



*Evidence Summary*

**Courses Studied by New York Librarianship Students Affect Their Perceived Readiness for Employment**

**A Review of:**

Creel, S. L., & Pollicino, E. B. (2012). Practitioners' & LIS students' perceptions on preparedness in the New York metropolitan area. *Education for Information*, 29, 53-69. doi: 10.3233/EFI-2010-0911

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**Abstract**

**Objective** – To investigate whether librarianship students felt ready to enter the workforce, and whether practitioners felt recent graduates were suitably prepared.

**Design** – Survey.

**Setting** – A university in New York City, and school and public librarians working in the New York metropolitan area.

**Subjects** – 55 MLS students, 167 school library practitioners, and 181 public library practitioners.

**Methods** – Students surveyed practitioners about new graduates' readiness to work as

librarians. The students also assessed their own readiness.

**Main Results** – Detailed analysis of differences between the responses of the four subject groups – public librarians, school librarians, public library students, and school library students – for each of six survey statements is provided. Practitioners and students felt that school librarianship graduates were more prepared for work than public librarianship graduates. This may have been due to differences in the practical components of their courses.

**Conclusion** – Preparedness for library employment is related to the courses studied by librarianship students.

## Commentary

Many degrees approved by the American Library Association (ALA) do not require students to take courses covering all of the ALA Final Core Competencies Statement (American Library Association, 2009) there is a disconnect between employers' and educators' expectations of what college courses should teach, particularly in relation to the practical components of the courses. This paper outlines previously published work in this field, and reports on a survey investigating new graduates' preparedness for work in a library. The opinions of librarians were gathered and students assessed their own readiness.

The authors acknowledge problems in their survey design, such as the small sample size and limited geographical area. They also draw attention to a significant flaw: they asked librarians about the preparedness of graduates, but did not check if these librarians had recently worked with a new graduate. The CriSTaL Checklist for Appraising a User Study (n.d.) was used as a guide to further assess the research methods described in this paper.

The paper lacks information about how participants were recruited, and the response rate is not given. A large number of students were involved in conducting the surveys (n=55); it would have been useful to include more detail about how the authors checked for consistency across surveys conducted by different students.

The authors compared public and school librarianship students but there was not a control group who had not attended MLS training, so the impact of the courses cannot be fully evaluated. Future studies could compare the readiness of students at the start and end of their degrees to see if attending library school changes their capabilities. Students were asked if they agreed with statements about their own preparedness, but the discussion sometimes

interprets this as an opinion on the readiness of all students (e.g., "think recently graduated MLS students" (p. 59)). Some students might assess their own readiness differently to their classmates' readiness; this purpose of this question needs to be clarified in future iterations of the student survey.

In the analysis of the survey, the data is often presented as bar charts and percentages. The inclusion of numerical data tables would have been useful (if permitted by the journal), as this would enable readers to carry out their own analysis. Demographic information about the student participants is provided, but demographics of the employed librarians are not given. Authors writing about country-specific education practices should include definitions of terminology (e.g., "service learning") for international readers.

This study should influence the design of librarianship courses as it identifies areas where students and employers feel graduates are not well prepared for the workplace. Further research is needed to investigate why employers feel students are underprepared, and to explore whether revising the content of librarianship courses would have an impact on preparedness.

## References

- CriSTaL Checklist for Appraising a User Study. (n.d.). Retrieved November 28, 2012, from <http://nettingtheevidence.pbwiki.com/f/use.doc>
- American Library Association. (2009). ALA's Core Competences of Librarianship. Retrieved November 28, 2012, from <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/files/careers/corecomp/corecompetences/finalcorecompstat09.pdf>