

I Didn't Even Know That Job Existed....

8 ways to research emerging library and information science jobs and careers



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INTRODUCTION

If you're considering a library/information science career but haven't explored the profession recently, you may be surprised to discover there are literally hundreds of different ways that LIS graduates are deploying their skills today.

You're probably already aware of school, public, and academic library careers.

In addition to these familiar options, your LIS skills might also enable you to work for a corporation, a government agency, a hospital, a private law firm, a major city orchestra, a community organization, a policy research institute, a media entity such as NPR, or countless other types of employers who can benefit from your information skills.

In fact, there's almost no type of organization, and no industry, that doesn't need cutting-edge information skills. Because LIS professionals are undertaking so many new, innovative roles with their skills, however, they're also expanding into territory where the job descriptions rarely mention the word "librarian."

In that case, how can you identify jobs that might be a perfect fit for your LIS skills, even if those organizations posting these "invisible" job openings don't realize it yet?

By using the following strategies and processes to explore your jobs and/or careers of potential interest, identify what position keywords have relevance to your interests and expertise, and develop your own "map" of relevant job titles, employers, and industry information.

Time to use those research skills to make the invisible *visible*!

WHAT INFORMATION MIGHT YOU NEED?

When you're exploring new LIS roles and job opportunities, you probably want to consider four elements that will help define those opportunities. These are:

- **Industries.** How are the industries of potential interest to you in your geographic area faring? Expanding or contracting? Hiring or laying off? And have any new industries sprung up (think recent announcements about new corporate headquarters) near you recently?
- **Employers.** Who are the major employers in your industries or career paths of interest? Expanding or contracting? Do their operations rely on using information resources strategically, and do they do so?

If yes, what are the job titles for those types of information-intensive role?

- **New roles for existing skills.** How are both library and non-library organizations deploying familiar LIS skills in new ways? What are those new ways (jobs) called?
- **Emerging roles for new skills.** LIS students and professionals are learning new skills that can take them into entirely new career territory, for example, user experience (UX), data management, and information governance, among others.

Where are these jobs, who's hiring, what do you need to know, and what are these new positions likely to be titled?

With those four guideposts in mind, your next step will be to develop an approach that helps you narrow those hundreds of potential invisible jobs down a bit.

THINK JOB TITLE OR KEYWORD GROUPINGS

Because different employers use so many different titles or keywords for similar jobs, it's important to think about multiple terms they might use when posting a job opening.

This means you need to take into consideration two types of title groupings.

Your **primary** grouping is the type of skill or work focus you're interested in, for example, taxonomy building, user experience, content development, digital asset management.

Your **secondary** grouping or group of keywords describes your role in relationship to that work - perhaps manager, coordinator, team lead, etc.



Say, for example, that your area of expertise was using your LIS research, analysis, and organization skills dealing with content in one form or another.

Your primary keywords might look something like this:

content | information | intelligence | knowledge | data

Your second grouping of keywords (again, thinking broadly about keywords for various roles) might include:

coordinator | librarian | acquisitions | specialist | producer | analyst | writer | manager | curator | developer | officer | aggregator | strategist | marketer | editor

And if you wanted to add a third level of descriptors to filter the jobs in which you might be interested, you could do so by also searching on terms such as these:

- **Enterprise, established, large-scale** (for larger organizations)
- **Start-up** (for newly launched businesses)
- **Pharma/pharmaceutical** (or other industry names)
- **International** (indicates organization that may offer global opportunities)

The following list of potential keyword combinations will give you a good sense of how these combinations work, based on real job descriptions related to an expertise in *Information Organization and Preservation*. Keep in mind, this is only a selection of relevant job titles; you could likely find many more!

Archives and records director
 Archivist, archival processor
 Authority control
 Cataloging, cataloging & metadata services librarian
 Corporate archivist
 Compliance information resources
 Data analyst, manager
 Data curation, mining
 Data scientist, services librarian
 Database design analyst
 Database editor, manager
 Digital archivist
 Digital assets, rights manager
 Digital collections coordinator
 Digital image control specialist
 Digital initiative librarian
 Digital library production services
 Digital preservation specialist
 Digital product manager
 Digital services librarian
 Document analyst, controller, manager
 Document services coordinator
 Electronic document manager, librarian
 Electronic resources officer, cataloger
 Electronic text and imaging center management
 Emerging technology specialist
 Enterprise content manager
 Health or science informatics administrator, analyst
 Imaging coordinator
 Indexer/abstracter
 Information architect
 Information manager/resource manager
 Information systems engineer
 Intranet manager
 Knowledge engineer
 Knowledge management/manager
 Knowledge network specialist
 Learning resource center manager/coordinator
 Management information systems (MIS)
 Metadata specialist, librarian
 Ontology conceptualization
 Photo-archivist
 Preservation coordinator
 Records conversion specialist
 Records manager, records management specialist
 RIM (records and information management) analyst
 Strategic information manager
 Systems architect
 Taxonomy building/taxonomist
 Technical information specialist
 Technology development librarian
 User experience designer/specialist
 Video archivist
 Web content manager
 Web development librarian

RESOURCES FOR DISCOVERING JOB INFORMATION

Let's assume you have an idea of what types of work might interest you and you now know how to think about keywords related to that work.

