81%). The number of graduates who secured a library job as their first position of employment after graduating to the number who have acquired one in the interim has risen by 14% of the total respondent population.

The data gathered also shows that 5 out of the 12 respondents who answered No to Question 10 (therefore 42% of that group) and did not immediately secure employment in the library sector after graduating, have since searched for and succeeded in securing roles in the library sector in the interim.

When the implications of the potential scope for employment for LIS graduates discussed previously in this dissertation is taken into account, once again the data seems relatively limited. These figures indicate that even amongst those who did not immediately acquire a job in the library sector, almost half still pursued this particular professional avenue. Additionally, the possibility should not be dismissed that respondents who are not currently employed in the library sector may still be applying for opportunities within it.

For the purpose of analysing the data gathered, I quantified the respondents’ essay style answers to Question 14 and placed them in different categories suggested by the frequency of similar types of answers. The details of this division can be seen in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet I have uploaded along with this dissertation. I have divided the answers for Question 14 into 2 separate strands of data. The first “Employment – Library 1” has divided up the respondents according to the role they assume within their current library employment e.g. library assistant, senior librarian, etc. “Employment – Library 2” has categorised the respondents’ answers by what type of library they currently are employed in e.g. public library, academic library, etc. Answers that only occurred once were gathered under the Other column and have been considered individually.
The data regarding what roles are held by graduates currently in a position of employment within the library sector is more diverse in terms of professional careers than that provided in answer to Question 11. The percentage of graduates working as library assistants has dropped from 63% (of the 24 whose first job after graduating was in the library sector) to 31% (of 29 respondents currently working in the library sector). The reduction in this role is compensated for by the role of librarian rising to 10% and assistant librarian to 17%. Although it was not an option in the questionnaire itself as an answer to select for Question 11, I added branch librarian as a category of role here because it was an answer that was frequently provided by respondents who answered Yes to Question 13.

Amongst those who answered Other to Question 14, there were some additional respondents who fill professional roles not selected by any of their fellow respondents - information skills librarian, senior information specialist, subject librarian. Other positions held in libraries by those currently employed in the sector include a scholarly publication’s officer, circulation/support staff, online content advisor and assistant web archivist.

If the total group is measured of respondents who currently fill professional librarian roles for which an LIS Masters qualification in required, the figures rise to 38% (of the 29 who currently
are employed in the library sector) as opposed to the 11% who previously held professional library roles (of the 24 whose first position of employment after graduating was in the library sector).

Almost all respondents currently working in the library sector are also those who have had some previous history of working in the library sector since graduating. Therefore it is unclear whether the general upward rise in roles in the years since graduating are directly related to their possessing a Masters qualification or are more-so as a result of graduates having gained work experience in the library sector in the meantime. It is also possible that both or neither of these could be factors that have played a role.

![Bar chart showing types of libraries respondents are currently employed in](chart.png)

With regards to the types of libraries that respondents are currently employed in, academic libraries make up almost half (48%) of the institutions that those currently employed in the library sector work in. If taken from the total group of respondents, the figure is still significantly high – 39% of all respondents, regardless of their first position of employment, are currently employed in an academic library. It is the most common work environment for this body of respondents by some distance, even if those who do not currently work in the library sector are taken into account. The second most common is in the public library,
accounting for the workplace of 31% of those who are currently employed in the library sector. If measured as a percentage of the total body of respondents, this figure is still a significant 25%.

Taken together, this data shows that from all of the graduates of LIS Masters courses in Ireland who have graduated since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive and who have completed this questionnaire, a total of 64% are currently employed in either an academic or public library. This figure also seems relatively high considering the themes discussed in the literature reviewed for this dissertation, particularly the course descriptions presented by the Masters programmes regarding the wide array of positions available to graduates outside of the library sector. However, from another perspective it might only serve to suggest what may seem obvious - that graduates of LIS courses are both interested in and well equipped with the skillsets for working in the library sector.

Another 10% of those currently employed in the library sector are employed in school libraries, while the single respondent categorised under Other works in the library of an international law firm. The remaining 2 respondents did not complete the details of their current position regarding the library they are currently employed in. If the figures were only to include those respondents who are both currently employed in the library sector and fully answered Question 14, then the number of those currently employed in either an academic or public library would rise to an even larger 85%.

Of the 7 respondents who are not currently employed in the library sector, there is no discernible pattern to their career paths. Even if there was it would be difficult to come to any definitive conclusions regarding them, as it is such a small group. 5 of these 7 respondents also answered No to Question 10, so additionally did not assume a position of employment in the library sector as their first job after graduating. Amongst these, several hold the same, or a very similar, current role as the one they assumed after graduating. For example, respondent 6 is currently working in an administrative role at a university. This type of position is the same as the first one they filled after graduating and the respondent has only changed the university that they work at. Respondent 17, who answered that they continued on to pursue a PhD after graduating is still currently completing their PhD. Respondent 23, who answered that their first position of employment after graduating was as a project
archivist, has answered “archives and record management – project archivist for archive development team at the BBC” for Question 15. As this respondent has answered to a later question (16) that they have not filled any other positions of employment since graduating, it can reasonably be assumed that this is the same role.

Of the remaining respondents who answered No to Question 13, one is working in an administrative position, another is a consultant for a marketing manager at UCD and a third works in community development as a social media assistant. As with the answers for the first positions of employment since graduating that were outside the library sector, these answers could be generally divided into those that can be considered directly related to the LIS courses, with the archives and records management position being the one most immediately related to modules within these courses. Although not as directly related, roles working in social media, administration and consulting can all be considered to involve subjects included in the LIS Masters course, and are all connected with the management of information to some degree.

Respondent 31, who answered No to Questions 13, has recently been employed part-time as acting librarian at the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (RSAI). This respondent could therefore also be counted as being currently employed in the library sector and added to the limited figure representing those not working in a public, academic or school library, as the RSAI library is only available to non-members by appointment (Library – RSAI, 2017).

