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This study describes the responsibilities and qualifications, as specified in job advertisements, for professional catalog librarians in U.S. academic libraries in 1999. The job advertisements in the issues of *College & Research Libraries News* and *American Libraries* for 1999 were examined. The analysis was focused on the qualifications related to special cataloging skills, managerial skills, and other activities such as reference and collection development to see the impact of outsourcing, de-professionalization, and diversification of library materials on catalog librarians' work.

The analysis of 124 advertisements found that 63% of the postings listed special format cataloging responsibilities and skills. It also indicated that catalog librarians were expected to be involved in many different activities, such as supervision and reference in addition to cataloging. It is advised that job applicants learn a variety of skills, including specialized cataloging, while acquiring practical work experience.

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CATALOGING POSITIONS IN U.S. ACADEMIC LIBRARIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF JOB ADVERTISEMENTS, 1999

by
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INTRODUCTION

The roles of professional catalogers in academic libraries are changing dramatically. First, cooperative cataloging using online bibliographic databases has reduced the demand for original cataloging. Second, many of the tasks formerly assigned to professional catalogers have been shifted to paraprofessional library assistants due to technological innovations in libraries (Bordeianu & Seiser, 1999; Younger, 1996). Third, the outsourcing of cataloging has increased since the beginning of the 1990s. Today, professional catalogers not only catalog and manage the work of in-house cataloging operation, but also work with contractors (El-Sherbini & Klim, 1997). Further, the Internet provides new challenges and opportunities for the description of digital resources. Catalog librarians have to meet the needs of digital users as well as traditional users (Younger, 1997). In addition, with tight library budgets, catalog librarians are often expected to perform many other tasks in addition to traditional cataloging work.

While the *ALCTS (Association for Library Collections & Technical Services) Educational Policy Statement* and the study by Hill and Intner (1999) describe the necessary preparation for a cataloging career, it is important for job applicants to know the current qualifications for cataloging positions. Vellucci (1997) wrote that “Increasingly, job advertisements require new competencies that go beyond the narrow definition of cataloging and classification, yet the traditional cataloging and classification

knowledge and skills are also still in demand.” The study described in this paper was undertaken to attempt to understand the recent trend in qualifications for academic cataloging positions. The goal is to answer to the question “What were the required and preferred qualifications, as specified in job advertisements, for professional catalog librarians in U.S. academic libraries in 1999?” and to make a recommendation on the preparation for a cataloging career. The analysis will focus on the qualifications related to special cataloging skills, managerial skills, and skills related to other functions in libraries such as reference and collection development to see the impact of outsourcing, de-professionalization, and the diversification of library materials and services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been done to analyze qualifications for cataloging positions in academic libraries using different methodologies. Job analysis based on advertisements in professional journals is the most popular method, while some researchers surveyed practicing librarians.

Some of the job analysis compare public and technical services. For example, Reser and Schuneman (1992) examined academic library job advertisements in *American Libraries*, *College & Research Libraries News*, *Library Journal* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* during 1988. They found that technical services positions also were more likely to include administrative responsibilities than were public services positions. Technical services jobs were more likely to require foreign-language skills and computer skills. While public services positions are more likely to require advanced subject degrees, both public and technical services required an ALA-accredited M.L.S. degree at equally high levels. Previous library work experience was more often required for technical services librarians. Xu (1995) compared the qualifications for catalogers and reference librarians in academic libraries and analyzed the impact of automation by examining job advertisements in *American Libraries* published between 1971 and 1990. The result indicated that, with the development of automation in libraries, the requirements of previous work experience for catalog and reference librarians were

becoming more similar, and the needs for computer skills were increasing in both categories.

Several researchers have done job analysis limited to cataloging positions. Palmer (1992) analyzed job advertisements that specifically asked for cataloging skills in *American Libraries* for the periods January through June 1987 and July/August 1988 to January 1989. He found that 71 percent of the positions were academic, while 14% were public, and 15% were special library positions. He also pointed out that many positions included responsibilities in the areas of supervision (50%), training (17%), user education (6%), reference (27%), acquisitions (22%), and collection development (18%), in addition to cataloging responsibilities. Towsey (1997) studied trends in cataloging employment in the U.S. and the U.K. in the mid-1990s. He used the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *American Libraries* and *Library Journal* for the analysis of the U.S. cataloging job market. He analyzed the advertised cataloging work responsibilities in detail and predicted that networking and outsourcing would have a negative impact on the demand for catalogers, especially in non-specialized and non-prestigious libraries. He also advised newly-qualified librarians with an interest in cataloging to try to get a job linking cataloging with other skills and duties. Buttlar and Garcha (1998) surveyed catalogers in academic libraries who belong to the ALCTS (Association for Library Collections & Technical Services) to determine if and how their job functions have changed over the past 10 years. Their research concluded that professional catalog librarians in academic libraries were increasingly viewed as managers, policy makers, special materials catalogers, upgraders of online catalog databases, bibliographic instructors, collection development librarians, automation librarians, and so on. The

survey result also indicated that job sharing was on the rise, especially transfers from the technical services area to the public services area, adding to the decrease in cataloging staffs and increase in reference staffs.

