

Learning How to Teach

How MLIS Students Become Information Literacy Instructors



>> BACKGROUND

Entry level positions in academic librarians routinely require that applicants have instructional experience. Some examples from recent position descriptions include:

Business and Public Administration Liaison Librarian
"Experience with reference and bibliographic instruction"

Public Services Librarian for Scholarly Communications
"Experience developing and delivering services, instruction and materials"

Web and User Experience Librarian
"Responsibilities include...collaborating with the information literacy and instructional technology librarians to teach a significant number of face-to-face information literacy sessions"

Color & Materials Librarian
"Provide reference services, including bibliographic instruction sessions"

>> RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Did students have experience with instruction before entering the MLIS program, and if so, what experiences did they have?
2. Over the course of obtaining a master's degree, what experiences helped students develop their skills in instruction?
3. Do students and recent graduates feel confident in different facets of their instructional abilities, from creating a lesson plan to assessing a lesson?

>> METHODOLOGY

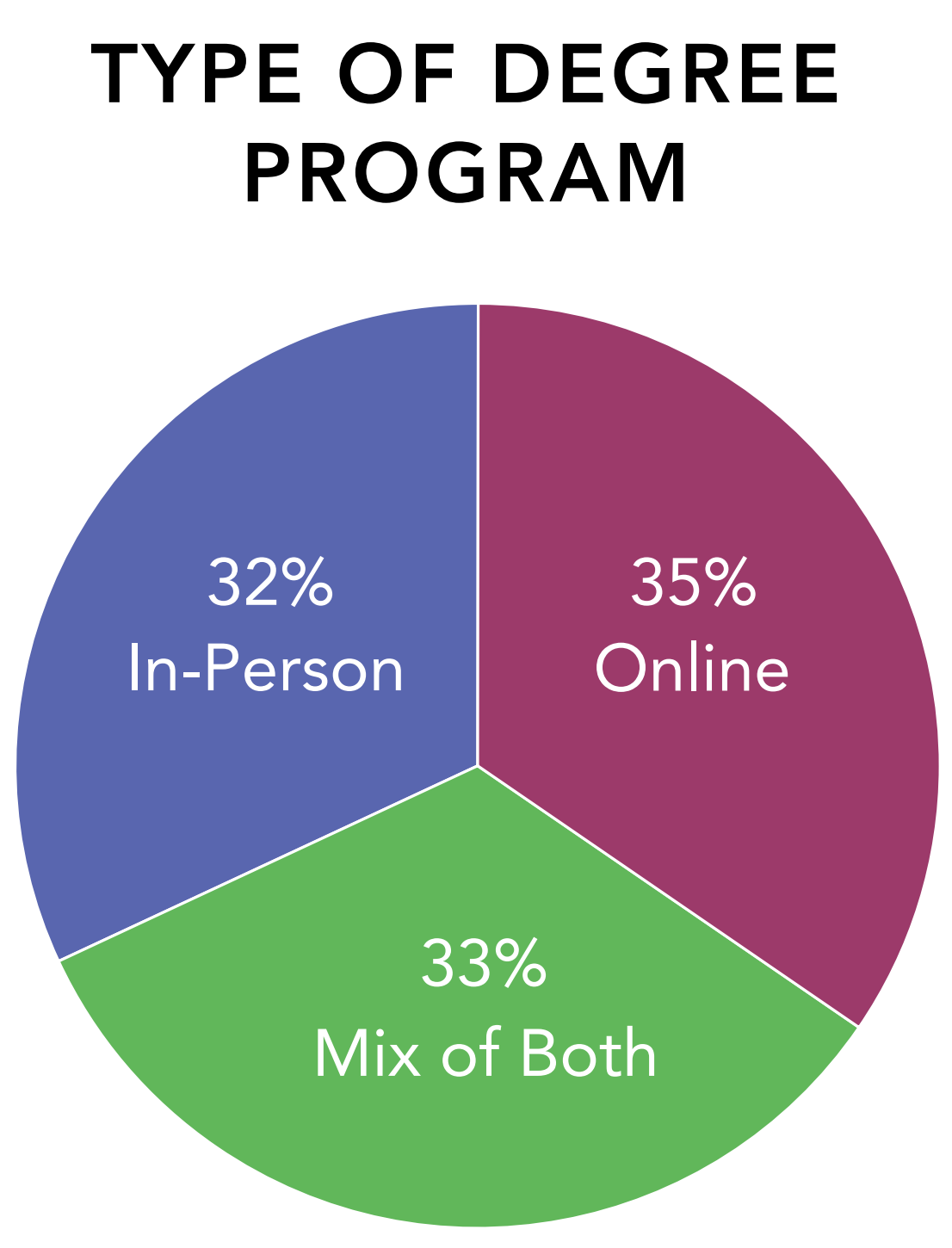
- Gathered data using a **survey** composed mainly of **closed-ended questions**
- Created survey using **Qualtrics**. Through conditional display logic, a given respondent could have answered anywhere between 12 and 18 questions
- Sampling was **not random**: disseminated the survey through listservs and Twitter - and also sent targeted emails to staff at MLIS programs across the U.S.
- Gave respondents the possibility of being entered into a **gift card drawing**: respondents could choose to share their email addresses to be entered into the drawing
- **Limitation**: non-random sampling procedure means our sample is not representative

>> RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



Students and recent graduates from **52** different library science programs across the **United States and Canada** answered our survey. These schools ranged from traditional MLIS programs to iSchools with an LIS specialization.

The highest percentage of respondents from any one school came from Wayne State University (in Detroit).



>> RESULTS

I AM CONFIDENT IN...

	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
Creating instructional materials	87%	9%	4%
Teaching an in-person lesson with colleagues	85%	10%	5%
Creating a lesson plan with colleagues	84%	10%	6%
Creating a lesson plan on my own	81%	11%	18%
Teaching an in-person lesson on my own	76%	10%	14%
Teaching a virtual lesson with colleagues	65%	21%	14%
Implementing assessment for a lesson	54%	21%	24%
Creating an assessment tool	52%	21%	26%
Teaching a virtual lesson on my own	49%	23%	28%

Across the board, respondents were markedly less confident in their ability to **implement and design assessment** and in their ability to **teach virtual lessons**. They expressed more confidence in **working with colleagues** than in working alone.

OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS...

31% Did not take coursework on library instruction but **wished they had**

15% Said their school **did not offer** courses on instruction

66% observed seasoned instructors

60% had prior instructional experience before degree

57% had **formal practical experience** during degree

47% took **coursework on instruction** during degree

34% Did not have formal practical experience with instruction, but **wished they had**

29% Gained practical experience through **their own initiative**

>> WHAT RESPONDENTS HAVE TO SAY:

"During my program, I didn't realize exactly how much instruction I would end up doing as an academic librarian. I do wish that my training had focused more on these skills..."

"I wish my master's program had been a more practical experience. Theory is nice, but it doesn't always help in a classroom full of freshmen."

"Nothing can prepare you for instruction like just going out and doing it."

"I had very little education on being an instructor and was given the impression when I started my job in an academic library that I should already know how to teach."

>> RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Require information literacy practica for all students intending to work in libraries
2. Support students in their practica with coursework including theoretical readings as well as mentorship from librarians currently working in the field
3. Focus on teaching students creation and implementation of assessment
4. Integrate online instructional methods into information literacy curricula

>> AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- What instructional skills do library employers expect entry-level librarians to have?
- How should managers support entry-level librarians as they begin teaching in the academic library setting?
- How can/should library science programs change their curricula or practica to respond to the needs of library jobs and of MLIS students?