Only one respondent not currently employed in the library sector was employed in the library sector for their first position of employment after graduating. Additionally, this respondent is currently not employed in the library sector due to redundancy, not as a result of being employed in another sector, and their most recent position of employment was in a library. Therefore, there is not a single respondent who assumed a position of employment in a library as their first job after graduating who does not currently work in the library sector. This suggests a pattern of consistency for recent LIS graduates in the Republic of Ireland - that once they have found a foothold in the library sector they remain there. Whether this is due to a passion for the type of work or the work environment, or whether there are other factors involved (e.g. lack of other opportunities), is beyond the aims of this dissertation to speculate. This data also continues to suggest the tendency of LIS graduates to have sought for and
secured employment in the library sector, as opposed to in other potential area discussed in the literature reviewed. Finally, it also suggest that even within the library sector, the vast majority of recent LIS graduates are working in more traditional library environments, academic and public libraries, rather than some of the other library types discussed in the literature review.

Perhaps these findings are supportive of the literature review theme concerning a potentially limiting self-perceptions amongst librarians. It may be the case that, despite the skillsets developed through their LIS courses and the wide applicability of these skills, LIS graduates may not be taking advantage of opportunities due to a limited perception of their own abilities. However, it is possible that there are any number of alternative, unknown factors influencing these figures.

Q 16. Please list any other employment positions you have filled, prior to your current position, since graduating from your LIS Masters course. Please provide the name of the sector you worked in, the organisation and your position within it.

When analysing the data provided in response to Question 16 it became clear that, along with current employment and the first position of employment secured since graduating, a significantly large portion of graduates’ employment history has been in the library sector. Once again, the results seemed relatively limited when considering the topics and skillsets discussed in the literature reviewed, along with the aims of DBS and UCD to generate graduates skilled as both information managers and librarians.

Almost all of the respondents who have held a position of employment outside the library sector at any point of their career since graduating which was not mentioned in the answers to Questions 10-15, are also those who answered No to their first position or current position being in the library sector. For example, respondent 4’s first position after graduating was in a customer support role. They followed this with positions as “customer support agent at PayPal”, “social media specialist at PayPal” and “social support specialist at YouTube” respectively, before securing their current employment in the library sector. Similarly,
respondent 10 who worked in records management after graduating, worked as a knowledge management officer in Trócaire before entering the library sector for their current position.

Similarly to the answers to Question 15, positions in graduates’ employment history that were outside the library sector are not drastically different or even entirely separate from work in the library sector itself. Respondent 14 worked as a library systems profiler for Interleaf Technology, which provides technology support for information services, primarily focusing on libraries. Respondent 15 worked as a library assistant in their first position after graduating, before working as a research coordinator at the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. This was prior to assuming a role within the library sector once more as a senior information specialist in the Library and Surgical Information Service for the Royal College of Surgeons, England. The only other respondent who has held a position outside the library environment that was not their first position since graduating or their current employment, is respondent 38, who held 2 positions as a teaching assistant at UCD, one of them directly attached to the MLIS, before taking a position as a Library assistant in UCD. Therefore, even amongst those who have secured positions outside of the library sector during their employment history since graduating, they have neither pursued careers very far removed from the library environment nor worked outside the sector for prolonged periods of time.

Of the 55 employment positions listed by the total body of respondents since graduating, excluding their first positions of employment and their current positions, 42 (76%) are in the library sector. The remaining 13 positions outside the library sector are divided between 10 respondents. Of these 42 library positions in respondents’ employment history, 48% were within academic libraries, 19% were within public libraries, 5% were in school libraries, while the remainder were all in different library types.

In regards to these other types of libraries, respondent 35 held positions in a special health library, respondent 5 as a librarian in healthcare in University Hospital Limerick, while respondent 36 held 3 separate positions in libraries within the UK’s legal sector. Respondent 37 was employed in a library specialising in research, respondent 33 worked in the Tiernan MacBride Library at the Irish Film Institute. Other respondents that have held positions of employment outside academic, public or school libraries, include a position as library assistant
at Bord Bia, a cataloguer at Christ Church Cathedral Library and a library assistant in Marsh’s Library.

Although this variety of positions and different library types might indicate the emergence of a certain level of diversity amongst the scope of recent LIS graduates’ employment beyond the traditional academic and public library sector, over a third of these positions were either volunteer or JobBridge positions. This reduces the number of fully-paid librarian positions in respondents’ histories, outside academic, public or school libraries, to just 8 positions divided between 6 respondents, only 15% of the total number of library positions listed for Question 16.

Of the respondents who specified the role they held within the libraries detailed in their employment history, 61% of these positions were as library assistants. Only 4 positions were in the role of librarian and 3 as assistant librarian. One respondent answered branch librarian, while the remaining 7 answered other role types, including cataloguer, knowledge assistant, knowledge officer, online content advisor, archiving and intern positions.

Of the total 125 positions of employment listed between Questions 10-16, including the first position of employment which respondents secured after graduating, their current employment positions and any other employment history, 77% of these are or were in the library sector. 49% of these library positions are or were as a library assistant. Therefore, when the total scope of the employment for these respondents is calculated, the range of employment positions when taking into account the themes discussed in the literature review is quite limited. It is clear that, amongst this body of respondents at least, the library sector is by far the most commonly entered after graduating, both in the short and long term. It is also indicative of the employment positions most commonly secured being non-professional roles, even after graduating with a professional library qualification. However, the rise in frequency of professional roles from first positions of employment after graduating to current employment, which was discussed earlier, must also be remembered.
Q 17. How frequently do you apply for employment opportunities outside of the library sector?

Q 18. Please explain your answer to the above question.

