

Alumni Survey Analysis, April 2014

As part of our ongoing planning and assessment process, alumni were solicited for help in assessing the effectiveness of the program. These data are presented here as evidence of our success in achieving Program Goals and meeting Standard II.7. An online survey was distributed via the GSLIS listserv on April 9, 2014, and 119 replies were received by April 14, 2014.

This preliminary qualitative analysis addresses the following issues, but not necessarily in this order.

- Employment status
- Perceptions of most valued experiences at GSLIS (up to 3, with space for additional comments)
- Skills learned at QC GSLIS that help in one's current position ((up to 3, with space for additional comments)
- Greatest strength of the program (choice of 5, with space for additional comments)
- Suggestions for making the education at GSLIS more meaningful/valuable
- Additional comments and suggestions

These perceptions are addressed overall and by two cohorts: those graduating between 2005 and 2009, and those graduating 2010 to 2014. There were too few responses to analyze by cohort for those graduating before 2004. Twice as many respondents (n=60) graduated since 2010, as in the period between 2005 and 2009. This likely reflects both the interest shown in the survey by more recent graduates, and especially, their greater likelihood to still subscribe to the GSLIS listserv.

Overall, while nearly 70% of all respondents report working full-time, and 77% work in LIS or a related field, those with more years of experience are generally more likely to be employed full-time and in an LIS field. This is likely the result of the continuing economic downturn, and the difficulties faced by new graduates in a challenging job market.

Table: Alumni Profile and Perceptions: Total Sample Overall Responses

Number of responses: 119			Number	percentage
Are you currently working?	Yes, full time		82	68.91%
	Yes, part time		26	21.85%
	No		10	8.40%
If you are currently working,	Is it in a field related to Archives and/or Library and Information Services,	Yes	91	85.85%
		No	15	14.15%

Number of responses: 119		Number	percentage
	broadly defined?		
What are the things you most value from your experiences at the QC GSLIS? Please select three:	Exposure to all aspects of librarianship	78	65.55%
	Broad overview of current state of the field	57	47.90%
	Learning from practitioners	55	46.22%
	How to do a reference interview	39	32.77%
	Practical experience, in class and internship	49	41.18%
	Socialization into the field	29	24.37%
	Mentoring from professors	30	25.21%
	How to handle reference sources	32	26.89%
	Writing grants	7	5.88%
What skills did you learn at QC GSLIS that help you in your current position? Please select three:	Writing, analysis and research skills	64	53.78%
	Presentation skills (practice, emphasis as skill)	63	52.94%
	Professionalism	58	48.74%
	Ethical librarianship	43	36.13%
	Preservation	17	14.29%
	Public speaking	32	26.89%
	Pedagogy / instruction	25	21.01%
What is the greatest strength of the program?	Student diversity	16	13.45%
	Faculty	38	31.93%
	Adjunct faculty	15	12.61%
	Curriculum	27	22.69%
	Proximity to Manhattan	3	2.52%
What could we have done to make your education more meaningful/valuable?	More active career placement	63	52.94%
	Hands on experience (different internships, shadowing?)	51	42.86%
	More technology	56	47.06%
	Career skills workshop	42	35.29%
	Archives Technology-XML, EAD, etc.	31	26.05%
	Right level of technology	23	19.33%
	Use QC Library	12	10.08%

As indicated in the overall summary of survey responses, nearly 53% of respondents felt that more active career placement, a greater emphasis on technology (47%) and more hands-on experience (43%) would have enhanced their education. Comments related to this theme included the following:

- Awareness of County Civil Service requirements
- Mentoring with alumni
- Greater encouragement of networking, both within and outside the school
- A more practical, career-oriented emphasis in coursework; more fieldwork
- Greater collaboration with CUNY libraries
- More field trips to area libraries

The GSLIS has taken steps to address some of these concerns, as on comments reflect: “I have seen much improvement since I graduated: use of ePortfolios, more career-workshops, COURSE ON INFORMATION LITERACY TEACHING”. A further example was a Curriculum Space event in which speakers addressed the County Civil Service requirements for Nassau and Suffolk counties in Spring 2014.

As shown in Table 2.Y, recent graduates (2010-2014) were far more likely to be working part-time than those graduating between 2005 and 2009. Recent graduates also were less likely to be working in an LIS-related field. A range of types of LIS setting were represented over the ten year period, with most working in public (19), academic (15) or museum/archive/institute environments (11).

Perceptions of most valued experiences at GSLIS (up to 3, with space for additional comments)

In general, respondents felt that exposure to all aspects of librarianship (66%) was the most valuable aspect of the program, followed by a broad overview of the current state of the field (48%), learning from practitioners (46%), and practical experience, in class and/or in the internship (42%). More recent graduates were more likely to value the broad overview of the field (57% vs. 43%), while those graduating in the earlier cohort felt that learning from practitioners was especially helpful. Specific comments related to the value internship or practical experiences, guest speakers, technology classes, and the Archives Certificate.

