

The Library Graduate Assistantship: A Crucial Supplement to an LIS Education

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Abstract

While undertaking their graduate studies, many library and information science (LIS) students seek pre-professional graduate assistantships. These assistantships can serve as excellent opportunities to complement student's education and influence their future careers by providing them with relevant on-the-job education and skills. Graduate assistantships are a crucial to LIS education in helping new LIS professionals develop skills and experiences needed to attain gainful, professional employment.

Methodology

32 LIS students or professionals, all of whom (100%) have held a graduate assistantship, **responded to a survey** disseminated by word-of-mouth and Twitter. The survey presented participants with definitions of graduate assistantships, technical services, and public services to aid participants in better understanding the questions. The participants answered **a series of 13 questions about their graduate assistantships** and their graduate level **coursework**, including whether they found professional employment within 6 months of graduating, which graduate experience most strongly influenced their career decisions, what sorts of experiences they received in their assistantships versus their coursework, and what they found most valuable about their assistantships.

Experiential Learning

Graduate assistantships provide learning opportunities outside the curriculum. Through their graduate assistantships, students can develop skills first taught in coursework. 81.3% of respondents had reference coursework; and 71% had reference experience in their assistantships. The assistantships also provide additional learning opportunities that the LIS coursework does not provide. For example, 32.3% of respondents gained circulation experience in their assistantship, whereas only 1 respondent (3.1%) had coursework that covered circulation.

Collaboration Opportunities

LIS programs and their institutions' libraries can collaborate **to provide assistantships** which are relevant. Due to this collaboration, LIS faculty and librarians strengthen their ties and may find opportunities to collaborate **on projects or publications** to bolster both parties' careers. The collaboration around assistantships also opens a dialogue which allow LIS educators to remain current with library trends, thus further improving the curriculum.

What do they learn during their graduate assistantships?