The data in response to Question 17 also seems rather limited when the literature review of this dissertation is taken into consideration. It is consistent with the trends displayed in the data regarding current and previous employment, as it seems a pattern showing a proclivity for employment in the library sector is clear amongst this group of respondents. 44% of respondents answered that they very rarely apply for positions of employment outside the library sector, with another 27% answering rarely. These figures combine for a total majority of 61%. It is perhaps the basis for further future research as to why the a large number of recent LIS graduates in Ireland are not frequently applying for jobs outside the library environment, but it nonetheless seems a limited number considering the range of options discussed earlier on in this dissertation. Only 28% of respondents apply for roles outside the library sector either very frequently or somewhat frequently.
Given an essay-box in Question 18 to explain their answer to Question 17, 53% of the 32 respondents who completed this question answered that a lack of frequency in applying for roles outside the library sector was due to their being happy with their current library position, having no interest in working in another sector or to their currently having a permanent library role. 88% of the respondents who provided an answer of this type, selected that they very rarely or rarely apply for roles outside the library environment. From the answers of this group of respondents, some conditions mentioned under which they might consider applying for a role outside the library sector include if a role is particularly interesting or if the position provides the opportunity of acquiring new skills.

Taken from the respondents who answered very frequently and somewhat frequently, the follow-up answers provided in Question 18 indicate that this is due to a lack of opportunities or permanency, along with a sense of frustration when seeking employment in the library sector, rather than a particular desire or interest to work in another sector.

Respondent 24 answered that they only applied for jobs outside the library sector when they could not secure a library job. Respondent 27 answered that the “... library sector entry level jobs are very badly paid, few and far between, and do not offer permanency.” Respondent 32 answered not very frequently to Question 17 but added that they have had to move abroad to in order to gain full-time employment.

Respondent 38 had the following explanation to their answer of somewhat frequently to Question 17:

I look for jobs outside the library sector because there are so few jobs in the library sector in Ireland. I do not have enough money to emigrate yet, so apply for jobs outside the sector as I feel it is a bit of an uphill battle to get a library job in Ireland. My contract is temporary and has been renewed twice but I lack any job security at the moment and my salary is very low (less than the living wage). I need to look for work outside the library sector to earn enough money to be able to emigrate somewhere where there is a higher chance of me getting a librarian position, which feels very unlikely in Ireland - all that is available to me here is low level library assistant positions.
Another respondent answered that they have a lack of experience outside the library sector which they feel puts them at a disadvantage when applying for other roles.

Clearly, there are different reasons for why respondents may or may not have current or previous experience working outside the library sector. It is also clear that many of these reasons consist of almost completely contrasting opposites, from job satisfaction and a passion for the library sector to frustration, lack of opportunity, lack of permanency and unsatisfactory wages. However, the general consensus is that almost all respondents aim to work in the library sector long-term. No respondents answered that they frequently apply for positions of employment outside the library sector because of a passion for a particular role or because they have developed different interests and career goals. The answers to these questions indicate that the primary professional goal since graduating of all of the respondents who answered, unless there a specific opportunity arises that contains elements of career development or of particular interest, is securing a position within the library sector. Even amongst the 10 respondents who answered very frequently or somewhat frequently to Question 17, only 3 are currently employed outside the library sector.
4.5 Questions 19-28: Subjects and Skills in LIS Masters Courses

Q 19. Are there any particular subjects that you studied during your LIS Masters course that you found beneficial to your career when seeking employment opportunities outside of a library environment?

Q 20. If you answered Yes to the above question, please explain your answer.

61% of respondents answered Yes to Question 19, while 8% did not answer the question. Of this 61%, there was a wide variety of answers provided for Question 20 regarding which subjects and modules in particular were useful to them in this regard. The answers are divisible into at least 25 different subjects, even after having generalised some as a means of categorising and grouping similar subjects.

These answers show some degree of similarity with the material discussed in the literature review. The number of graduates that consider their skills useful in terms of seeking employment in other sectors would indicate an agreement on their part with the literature review theme regarding the transferability of librarians’ skillsets.
The most commonly referred to subjects in the data provided for Question 20 are related to business and project management, general IT skills, web development/design, research, information organisation/cataloguing and information architecture. Each of the above were suggested by 4 or more respondents as subjects that were considered useful when seeking employment opportunities outside of a library environment. Other general subjects that were mentioned by 2 or more respondents each include teaching/information literacy instruction, reference skills and social media. A significant number of other specific answers that were only mentioned by one respondent each could be grouped under the umbrella term IT, e.g. network resource management, metadata, data management, HTML, web publishing, podcasting, digital media, information design. Other subjects mentioned include collection development, reader’s advisory, records management, collaboration and statistics.

Although the majority of skills mentioned here are leaning towards the technological side of graduates’ educations, it is noteworthy that many LIS graduates still feel there is applicability to employment situations outside the library environment for more traditional librarian subjects, such as cataloguing, knowledge of referencing, research knowledge and different forms of instruction.
Q 21. Are there any particular subjects that you studied during your LIS Masters course that you feel cannot be applied to employment positions outside of a library environment?

Q 22. If you answered Yes to the above question, please explain your answer.

69% of respondents answered No to Question 21, that there were no subjects they studied during their LIS Masters course which they believe are only applicable to the library environment and have little application outside of it, while 1 respondent did not answer. Only 10 respondents (28%) answered that there are subjects from their course that are not applicable outside the library environment.

When considered alongside the 61% that answered Yes to Question 19, it seems that the vast majority of graduates consider the body of subjects included in their education to be applicable to environments besides the library. 16 of the 22 respondents who answered Yes to Question 19 also answered No to Question 21.