While previous studies are useful to predict the future job market for catalogers in general, the current study is different in that it attempts to provide a snapshot of the market situation for academic catalog librarians in 1999 and to suggest necessary preparation for a cataloging career with a focus on academic librarianship. The study is also unique in that it concentrates on special cataloging skills, managerial skills and other responsibilities not directly related to traditional cataloging work. The responsibilities and qualifications related to traditional cataloging, such as monographic cataloging, AACR2-R, LCSH, LCC, and DDC, are not included in this study since it is expected that catalog librarians need to obtain basic cataloging skills even if they are involved in many different activities in libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The issues of *College & Research Libraries News* and *American Libraries* for 1999 were used for the study since they appear to be major sources of position announcements for academic libraries in the U.S. and have a wide circulation among librarians.

All advertisements for academic cataloging positions and the positions that directly manage the work of catalogers, regardless of languages and formats of materials were examined. Both temporary and permanent positions, full-time or part-time, were included in the study. Since the analysis is limited to academic catalog librarian positions, all the job advertisements in *College & Research Libraries News* and the position announcements in the “academic library” section of *American Libraries* were examined. It was assumed that all the positions posted in the journals were professional positions unless otherwise specified.

A total of 177 advertisements matched the criteria for the study, of which 53 were duplicate announcements. Out of the 53 duplicates, 19 seemed to be for “search re-opened” or unfilled positions since they were advertised in the same journals with the same contents with a few months’ interval, or were specified as re-posted positions. Duplicate announcements and re-opened positions were excluded from the analysis, leaving 124 job advertisements as the source of this study.

To prepare for the analysis, an identification number was assigned to each job advertisement for easy reference. Each job advertisement was examined, marking words or expressions related to special cataloging skills, managerial skills and non-cataloging skills. Responsibilities as well as skills or requirements specified in the “qualification” sections of job advertisements would be examined to obtain a better idea of the employers’ expectations.

Sub-categories were created in each category so that detailed analysis would be possible. For the category of special cataloging skills and responsibilities, seven sub-categories were created: serials cataloging, foreign language cataloging, special format cataloging, electronic/Internet resource cataloging, rare materials/special collections cataloging, online catalog maintenance/authority work, and participation in national programs such as PCC and CONSER. Special format cataloging is defined as “non-book cataloging,” and includes cataloging of maps, microfilms, audiovisuals, CD-ROMs, Internet resources and other materials that do not involve cataloging in book formats. The separate sub-category of electronic/Internet resource cataloging was created in addition to the sub-category of special format cataloging to see the impact of electronic/Internet resources on cataloging work. For managerial skills and responsibilities, four sub-categories were included: design cataloging policies/work flow, management, supervision, and staff training. Lastly, for non-cataloging skills and responsibilities, nine sub-categories were identified: HTML/Web page design, reference, collection development, bibliographic instruction, acquisitions, serials management, binding, preservation and ILL (inter-library loan).

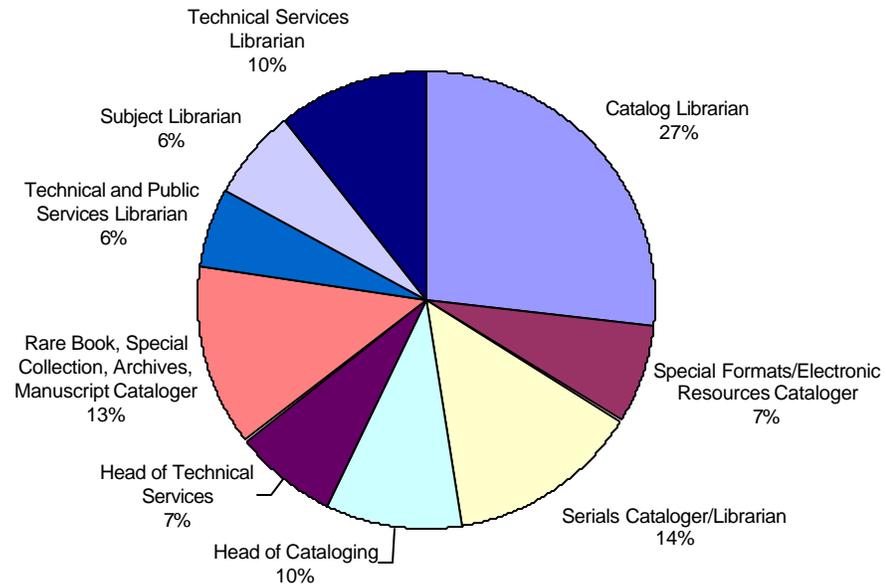
In creating a database for the analysis, data was input based on the degree of emphasis in advertisements. Specifically speaking, each sub-category was analyzed by dividing the data into four sections: not mentioned in advertisements, mentioned as responsibility, mentioned as preferred qualification, and mentioned as required qualification.

