

More Job Seekers, Fewer Jobs: Findings from Library Jobline, Year Three

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For the last 3 years, Library Research Services, a unit of the Colorado State Library, has provided a venue for libraries and library staff to meet in the job search. LibraryJobline.org is a database-supported website where job seekers can create personal accounts and libraries from throughout the state and nation can post job listings. This free service, available online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, offers job seekers interactive tools to specify what they are looking for in a position and allows them to receive notifications when a related description is posted. Comparisons among the postings over the 3-year period reflect aspects of the current economic climate as well as reveal trends in the library field.

Quick Look at LibraryJobline.org

Since 2007:

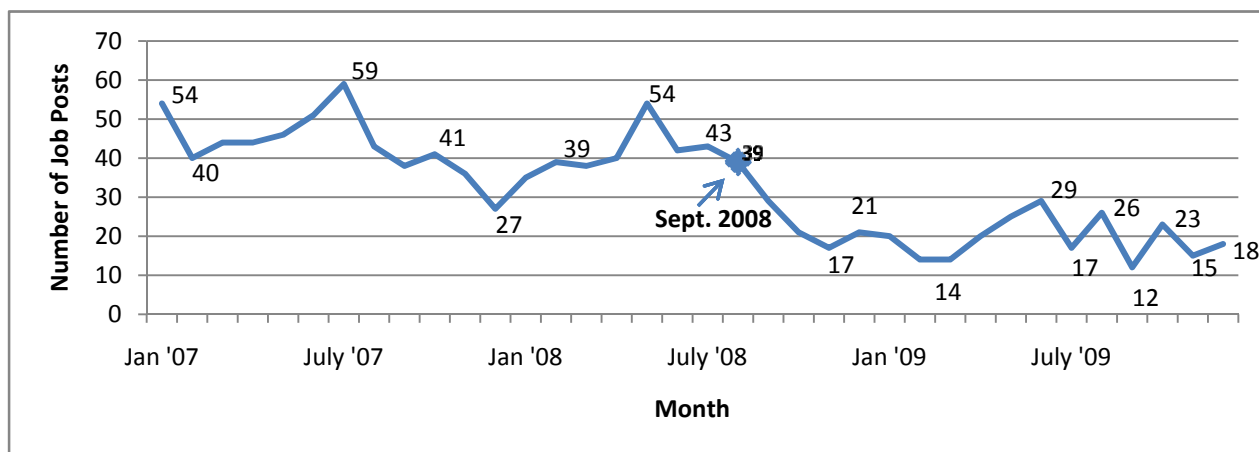
- 1,500 positions posted
- More than 1,500 people have signed up for MyJobline accounts
- 2 out of 3 registered users receive email notifications of new job posts
- More than 1 out of 3 registered users subscribe to Jobline's RSS feed

Number of Job Postings

As librarians are well aware, their profession has not been immune to the negative effects of the economic recession. This is evident simply from the decline in the number of job postings on Library Jobline. Only 233 jobs were posted during 2009—56 percent of the total posted in 2008 (418) and less than half (45%) of the 2007 total (523).

The sharp decline started in September 2008 and continued through most of the following year. By the last 3 months of 2009, however, the number of job posts matched those of the same period in 2008. Though still considerably fewer than the number of jobs posted in 2007, this may indicate the first signs of recovery (see Chart 1).