Amongst the 10 respondents who answered Yes to Question 21, there is some unanimity to their data. 5 of these 10 respondents answered that cataloguing and classification/information organisation was not applicable outside the library environment.
This is in itself not necessarily indicative of information organisation/cataloguing’s importance within the profession. It may not be considered as transferable by a number of respondents, but that does not suggest that it is not amongst the most fundamental skills necessary for employment in the library environment. Additionally, as referred to above, 4 respondents answered in Question 20 that cataloguing was a subject beneficial to have knowledge of when seeking employment outside of the library sector. This includes respondents 2 and 23, neither of whom have held any position of employment in the library sector since graduating. This perhaps serves to highlight how dependent much of the data is on respondents’ individual experiences, careers and personal opinions. In reference to the more traditional librarian skills such as cataloguing, in the comments section provided by Question 29, respondent 28 suggested that:

The move towards “i-schools” with an emphasis on tech rather than traditional library skills is worrying - Library Studies is a distinctly different subject to Computer Science - while there is clearly overlap, I feel some core library competencies are being squeezed out through over-emphasis on the tech end of the job.

The other topics that respondents named as not being applicable outside of the library environment are youth information services/children’s books, information philosophy, school libraries and management, each of which was mentioned by a single respondent.

Interestingly management, an answer provided by respondent 30, is presented in a significantly positive light in answers to other questions with regard to the applicability or usefulness of skills and subjects outside of the library environment. Again, this contradiction might demonstrate how subjective these answers are, based on personal opinions and experience as much as they are based on any qualities inherent in a particular skillset or subject.

Respondent 10 did not specify any particular module, but more generally commented that “… in the LIS Masters, you are trained on how things work in an academic library. Working in the public field half of what [was taught] was fairly useless.” Respondent number 27 commented that theoretical modules are not important for a job based upon practical work, stating that “modules on key skills necessary for employment … would have been more beneficial,
especially since this is a Masters course aimed at employment and not an undergraduate arts course.” The importance of practicality over theory is a subject that continues to be emphasised by respondents in answers at further stages of the questionnaire.

Q 23. Are there any particular subjects or skills that you believe would have been beneficial to your professional career since graduating had they been included in your LIS Masters course?

Q 24. If you answered Yes to the above question, please explain your answer.

The majority of opinions in response to the previous questions suggested that there are skills learned on LIS Masters courses that are beneficial when searching for employment outside of the library environment and that there are not many skills limited to use solely in the library environment. Nonetheless, 64% of respondents are still of the opinion that there are skills which their careers would have benefitted from, had they learned them during their LIS Masters. Some of these answers were repeated in Question 26, with these respondents stating that these subjects should be added to future LIS Masters courses.

Compared to the answers to Questions 20 and 22, there were considerably fewer similarities in respondents’ opinions, with numerous different subjects each being mentioned by only a single respondent.

The answers most frequently suggested as subjects that could have been beneficial to respondents’ careers were still related to management. General management (working with people, HR, etc.) was suggested by 3 respondents, as were elements of financial management (negotiating with vendors, managing budgets, drafting business proposals to secure funding from senior management). This data could be considered as supportive of Martin, Hazeri and Sarrafzadeh’s research, discussed in the literature review, which proposed that LIS courses need to provide graduates with more business and management content, in order for them to be fully equipped with the skills required for seeking employment outside traditional LIS environments (Hazeri, Sarrafzadeh and Martin, 2007, pp. 181–182). Utilising and managing
digitisation (digital archiving, digitising document, studying digitising equipment, digital curation) were also mentioned by 3 respondents. The other area most frequently referred to was being provided with a greater understanding of careers in the library sector (different job opportunities and roles, job applications, employment support, guidance).

Beyond these answers, the subjects discussed by respondents were quite diverse, including rare books, database management, coding, copyright, publishing, grant writing advice and care of/restoration of book collections.

One common aspect of respondents’ answers here, also referred to in analysis of data provided for Question 22, is a belief that LIS courses should place a greater emphasis on practical instruction and hands-on experience, rather than theoretical education. This was directly addressed in Question 24 by 4 respondents, who feel that their LIS courses were too theory based. Respondent 20 emphasised the importance of “more practical skills, perhaps a placement with a librarian or 'shadow a librarian week'.” Respondent 29 stressed the need for more practical experience in a library environment. Respondent 38 answered that “Generally I would like to have been given the opportunity to do more practical work.”

These 4 respondents graduated from the UCD LIS course, 3 of them in the last 2 academic years. The UCD MLIS, requires all students to have completed work experience prior to beginning the course (MLIS Library & Information Studies - Programme Details - UCD Graduate Studies, 2017). The DBS LIS course includes a mandatory, credit-bearing work experience placement, organised by the student at an organisation of their choosing, at the end of the academic year before the commencement of the students’ dissertation (MSc Information & Library Management, 2017). The data provided by these respondents may indicate that placing the work experience after the conclusion of classes, when students have learned a number of new skills and subjects, is a beneficial element that may be worth consideration for all LIS Masters courses.

The respondents who addressed the issue of including more practical experience are also all graduates whose first position of employment after graduating was in the library sector and who are currently employed in the library sector. None of these respondents have filled any position of employment outside of a library since graduating. 3 of these respondents answered that they very rarely apply for employment positions outside of the library sector.
It is interesting that this emphasis on more practical experience is coming from graduates who, since graduating, have solely secured library sector careers. This may suggest that, along with a move towards providing graduates with an education and skills applicable to outside environments, LIS courses may also need to focus on providing separate, more hands-on, practical learning for those students specifically interested in pursuing a library-focused career. In the comments section provided by Question 29, respondent 2 concluded that:

MLIS courses need to be more hands on and practical from what I experienced. They need to “train” students rather than “educating” them. They need to work with actual Library Management Systems, actual cataloguing databases, etc., rather than simply dealing with theoretical and hypothetical assignments.

Q 25. Are there any subjects that you would recommend adding to future LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland based on your experiences since graduating?

Q 26. If you answered Yes to the above question, please explain your answer.

The responses to Question 25 mostly followed an expected, natural progression from those to Questions 23 and 24. Only 2 of the 26 respondents who answered Yes to Question 23, answered No to Question 25. This was also reflected in many of the answers for Question 26, regarding which subjects graduates thought should be added to future LIS Masters courses, being similar to the answers for Question 24. 5 respondents expanding upon their answer to the previous question, writing “as above”, “answered in a previous question”, etc.