FINDINGS

Prior to the analysis of the responsibilities and qualifications in relation to special cataloging skills, managerial skills and non-cataloging skills, some basic elements of the job advertisements, such as job titles, degree requirement, minimum years of experience, were analyzed.

Job titles

Many different job titles were identified. For the purpose of the analysis, they were consolidated into nine broad categories. The overview of the finding is shown in Chart 1. Of the total 124 postings, only 33 (27%) had the job title “catalog librarian.” Figures for the other positions varied with 9 (7%) postings as special formats/electronic resources cataloger; 17 (14%) as serials cataloger/librarian; 12 (10%) as head of cataloging; 9 (7%) as head of technical services; 16 (13%) as rare book, special collection, archives, manuscript cataloger; 7 (6%) as technical and public services librarian; 8 (6%) as subject librarian; and 13 (10%) as technical services librarian. The findings indicate that the majority (73%) of the positions involves multiple responsibilities in addition to traditional cataloging.

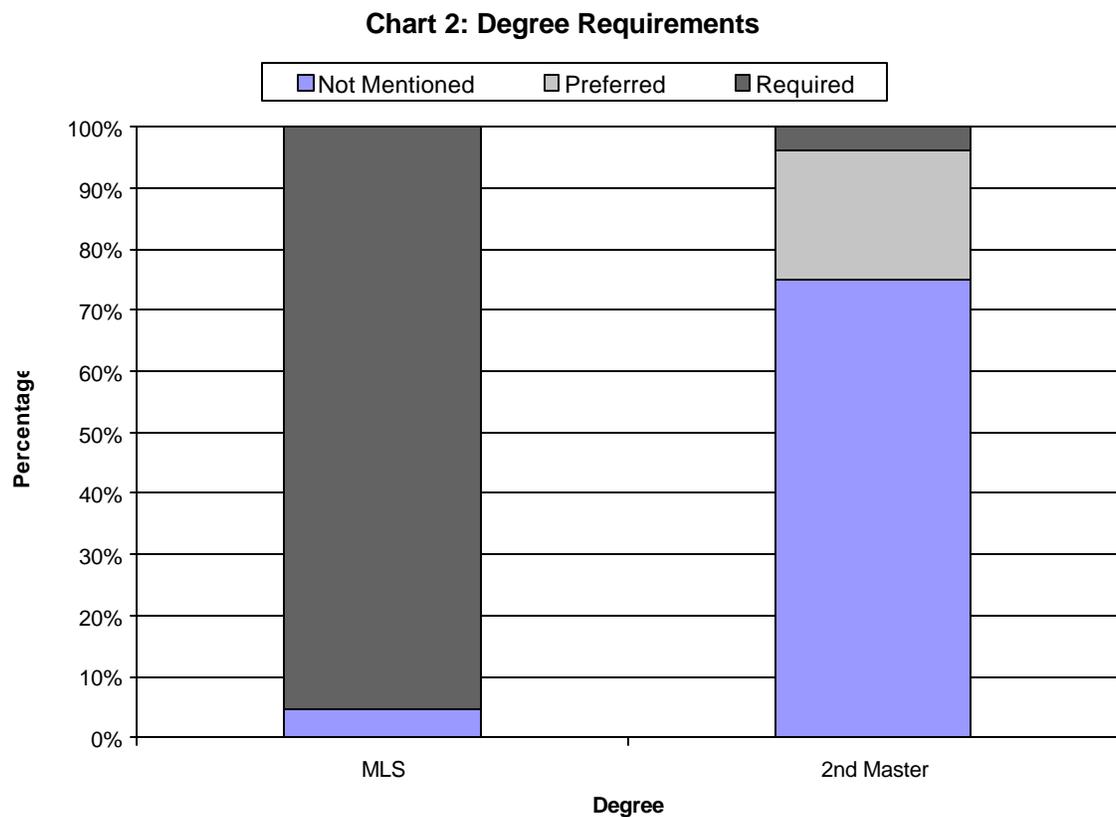
Chart 1: Job Titles

Degree Requirement

Most of the positions (118 postings or 95%) required the MLS degree. All of the 6 positions (5%) that did not mention the MLS degree had a short description of the positions and asked the applicants to contact the library personnel offices for more detailed requirement. Consequently, it is possible that those positions might also require the MLS degree.