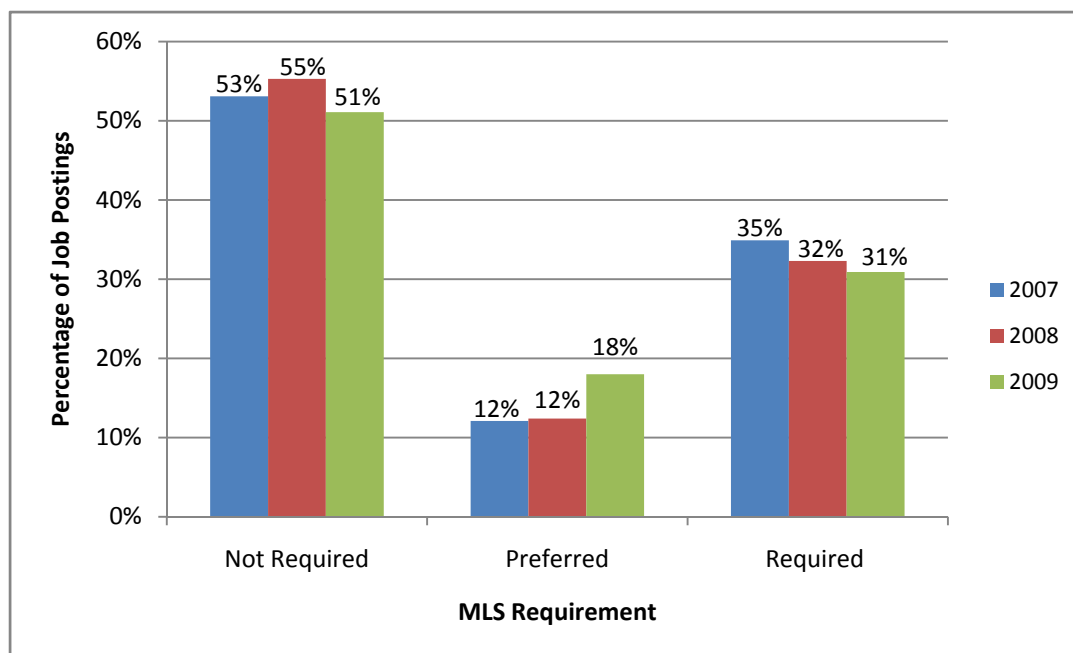
Chart 1
Library Jobline:
Number of Job Posts by Month
January 2007- December 2009



While the number of job postings decreased, the number of job post views increased by 23 percent (from 338,347 in 2008 to 416,253 in 2009). Not only are fewer jobs available, but those looking for work face more competition.

In an increasingly competitive job market, job seekers and employers search for a variety of ways to distinguish the top candidates from the larger pool of applicants. Advanced education traditionally has been a way to do that. Surprisingly, the percentage of job postings *requiring* an MLS degree has decreased slightly in the last 3 years (from 35% in 2007 to 31% in 2009). However, a notable increase in the proportion of postings *preferring* an MLS degree, from 12 percent in 2007 to 18 percent in 2009, suggests that the further education is still an advantage for job seekers (see Chart 2).

Chart 2
Library Jobline
Percentage of Job Postings Requiring ALA-MLS
2007, 2008, 2009



Reasons for the changes in degree preferences and requirements are unclear. Even so, it is obvious that the increase in the percentage of job posts *preferring* the degree is connected to the decrease in percentage of job posts that *require* and *do not require* the degree. The changes could simply be due to the level and types of jobs posted, which can vary from year to year (i.e. more shelving versus administrative positions, or an increase in positions that combine professional and non-professional duties).

Another noticeable shift has occurred in the ratio of full-time (40 hours per week) to part-time (less than 40 hours per week) job posts. Over the last three years, the percentage of full-time job posts has steadily decreased, dropping from 72 percent in 2007 to 62 percent in 2009. The same trend seems to be occurring nationwide, according to *Library Journal's* ¹ latest report on the employment rates and salaries of recent MLIS graduates. In 2007,

¹ Maatta, S. (2009). Jobs and pay take a hit. *Library Journal*, 134(17), 21-29.