26 respondents (72%) stated that there are subjects they would recommend adding to future LIS courses, while a single respondent did not answer. This left 9 respondents who would not recommend any future subject additions to LIS courses. Regarding these respondents, there was also an expected comparison with the previous set of questions. 78% of those who answered No to Question 25 also answered No to Question 23.

The reasoning behind the answers of the remaining 2 respondents who answered Yes to Question 23, but No to Question 25, are difficult to understand. They are both currently
employed in the library sector and have been since graduating, apart from one of them working at Interleaf Technology, itself primarily a library support organisation. They mentioned that computer-programming languages/networks and digitisation, respectively, would have been beneficial to their careers since graduating, but would not recommend adding any additional subjects to future LIS courses, despite said careers being in the library sector.

The most frequently recommended subjects by respondents for future LIS Masters courses are similar to the subjects discussed in previous answers. The most common answers were those suggested by 4 or more respondents and had all been referred in the data already - IT skills, social media, general/project management and financial management (budgeting, negotiations).

Other subjects and areas previously referenced include careers/employment guidance and customer service, both being mentioned by 3 respondents each. Several respondents again voiced their opinion that future courses should work towards a more practical, experience-based learning rather than theoretical instruction. 3 respondents suggested that future courses should contain hands-on experience of using different LMSs (Library Management Systems), along with other relevant technology such as RefWorks and EndNote.

A wide variety of answers were provided by 2 or fewer respondents. These include specialisation in differences between school and academic librarianship, more developed information literacy skills, database management, teaching skills, advocacy/representing the sector, rare books, greater cataloguing experience and event management/planning/public speaking. A further 15 subjects were recommended by one respondent each.

Although the data gathered has not suggested the wide scope of employment type that may have been expected following the literature review, there is nonetheless great diversity amongst respondents in the opinions regarding skills used and important modules for future LIS courses. This may indicate that, while many of the graduates are pursuing career paths in the library sector, they are nonetheless making use of a wide range of different skills, which is, to some degree, in accordance with the literature reviewed for this dissertation.
Q 27. In your opinion, are there particular types of career opportunities which LIS Masters course graduates do not regularly apply for, which you believe they would be capable of successfully pursuing?

Q 28. If you answered yes to the above question, please explain your answer.

The final Yes/No question, excluding Question 30 regarding permission to share data, provided the most evenly balanced answers from respondents of questions 19-28. 20 respondents (56%) answered that they are of the opinion that there are particular opportunities which LIS Masters course graduates do not regularly apply for, which they believe they would be capable of successfully pursuing. 15 respondents (42%) answered No, while 1 respondent did not answer.

Answers for Question 28 could be grouped or categorised in different ways according to the interpreter of the data. Generally speaking though, the most common types of responses were employment opportunities related to data management (data specialist, metadata), information officers, IT roles (software, web design, systems management), knowledge
managers, researchers, along with the general management of information. Career types mentioned by 2 respondents each include records managers, data protectors, FOI (Freedom of Information) roles, archivists, and educational positions/instructors. Once again, a variety of answers were provided by one respondent each, including taxonomist, project manager, publishing and heritage roles. Non-library sectors referred to by respondents include IT, civil service, banking, retail and media.

Some respondents elaborated on their answers with further comments. Respondent 3 suggested that “MLIS does not really provide modules to help students understand these alternative careers. When I read the job descriptions I am never that confident that I am actually properly qualified for a lot of these broader career ops.”

Respondent 5 believes that much of what LIS graduates do has parallels in the online environment and that LIS graduates are skilled in knowledge management roles in a variety of fields, “… but the challenge is in breaking the stereotype that librarians just manage books. We need to rebrand as Information Managers.”

Respondent 38 shared similar feelings:

The Information Professionals Network is trying to bridge the gap between LIS grads and [the] private industry to make [the] industry realise our excellent knowledge management skill set and see the benefit we can bring to their organisations. Lots of jobs they advertise are librarians under a different name - we need to reach out to them to help them see us as a viable option and to consider the private career path. These jobs can include knowledge manager, information officer, taxonomist etc.

Respondent 37 believes that LIS graduates overlook potential opportunities as they are put off by positions that do not include the word “librarian” in their description. This respondent continues by saying these are often IT or organisational roles which LIS graduates would be capable of performing.

Although Question 27 is strictly referring to roles that respondents believe LIS graduates are not applying for, it is notable that, given the limited scope of employment suggested so far by the data, over 50% of respondents answered Yes, believing there are other opportunities that
graduates are not pursuing. Despite this belief, 16 of the 20 respondents who answered Yes to Question 27 are currently employed in the library sector, while the significant majority of their total employment positions held since graduating have also been in the library sector.

Furthermore, if the figures for Question 27 are considered alongside the data for Question 17, it can be seen that of the 20 respondents who believe that these opportunities exist that graduates are capable of performing but are not pursuing, only 4 (20%) answered either Very Frequently or Somewhat Frequently to how often they apply for employment opportunities outside of the library sector.

4.6 Final Conclusions on the Data Analysed

Of the 7 respondents who do not currently work in the library sector, 4 of them only graduated in 2016 (with 2 having graduated in 2013 and 1 in 2014) and the first position of employment they secured was not in the library environment. This might suggest that rather than actively pursuing careers outside the library sector, these more recent graduates may simply not have secured a role in the library sector in the short time elapsed since their graduation. Furthermore, 2 of the 4 who graduated in 2016 who do not currently work in the library sector answered at different stages of the questionnaire that they infrequently apply for positions outside the library sector. Another of these 4 is respondent 17, who is continuing their educational career with a PhD. When taken into consideration alongside the total body of respondents, it seems the priority for a great majority of the entire group, with regards to their professional life since graduating, is and has been almost entirely focused on pursuing a career in the library sector.