The following eight resources will help you learn more about where emerging and invisible LIS job opportunities might be found.



1 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional LIS associations are a great source of information about industries, employers, career paths, and jobs. They often offer the following benefits:

Membership lists – use to explore job titles, fellow members at companies or working in industries of interest to whom you can reach out and learn more.

Special interest groups (SIGs) – often called divisions, these groups are made up of members who share a similar area of expertise or type of employment, offering you a target-rich environment for learning more about a potential career option, recommended employers, job openings, and other information of interest.

Member profiles – usually found on the association website or in its publications, member profiles provide useful information about career paths, types of employment, skills required, and job titles.

Trend/salary insights – many associations undertake fairly regular overviews of their field and member salary surveys, which often includes specific job titles; this information is generally available only to members.

Job postings – most associations provide a list of job openings for their members, which, because they are specific to that discipline, can provide an excellent overview of current job keywords and descriptions of those jobs.

Career information – as part of their recruiting efforts, many associations provide good information about the multitude of interesting and unusual jobs their members hold and career paths they've followed.

2 GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

The federal government can do a good job of describing broad national employment information and trends (e.g., [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)), including overall projected job growth and/or contraction.

However, local information is likely to be most useful for your jobs exploration – state, regional, and municipal resources, both governmental and industry (or often a partnership of both).

Generally falling under the heading of “economic development,” these groups focus on the relevant area’s top industries, employers, trends and growth forecasts.

To locate these organizations and determine whether they have resources relevant for your jobs research, consider searching on these terms in your browser:

Economic development + [your state, region, or municipality]

Job(s) forecast [your state, region, or municipality]

Top industries [your state, region, or municipality]

Top employers [your state, region, or municipality]

For example, a search on *economic development* and *Colorado* brings up the [Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade](#) and a wealth of industry-specific insights.

Other potential sources for local economic information would be your local [Small Business Development Center](#), [Chamber of Commerce](#), or city/state Office of Business Development.

3 CONFERENCES

LIS conferences can be an emerging jobs resource in many ways. For example:

Emerging areas of expertise – conference sessions often provide a first overview of new ways information skills are being deployed, as presenters discuss their innovative projects.

Speakers of interest – if someone is presenting in an area of interest to you, learn more about them and their career paths by reaching out after the conference for an information interview.

Networking opportunities – many association divisions host “open houses” at conferences where they meet and greet attendees who are interested in their field, a perfect opportunity for you to make helpful connections and learn insider insights.

Volunteering benefits – most conferences need volunteers to help manage all the event’s activities, and that provides you with a terrific way to get to know individuals and talk with them about their careers and career opportunities in between your volunteer work .

Deep-dive topic immersion – specialty conferences that focus on a smaller area of expertise (think [IA Summit](#) rather than [PLA](#)) enable you to explore in depth a given career path, its employment opportunities, roles, job descriptions, and employers (and help you determine quickly just how good a fit this might be for you).

Can’t attend the conference? No problem! Go online to peruse the conference program for session topics, speakers, and possibly program tracks for later outreach to presenters.

4 ANNUAL “COOL STUFF” AWARDS

Want to find out new ways people are using their LIS skills? One good approach is to check out the profiles of the annual “doing cool stuff” award recipients. These awards winners include, for example, *Library Journal*’s [Movers & Shakers](#), ALA’s [Emerging Leaders](#), and SLA’s [Rising Stars](#).

What can you learn from these award winners? Depending on what they’re doing with their careers, you can find out about:

Charting new career paths – how did they end up doing the cool stuff they’re doing? What kind of organizations do they work for? What departments are they in? With whom have they partnered or collaborated? What LIS skills have they found most valuable, what have they had to learn on the job?

New opportunities – in many cases, these innovators saw a need and created a solution based either on their existing LIS skills or ones they developed in order to create and implement that solution. What can you learn from their approach? Do similar needs exist elsewhere, where you might pitch a similar innovative solution?