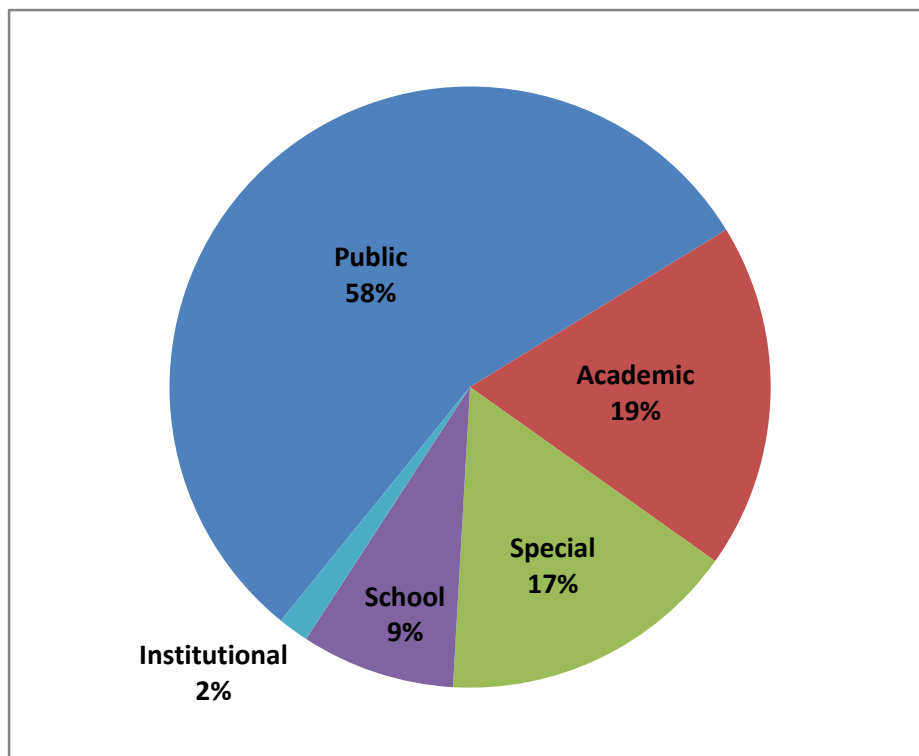
nearly 9 out of 10 (89%) MLIS graduates reported finding full-time jobs, but only 7 of 10 had similar luck in 2008.

Posts by Library Type

Overall, the proportion of job postings by library type stayed about the same as in previous years, with the majority of posts (58%) being for jobs in public libraries. Fewer than 1 out of 5 postings were for academic (19%) and special (17%) libraries, and just 1 of 10 were for schools (9%). Perhaps due in part to other avenues for advertising available positions, especially in school libraries, these proportions may not be an accurate reflection of the actual number of job openings (see Chart 3).

Although school library postings account for a small percentage of the positions posted on Jobline, they tend to garner considerable interest. The “Hot Job” of 2009 was for a teacher librarian with Denver Public Schools. This post was viewed more than 5,000 times. The next most popular post, for a management position with the Rangeview Library District, received 28 percent fewer views, with 3,663.

Chart 3
Library Jobline
Percentage of Total Job
Postings by Library Type
2009



Salaries

For those lucky enough to find a job, salary is an obvious concern. Unfortunately, it appears that salary was not immune to the cutbacks visible in other areas. Although the average starting hourly wage of job postings² saw a significant increase from 2007 to 2008 (4.3%), it declined by 2.4 percent during 2009.

Average Starting Hourly Salary of Jobline Postings

2007 - \$17.68
 2008 - \$18.44
 2009 - \$18.00

Average Hourly Salaries For Library Staff Bureau of Labor Statistics

Nationwide

May 2007 - \$19.69
 May 2008 - \$20.40

Colorado

May 2007 - \$20.73
 May 2008 - \$21.39

Compared to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' librarian and library technician salary estimates³ for the nation and for Colorado, the salaries listed for Library Jobline posts are on the low end. This could be due to an uneven distribution of postings according to their level and salaries (i.e. more page positions than administration), skewing the average lower. Another factor may be that the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses actual current wages, rather than starting salaries, in its calculations. Nevertheless, Library Jobline postings showed a higher percentage increase in average salary from 2007-2008 (4.3%) than did the nation (3.6%) or the state of Colorado as a whole (3.2%).

Salary and MLS Degree

While average salaries overall declined in 2009, the job postings *requiring* an MLS – though slightly fewer than in previous years – were offering higher average starting wages. Positions with fewer educational requirements dropped below the average salary from two years before.

Most drastic was the drop in salary for job postings *preferring* an MLS. The decrease of 13.5 percent brought the average down by \$2.70 from 2008 to 2009, settling at a significantly lower amount, even, than in 2007. It seems that although more job postings preferred candidates with an MLS degree, they weren't necessarily offering monetary compensation for it (see Chart 4).