Despite this significant focus on careers in the library sector for such a large majority, throughout different sections of the questionnaire respondents made reference to there being a lack of jobs in the library sector, alongside problems related to permanency and payment. In Question 29, encouraging respondents to add any further thoughts or comments, respondent 2 wrote:

I believe both UCD and DBS are taking on too many students for a career that offers so few job openings. Many don’t fully realise this until they’re well into
the course and it's too late. There should be more information about the realistic chances of getting a job as a librarian when people apply, and how few exist.

These sentiments were echoed by a similar statement from respondent 28 - “Too many qualifications are distributed by Library Schools every year, competition is fierce enough for jobs as is, many graduates have unrealistic expectations of career and earning potential.” Responding to Question 18, regarding the frequency with which respondents apply for positions outside the library sector, respondent 30 commented that:

... my qualification is neither fish nor fowl: not techy enough, not a qualification to teach, not a background in sales/marketing. I don't think librarians are seen as serving customer facing, observers of consumer trends, or instructors, even though that's the daily experience of public librarians.

Despite all of these opinions and data demonstrating that many recent LIS graduates work in non-professional roles, even though they possess their Masters level qualifications, almost all respondents have worked in the library sector for most of their professional career since graduating and continue to do so at present.

Although many respondents acknowledged skills that they felt beneficial to seeking careers outside of the library environment, and suggested a number of non-library careers that LIS graduates were capable of pursuing, the overwhelming number of respondents still employed or seeking employment in the library sector indicates that LIS graduates seeking employment outside the library sector are very much in the minority. The scope of employment for graduates from LIS Masters courses in Ireland since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive is, for the most part, focused on and limited to the library sector, despite common opinions amongst the literature reviewed and the respondents themselves regarding the potential for a wider range of employment possibilities.

Considering what a number of respondents view as significant problems with the library sector in Ireland, and bearing in mind the discussion in the literature review of this dissertation, further research could perhaps be conducted with the aim of assessing why more graduates have not secured employment outside of the library sector. The majority of
these respondents consider recent LIS graduates in Ireland to be equipped with skills that can be utilised in seeking employment outside the library sector and also believe there are career opportunities that graduates would be capable of fulfilling outside the library sector. When this information is set alongside the data regarding negatives that respondents outlined in the library sector in Ireland, involving problems related to position permanency, opportunity and wages, it seems unusual that there is not a greater number of them attempting, successfully or not, to pursue professional paths in other sectors.

It is possible that these findings are supportive of the third theme discussed in the literature review, namely that those in the librarian profession may have a limiting self-perception of themselves and their own professional potential. Despite the indication of a belief that LIS graduates are capable of pursuing employment opportunities outside of the library sector, indicated by the other literature review themes and the data gathered for analysis here, along with some problematic issues within the library sector itself, it still seems that some graduates may be reluctant to risk following a career path outside of the library sector.

Further research could be beneficial to the profession if it were conducted to assess the success rate of LIS graduates applying for positions outside of the library sector. There is the possibility that, despite the opinions of graduates themselves and the literature reviewed, LIS graduates are not equipped with sufficient skills to secure professional employment outside the library sector. It should be noted that the literature reviewed is mostly written by those working within or somehow connected to the LIS sector, while the data gathered is exclusively the opinions of LIS graduates. Perhaps there is an unrealistic view within the professional LIS world of the applicability of LIS professionals’ skillsets to other working environments.

If this were the case, it might explain, to some degree, the surprising and almost contradictory limitation of the careers of these respondents to the library sector, when many of them are Masters graduates filling non-professional roles or highlighting a lack of opportunity, permanence, and acceptable remuneration in the sector, yet simultaneously are of the opinion that they possess skills applicable to working in other sectors and that there are a variety of career types which they would be capable of fulfilling.

It should not be forgotten that, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, due to having contacted the majority of respondents through organisations closely associated with the
library sector, it is likely that most of the respondents are also particularly involved or interested in the library community. Therefore, the data gathered from this particular group of LIS graduates may not be representative of the employment scope of a whole other body of graduates who are not connected in any way with the library community. Future research could be conducted to try and contact a wider range of respondents. Being able to include the employment data of those who may not be connected with the library community at all may provide greater variance in terms of the employment scope of LIS graduates in Ireland from the last 5 academic years.

Another possibility for future research could question whether those who believe the term librarian most accurately describes them as a professional only have this opinion because they currently work in the library, the current employment sector for most of these respondents. Other potential future research could include an examination of the career history of LIS graduates before they completed their LIS Masters course. Comparisons could be made between their employment positions before and after they completed the course. If time had allowed, I feel this information would have allowed for more in-depth and conclusive findings to be developed during the data analysis. For example, further theories could be generated if any of the respondents currently working as library assistants had already been working in that position before they completed their LIS Masters course.

In conclusion, the data gathered for this dissertation suggests that although most respondents believe there are opportunities available for LIS graduates in other sectors, this body of graduates is, for the most part, not pursuing these opportunities.

It is unclear whether this is due to the opinions outlined in individual respondents’ comments above, to a limiting self-perception in the library profession, because graduates are not actually capable of securing these roles, to their interests simply being solely based within the library sector or for other unknown reasons.

Respondent 23 commented that “… people need to think outside the box and not limit themselves to specific, library related careers.” For any potential number of varying reasons, it certainly seems to be the case that, despite the provision of skills by LIS courses which seem to be applicable outside of the library sector, and despite the majority of respondents
believing there are roles that they are capable of pursuing outside the library sector, this group of graduates are limiting themselves to specific, library-related careers.