Greatest strength of the program (choice of 5, with space for additional comments)

While 32% of respondents choosing from the pre-selected list identified faculty as the greatest strength of the program, other comments overwhelmingly stressed the low cost of the program as compared to other schools in the area, affordability, and value for the money. Twenty-two

individuals offered specific comments, of these, 16 (73%) mentioned issues related to affordability and value. This is consistent with Queens College's national rankings by the *Washington Monthly* as number one in New York and number two nationwide in the category "Best Bang for the Bucks". U.S. News and World Reprt similarly named Queens College one of the 10 best Public Regional Universities in the north (<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/about/Pages/default.aspx>). Other comments ranged from the quality of the professors, the local reputation of the program, to theoretical and practical knowledge. Several mentioned the emphasis on research, although others commented that an internship would be more valuable as a requirement, especially for those in public librarianship.

Suggestions for making the education at GSLIS more meaningful/valuable and additional comments

In addition to those comments already mentioned (especially as regards career placement, networking and mentoring), many of the suggestions in questions 5 and 6 emphasized the importance of technology, Many respondents felt that the program would benefit from more challenging coursework, especially in technology and in core classes, including a computer-literacy requirement for admissions, and a greater emphasis on practical assignments. An archivist graduating in 2007 noted:

More rigorous program in general, not necessarily from a technological assignment. I don't think the program should be teaching to the technology. I should not have been able to graduate with knowledge of encoding, which I had to teach myself.

Other topics included the following:

- multi-semester planning, more detailed assistance in planning for specific areas of LIS
- more realistic assessments of the job market
- keeping the curriculum current in a rapidly changing environment, but retaining cataloging, at least as an elective.
- Post-graduate continuing education programs

Comments relating to 709 suggesting making it a two semester sequence, having separate sections for Archives and other students in view of differing research methods requirements.

Year Graduated from GSLIS			2005 – 2009 (n=30)	2005 - 2009 (%)	2010 – 2014 (n=60)	2010 - 2014 (%)	Difference between 2005 - 2009 and 2010 - 2014
Are you currently working?	Yes, full time		24	80.00%	35	58.33%	-21.67%
	Yes, part time		3	10.00%	20	33.33%	23.33%
	No		3	10.00%	5	8.33%	-1.67%
If you are currently working,	Is it in a field related to Archives and/or Library and Information Services, broadly defined?	Yes	26	89.66%	44	81.48%	-8.17%
		No	3	10.34%	10	18.52%	8.17%
What are the things you most value from your experiences at the QC GSLIS? Please select three:	Exposure to all aspects of librarianship		21	70.00%	40	66.67%	-3.33%
	Broad overview of current state of the field		13	43.33%	34	56.67%	13.33%
	Learning from practitioners		18	60.00%	24	40.00%	-20.00%
	How to do a reference interview		10	33.33%	16	26.67%	-6.67%
	Practical experience, in class and internship		14	46.67%	25	41.67%	-5.00%
	Socialization into the field		6	20.00%	19	31.67%	11.67%
	Mentoring from professors		9	30.00%	13	21.67%	-8.33%
	How to handle reference sources		5	16.67%	18	30.00%	13.33%
	Writing grants		4	13.33%	3	5.00%	-8.33%
What skills did you learn at QC GSLIS that help you in your current position? Please select three:	Writing, analysis and research skills		19	63.33%	28	46.67%	-16.67%
	Presentation skills (practice, emphasis as skill)		16	53.33%	32	53.33%	0.00%
	Professionalism		13	43.33%	34	56.67%	13.33%
	Ethical librarianship		11	36.67%	22	36.67%	0.00%

	Preservation		4	13.33%	12	20.00%	6.67%
	Public speaking		7	23.33%	19	31.67%	8.33%
	Pedagogy / instruction		5	16.67%	13	21.67%	5.00%
What is the greatest strength of the program?	Student diversity		1	3.33%	11	18.33%	15.00%
	Faculty		11	36.67%	17	28.33%	-8.33%
	Adjunct faculty		3	10.00%	10	16.67%	6.67%
	Curriculum		10	33.33%	9	15.00%	-18.33%
	Proximity to Manhattan		0	0.00%	3	5.00%	5.00%
What could we have done to make your education more meaningful/valuable?	More active career placement		10	33.33%	38	63.33%	30.00%
	Hands on experience (different internships, shadowing?)		13	43.33%	27	45.00%	1.67%
	More technology		16	53.33%	29	48.33%	-5.00%
	Career skills workshop		5	16.67%	25	41.67%	25.00%
	Archives Technology- XML, EAD, etc.		9	30.00%	18	30.00%	0.00%
	Right level of technology		4	13.33%	15	25.00%	11.67%
	Use QC Library		2	6.67%	9	15.00%	8.33%

Clearly, the MLS program is serving our students quite well in many areas, but suggestions for improvement are pronounced. Action items for follow-up with the full faculty include the establishment of better career placement services, and professional development workshops. Already the faculty has passed a motion requiring the distribution of fuller course descriptions for courses to be taught in the next semester, along with relevant course sequences for a specific area of interest, to assist students and faculty during the advisement period. These and related topics will be priority agenda items in future faculty and CET meetings.