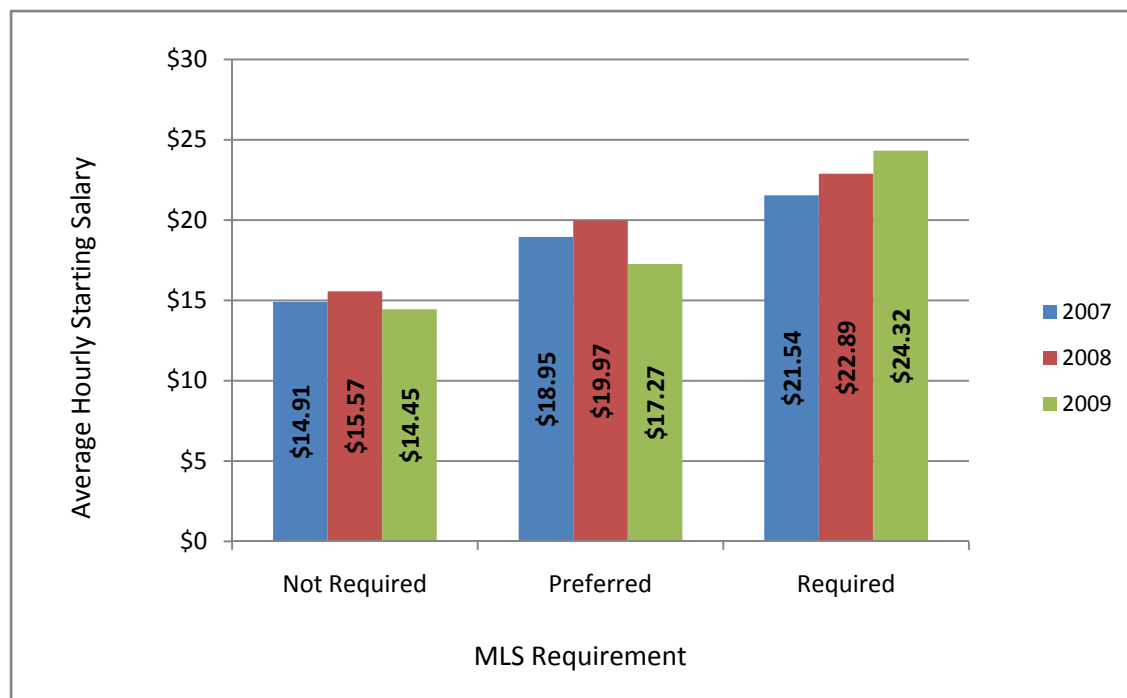


² The average includes all levels of library positions, from shelving to administration. The number of job posts at each level would affect the overall average salary for each library type, potentially pushing it toward either the high or low end. Calculations used the starting salary listed for each job post.

³ The nationwide and Colorado salaries were calculated using the Bureau of Labor Statistics State and National Occupation Employment and Wage Estimates. The dollar amounts given are an average of the wages listed for librarians and library technicians. Salary estimates for 2009 will not be available until May. For more information, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oes/home.htm>



Chart 4
Library Jobline
Average Hourly Salary⁴ by MLS Degree Requirement
2007, 2008, 2009



Conclusion

Without a doubt, the most significant change in Library Jobline's third year was the drastically lower number of jobs posted – little more than half the number posted in 2008. At the same time, the number of job post views has increased considerably (23%). More people are looking for jobs, but there are fewer job openings, and salaries for those jobs available have decreased. The final months of 2009 saw the number of job posts return to late 2008 levels, showing the slightest signs of the beginnings of a recovery. Even so, Library Jobline stats show the library field still has a long way to go in climbing out of the economic slump.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Author: Jamie Helgren – DU-LRS Research Fellow
 Library Research Service • 201 East Colfax Avenue, Suite 309 • Denver, CO 80203-1799
 Phone 303.866.6900 • E-mail: LRS@LRS.org • Web site: www.LRS.org

⁴ Average hourly salaries for job postings requiring an MLS degree were calculated using the starting salary listed.