4.7 Data Analysis Conclusion

This chapter considered the data analysis undertaken to complete the research for this dissertation and the resulting findings. It began with a discussion regarding how particular unclear or invalid data would be treated. This chapter continued by analysing the data collected and the implications of this analysis for the research. This chapter concluded with a summary of the findings that resulted from the data analysis and with suggestions for possible future research.
5. Reflection

I decided to undertake the DBS MSc Information and Library Management at the beginning of this academic year due to an accumulation of several different factors, both in my personal and professional life. After completing my undergraduate degree, I spent almost 2 years living in Argentina, where I spent much of my time writing a novel. When I returned to Ireland, my ambitions for this book became my main priority. I spent several years working in jobs that I was not particularly interested in or that did not have much potential in terms of career progression, as they enabled me to forget about work in my free time and focus on my book. I ended up self-publishing my novel, all of the work involved in which took almost as much energy, time and effort as writing it to begin with. Although this all led to a sense of personal achievement in one way, it made me realise that, alongside continuing to pursuing my personal, creative goals, I also wanted to find a more sustainable profession to have as a realistic, main source of income and to be more self-sufficient. As a result, I began thinking about returning to education in the near future.

After this project I decided to travel a bit more while I considered what I wanted to do. I signed up for a 3 month volunteering programme with the charity The Umbrella Foundation, who work to help children in Nepal who have become the victims of trafficking and poverty. I began this in March 2015 and was there during the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. This was an enormously traumatic and stressful time, which had a great impact on me, even after I returned to Ireland in July 2015.

At first I found it difficult to re-adjust to regular life in Ireland. I took several months off from job-seeking or making any major decisions, to pursue some personal projects and try to decide what I would really like to be doing with my life. This was a difficult period for me but the time spent reflecting helped me confirm that in the near future I wanted to further my education. I had spent much of my twenties working in jobs that I was not greatly interested in and that did not afford much opportunity for career progression. Although I enjoyed many of these jobs I was also always aware that I usually placed my professional career in a role secondary to personal projects. I decided that it was time for me to educate myself in fields that I was interested in, in order to open up possibilities of developing more reliable, long-term career goals.
I undertook a CELT (Certificate in English Language Teaching) course in spring 2016. I really enjoyed teaching English and worked in this profession for a few months. However, this mostly helped me to realise how much I enjoyed being back in the classroom environment, learning as a student. I began to look at different options for Masters courses which I thought I might find interesting. I arranged a meeting with Marie O’Neill in the DBS Library and came away from my conversation with her feeling that this course was well suited for me. It seemed to be a good combination of subjects I am interested in, along with something I might like to pursue in a long-term, professional capacity. I registered for the course a few days afterwards, confident that it was the right thing for me at this particular point of my life.

I ended up enjoying the course as much as expected. I found all of the subjects really interesting and enjoyed testing myself by trying to complete my assignments to as high a standard as I was capable in the limited time periods afforded. Although the demands of the course could regularly be quite exhausting, and the number of assignments in short periods of time could occasionally become slightly overwhelming, for the most part I really enjoyed completing it.

I made several new friends and enjoyed a lot of socialising during the semester months. It was also great to meet so many lecturers, guest speakers and other professionals during the course, all coming from different personal and professional backgrounds. It was very encouraging hearing their stories about their different careers before entering their current professions and helped to highlight the wide range of options there are for me after I complete the course.

For the most part I have also enjoyed completing the dissertation. Admittedly I found it difficult to get started at the beginning of the summer, after taking a few weeks to relax once I had completed my exams. It took quite an effort to get back into the right frame of mind for writing academically and designing surveys. However, once I began to focus on it I found that I really enjoyed much of the process. Despite it being a much larger piece of single work than any other part of the course, I found it easier in a lot of ways. I was able to focus on just one topic, as opposed to throughout the semesters where we were often working on 2 or 3 different essays at once, while also attending our lectures.
I realised that I really enjoyed the process of gathering and analysing the primary data. I found it quite exciting to be writing up and categorising all the different information coming in, especially as it was information that had not been gathered before. I enjoyed comparing and contrasting different figures and trying to determine any patterns or contradictions. In the end I found the most difficult aspect of the dissertation simply to be the lack of time available to complete it. I feel as though I could have explored a lot more possibilities with the data gathered had I more time. Overall, I am glad to have gone through the experience, as it has led me to consider whether I might like to pursue a researching career at some point or even to incorporate elements of research into whatever I decide to do.

As part of the MSc it is necessary to complete a 3 week, work-experience placement, which I decided to do at the Barnardos’ Learning and Development Centre. I really enjoyed this work placement and found it extremely beneficial for my educational experience. Besides being a very pleasant work environment and an organisation I admire, it was great to be putting many of the skills I had learned in lectures into practice in a real-world environment. Since completing the work placement I have continued to volunteer there one day per week.

Before I registered for the DBS course, I was giving serious consideration to doing an MA in International Development. My intentions for possibly taking that course were to work within the charity/NGO sector. I was also thinking about potentially working towards a long-term goal of a career as a relief-aid worker trained in managing relief teams in areas that have suffered from natural disasters or major crises. This was largely in part to my experiences volunteering abroad in 2015 and the devastation I saw during the earthquake. However, upon researching the sector, it seemed that there was quite a limited number of job opportunities and many graduates of this type of course were finding it difficult to find regular employment in the sector. Although I decided not to pursue these goals for the time being, I realised that the first day of voluntary work I did in Barnardos was on the 2 year anniversary of the earthquake in Nepal, so in my head that represented a nice example of life experiences coming full circle.