Expanding your definition of “possible” – one of the challenges when looking for invisible LIS jobs is thinking beyond the visible. You want to find out about those jobs with unfamiliar titles, possibly unfamiliar employers, and potentially new or expanded roles and responsibilities.

The more examples you can find of people using their LIS skills in unusual or innovative ways, the easier it will be for you to broaden your own thinking about *your* opportunities.

5 ONLINE PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

Think of the sorts of information that might help you identify emerging LIS career paths, and then dedicate a few hours to a bit of online research.

At this point, your goal is simply discovery – what information might be online that provide useful insights into the type of job or career that interests you?

Some possible keywords and concepts to search on include:

- trends, surveys, salary overviews, forecasts
- profiles of and interviews with practitioners
- topic-focused guides, learning resources (search on your keywords and *LibGuides* for starting points others have already created)
- “Top” or “Best” employers in given industries
- annual industry reports

Two great starting points from which to launch your research into emerging career paths and/or invisible LIS jobs:

[Alternative Jobs: The Nontraditional Career Path](#) (from Susanne Markgren and Tiffany Eatman Allen, “The Library Career People”)

[MLIS Skills at Work: A Snapshot of Job Postings](#) (annual overview from San José State University’s School of Information)

6 JOB SITES

Whether specific to LIS jobs or focused on all types of positions, job sites can provide a wealth of valuable information for narrowing down your emerging or invisible LIS jobs research.

This is where you'll use your job title/keyword groupings to experiment with which ones return the most targeted, relevant results.

In terms of research, you'll want to check out job sites for:

- what jobs are called by various employers and within different industries
- what LIS skills may be called when not described in terms common to the LIS profession
- what skills are required by different employers – is it the same across industries and types of employers, or does it vary?
- whether or not you have a skills gap between your existing expertise and what's being called for in your jobs of interest
- what keywords recur frequently (these are the ones you want to focus on)
- what specific employers, types of companies, and industries seem to consider these skills most in demand

Your goal with job sites isn't simply to identify potential jobs to apply for, but to get a sense of where your skills may align with organizations' needs, even though they're not using the same language to identify those jobs as the LIS profession would.

7 KEYWORDS + MLIS + JOB

An MLIS student working on a course assignment came up with this simple but effective way to find jobs that she was pretty sure existed, but couldn't find anywhere.

Frustrated with both the LIS and general job sites, she decided to use her online browser to search on:

“[organization/employer]” + “MLIS” + “job”

Her search looked like this:

zoo MLIS job

Sure enough, her search string resulted in multiple listings for LIS positions in zoos. The key was that the “MLIS” term was included not in the job title or description, but in the job requirements, where the MLIS was usually listed as required or preferred.

Not all emerging or invisible jobs will be with employers who know to require an MLIS, but many jobs do mention a preference for the degree. So when in doubt, this is a good secondary strategy to use when a more straight-on approach isn't producing your desired results.

8 YOUR NETWORK, THEIR NETWORK

When it comes to landing jobs, you've most likely heard the advice that it's not what you know, but who you know.

The reality is a bit more nuanced than that, but when it comes to exploring emerging or invisible LIS jobs and careers, your network truly *can* be an extraordinary resource.

Here's how your community of colleagues and their connections can help you with your explorations:

Informational interviews with people in the field who can answer those questions about industries, employers, job titles (and their alternatives), responsibilities, career trajectories, and more.

Reliable evaluations and advice regarding your personal skills and expertise in relation to a particular career path.

Insiders' assessments of career trends, opportunities, and threats.

Employers, including best and worst, who promotes from within, who supports professional development, corporate culture, etc.

Needed skills and expertise, which can be for a specific job, or for a long-term career path, both of which are important to understand.

Salary ranges (in general) for levels of jobs, for example, entry-level, mid-career, management, department head, etc.

Vetting your assumptions, that is, giving you a realistic picture of what a specific job or career path entails over the span of days, weeks, months, and years – and whether that's what you were expecting.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

One of the best things about having an LIS skill set is that it provides you with an immensely, endlessly adaptable career.

You can grow professionally in a specialization you love, use your technology skills across a wide range of employers and positions, support a nonprofit whose mission you support, join the high-intensity challenges of a local start-up, or pivot into a new information career trajectory, among hundreds of other options.

But in order to identify and pursue those options, you'll need to become adept at continually scanning both inside and outside the "visible" LIS employment universe to identify where you might want to take your career next.

If you want to have a resilient, rewarding, and sustainable LIS career, you'll need to take charge of exploring and learning more about where opportunities lie and how to position for them.

But you've got this! You now you have at least eight ways to learn more about those jobs and career paths that can enable you to combine your passions, interest, expertise, and market need.

Which direction would you like to head first?