

What happens to iSchool graduates?

Using career data to support iSchool engagement initiatives

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Background

iSchool collaboration with local, national or global constituencies can be promoted through curricular programs, community outreach, and partnerships with other nonprofit and for-profit institutions and organizations on research and projects. **iSchool faculty, students, and supporters, including alumni, all play a role in planning, promoting, implementing, and sustaining these engagement efforts.** Research institutions that are committed to community engagement will need data from a variety of sources to make these initiatives successful.

Career tracking of graduates can provide iSchools with useful data for strategic planning of programs and engagement activities. For some programs, **alumni may be an untapped resource**, and regular communication with those who are interested opens up potential partnerships with them, their associates, and their employers. **Retrospective surveys allow an iSchool to reconnect with alumni who may welcome the opportunity to re-engage with the program and faculty, conduct research or provide support, or offer internships, learning opportunities, or future jobs for students.**

Career surveys can be used to assess this interest and solicit ideas for collaborative ventures. Analysis of career data can also help iSchool educators find out **what types of jobs their graduates are taking and the variety of organizations that employ them**, as well as the graduates' perceptions of how well the program prepared them for their professions. This type of information informs curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, internship placement, research project planning, and the establishment of community partnerships.

Methods

The study analyzes a subset of the data collected for the Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science (WILIS) project, a large-scale retrospective career survey of graduates of North Carolina LIS programs (1964-2007). The subset of data consists of respondents who graduated with a master's degree in information science from two of the North Carolina LIS programs (1988-2007), **N=171**. All respondents completed a web survey consisting of closed-ended and open-ended questions about their education, employment history, career aspirations, as well as their current ways of keeping in touch with their LIS program and their interest in continuing this connection.

Results

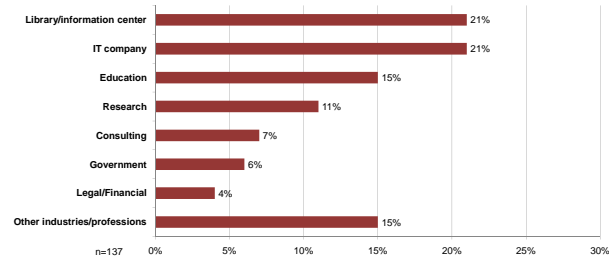
Profile of NC MSIS/MIS graduates



- Average age: 39, *sd* 8
- 38% non-white
- 94% employed
- 56% female
- 87% hold US citizenship
- 17% have left LIS field
- Dwell in 24 US states and 4 countries
- Average number of academic degrees: 2.5, *sd* .84
- 7% completed/pursuing PhD in IS or related field
- 10% completed/pursuing JD, MBA, EdD, or certificate

Current employment

Graduates are working in a variety of settings and industries



- 90% work full-time
- 8% are self-employed
- 41% are in a supervisory role
- Average Salary: \$73,986, *sd* \$35,202

Representative job titles and roles

Applications Analyst	Librarian
Business Process Analyst	Network Engineer
Digital Repository Specialist	Programmer
Information Architect	Project Manager
Interaction Designer	Research Analyst
IT Consultant/Director/Manager	Software Architect/Engineer
IT Specialist/Technician	Systems Analyst
	Web Services Engineer/Developer

Job and career satisfaction

- **88%** are satisfied with their job.
- In the next year, only 13% plan to leave their current job.
- **94%** are satisfied with an LIS career.
- In the next year, only 7% plan to leave the LIS field.

What can the data tell us about engagement and outreach?

The importance of social connections

- **Job Search:** 34% got their current job through informal networking. 30% got their job through direct recruitment.
- **Collegial work environment:** 90% feel that they are part of the group they work with, and 95% feel that they get the support from co-workers they need to do a good job.
- **Job values:** 58% believe it is important that their job allows them to have a lot of contact with other people. 74% believe that it is important to have an occupation that is useful to society and allows them to help others.
- **Alumni connections:** 38% wanted to send an updated email address to their LIS program.

Recent graduate perspectives (2001-2007)

- **75% rated the overall experience at their program as good or excellent, but**
 - 29% say the opportunity for mentoring from alumni is poor or needs improvement.
 - 26% say the opportunities for networking are poor or need improvement.
 - In contrast, only 6% rated the learning environment or teachers as poor or in need of improvement.
- **Placement concerns:**
 - "I was extremely disappointed in the lack of assistance from my program in helping me to find an internship or a job."
 - "I wish my program would have been active in finding graduates employment upon graduation."
- **Recent alumni are staying connected to their program** via email (56%), newsletter (47%), fellow students (42%), website (36%), and faculty (29%).



Professional social connections are valuable to students and alumni.

iSchools can maximize opportunities for students to network with alumni by leveraging existing relationships, opening lines of communication, and reconnecting with "lost" alumni. Post-graduation engagement efforts may augment career placement activities, inform strategic planning, and help to launch new programs.

WORKFORCE ISSUES IN LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
WILIS
<http://www.wilis.unc.edu/>

WILIS is a collaborative research partnership of the UNC Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science and the UNC Institute on Aging.

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