Now that I am submitting my dissertation, I am delighted that I decided to do the MSc Information and Library Management at DBS. I have learned an enormous amount and tested
myself in a lot of different, exciting ways. I am now looking forward to thinking about the first steps of my career in a new and interesting profession.
Bibliography


Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

1. Which age group do you belong to?

18-30 / 31-40 / 41-50 / 51-60 / 60+

2. What gender are you?

Male / Female / Other

3. What nationality are you?

4. Which LIS Masters course have you completed since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive?

Dublin Business School – MSc Information and library Management

University College Dublin – MLIS Library and Information Studies

Other (please specify)

5. In which year did you graduate from your LIS Masters course?


6. Please provide the details of the undergraduate education you completed before commencing your LIS Masters course

7. Have you completed any other accredited educational course(s) since graduating from your LIS Masters course?

Yes / No
8. If you answered “Yes” to Question 7, please explain which other educational course(s) you have completed since graduating from your LIS Masters course:

9. Which term do you feel most accurately represents you as a professional?
   Librarian / Information Manager / Other (please specify)

10. Was the first position of employment you secured after graduating from your LIS Masters course in the library sector?
   Yes / No

11. If you answered “Yes” to Question 10, what type of position was it?
   Library Assistant / Library Attendant / Librarian / Senior Library Assistant / Assistant Librarian / Senior Librarian / Other

12. If you answered “No” to Question 10, what type of employment position did you first secure after graduating from your LIS Masters course?

13. Are you currently employed in the library sector?
   Yes / No

14. If you answered “Yes” to Question 13, please state the name of the library and your position within it:
15. If you answered “No” to Question 13, please provide the name of the sector you work in, the organisation and your position within it:

16. Please list any other employment positions you have filled, prior to your current position, since graduating from your LIS Masters course. Please provide the name of the sector you worked in, the organisation and your position within it:

17. How frequently do you apply for employment opportunities outside of the library sector?

Very frequently / Somewhat frequently / Not very frequently / Rarely / Very rarely

18. Please explain your answer to the above question:

19. Are there any particular subjects that you studied during your LIS Masters course that you have found beneficial to your career when seeking employment opportunities outside of a library environment?

Yes / No

20. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, please explain your answer.

21. Are there any particular subjects that you studied during your LIS Masters course that you feel cannot be applied to employment positions outside of a library environment?

Yes / No

22. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, please explain your answer.
23. Are there any particular subjects or skills that you believe would have been beneficial to your professional career since graduating had they been included in your LIS Masters course?

Yes / No

24. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, please explain your answer.

25. Are there any subjects that you would recommend adding to future LIS Masters courses in the Republic of Ireland, based on your experiences since graduating?

Yes / No

26. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, please explain your answer.

27. In your opinion, are there particular types of career opportunities which LIS Masters courses graduates do not regularly apply for, which you believe they would be capable of successfully pursuing?

Yes / No

28. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, please explain your answer.

29. Please feel free to add any further thoughts or comments below:

30. Please select “Yes” if you are willing to allow your anonymised data to be passed on to University College Dublin and Dublin Business School for the purpose of informing developments in their library schools. Please select “No” if you do not wish your anonymised data to be used for any purpose other than this research dissertation.

Yes / No
Appendix 2 – SLIP Ireland Blogpost

Destination Data for Graduates of Postgraduate Library Programmes in the Republic of Ireland.

Since embarking on the MSc Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School, I have met numerous lecturers, guest speakers and other LIS professionals at different events, all of whom work in a diverse range of industries and positions within their respective organisations. This experience has contributed towards the direction I will be taking for my dissertation, as I intend to explore the scope of employment for LIS Masters course graduates in Ireland.

The aim of my dissertation is to examine the sectors of employment that graduates have entered since completing their courses, including the organisations they have worked for and the roles that they have filled within those organisations. I hope to be able to generate comparable figures for the numbers of graduates who have pursued careers inside and outside of the library sector. I also wish to assess the degree to which the education received in LIS Masters courses is transferable to employment outside of the library environment. The target population for this dissertation is those who have graduated from an LIS Masters course in the Republic of Ireland since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive.

A significant amount of literature exists regarding the wide range of skillsets utilised in day-to-day work by modern librarians (Foutch, 2016), (Murray, 2014), (Mahraj, 2012), (Gordon, 2003). Considerable literature is also available regarding the transferability and applicability of librarians’ skillsets to jobs outside of the library environment (Spring, 2016), (Law, 2014). However, there does not seem to be sufficient research focused on recent graduates in Ireland, which specifically examines the areas of employment graduates enter after completing their LIS course.

There is also previous research concerning the skills that LIS professionals feel they lack when seeking employment outside of traditional LIS environments. However, this research is based upon data gathered from professionals spread across the globe (Hazeri, Sarrafzadeh, &
Martin, 2007) I hope to gather data that is specifically representative of graduates of Irish courses to compare with this existing research, as well as other studies in the literature.

Based on the literature reviewed, and my own experiences, I believe that there is an opportunity to conduct informative research examining the variety of graduates’ career paths, both inside and outside of the library environment within the Irish context.

If you are a graduate of an LIS Masters course in the Republic of Ireland, who has graduated since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive, and would like to participate in this survey, please click the following link to complete the short questionnaire – https://s.surveyplanet.com/rypPzuXHb
Appendix 3 – Survey Information Sheet/Consent Form

My name is Daire O’Driscoll. I am a postgraduate student of Library and Information Management at Dublin Business School. I am currently working on my dissertation exploring the scope of employment for L.I.S. (Library and information Science) Masters graduates in the Republic of Ireland.

The aim of the dissertation is to examine the areas of employment that graduates have entered and the roles they have filled within the organisations they have worked for. It will also explore the degree to which the education received in L.I.S. Masters courses is transferable to employment outside the library environment.

The target population for my research is all graduates who have graduated from an L.I.S. Masters course in the Republic of Ireland since the academic year 2011/12 inclusive.

I would be extremely grateful if you would assist me by completing this questionnaire and allowing me to use the results for my research.

The responses are anonymous. This information will be gathered and used primarily for the purpose of this dissertation. Career destinations data, along with programme feedback, may be beneficial towards informing developments in the library schools at University College Dublin and Dublin Business School respectively. Please tick the opt out option at the end of this questionnaire if you do not want your anonymised data to be passed onto these schools for this purpose.

This short questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

The deadline for completing this questionnaire is Monday, July 31, 2017.