The majority (93 postings or 75%) of the positions did not mention other degree requirement. However, the 31 positions (25%) that listed second master's degree as a preferred or required qualification is much higher than the figure in Xu's study (7.5% for the period 1980-1990). It is possible that catalog librarians are increasingly expected to have advanced subject knowledge due to the diversified job responsibilities.

Interestingly, not many job advertisements specifically mentioned what advanced degrees were preferred. Instead, they often simply stated “second master’s degree preferred” or “advanced degree in humanities or social sciences preferred.” It might indicate that some libraries are uncertain or flexible about the ideal candidates subject background, but hope to find applicants with specialized knowledge supported by advanced degrees. The overview of the degree requirement is shown in Chart 2.

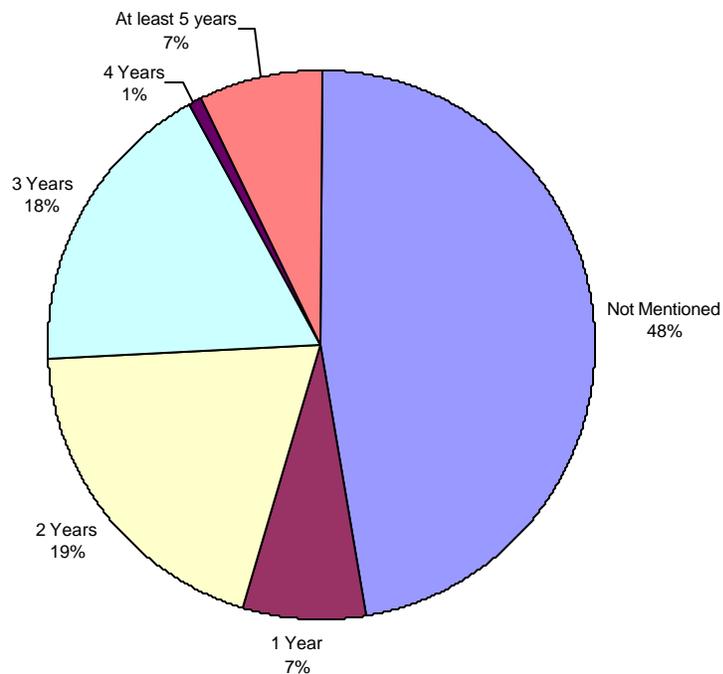


Minimum Years of Experience

More than half of the postings (65 postings or 52%) required at least 1 year of prior professional work experience, of which 9 (7%) required only 1 year, 24 (19%) required 2 years, 22 (18%) required 3 years, 1 (1%) required 4 years, and 9 (7%) required at least 5 years of experience. For the remainder of the positions, some of them

mentioned experience in certain areas of cataloging even though they did not specify minimum years of experience, thus they were not included in the statistics. Some postings mentioned paraprofessional experience as an alternative for professional cataloging experience. However, the required years of experience were often longer for those positions, and the MLS degree was still required. From these findings, it seems extremely important for job applicants to gain cataloging experience prior to the MLS degree or while working on the degree, considering the high demand for previous cataloging experience. Chart 3 presents an overview of the requirement of years of work experience.

Chart 3: Minimum Years of Experience



Special Cataloging Responsibilities and Skills

Most of the job postings mentioned special cataloging skills and responsibilities in addition to traditional cataloging requirements. The most frequently mentioned skill was special format cataloging which 78 postings (63%) either required or preferred in the listings of qualification or mentioned in the responsibility sections of the job advertisements. Online catalog database maintenance and authority work was mentioned in 69 postings (53%). However, only 26 postings (21%) mentioned participation in national programs such as PCC and CONSER. The postings that specifically mentioned electronic/Internet resource cataloging and serials cataloging were also prominent, with 48 (39%) and 45(37%) postings respectively. The figure for foreign language cataloging was also high 60 (48%), which was much higher than previous studies (Xu, 1995 ; Reser & Schuneman, 1992). Some positions (22 postings or 18%) mentioned rare materials/special collections cataloging as a responsibility or a qualification, but most of them were primarily rare materials cataloging positions. The summary of special cataloging skills and responsibilities is shown in Chart 4.

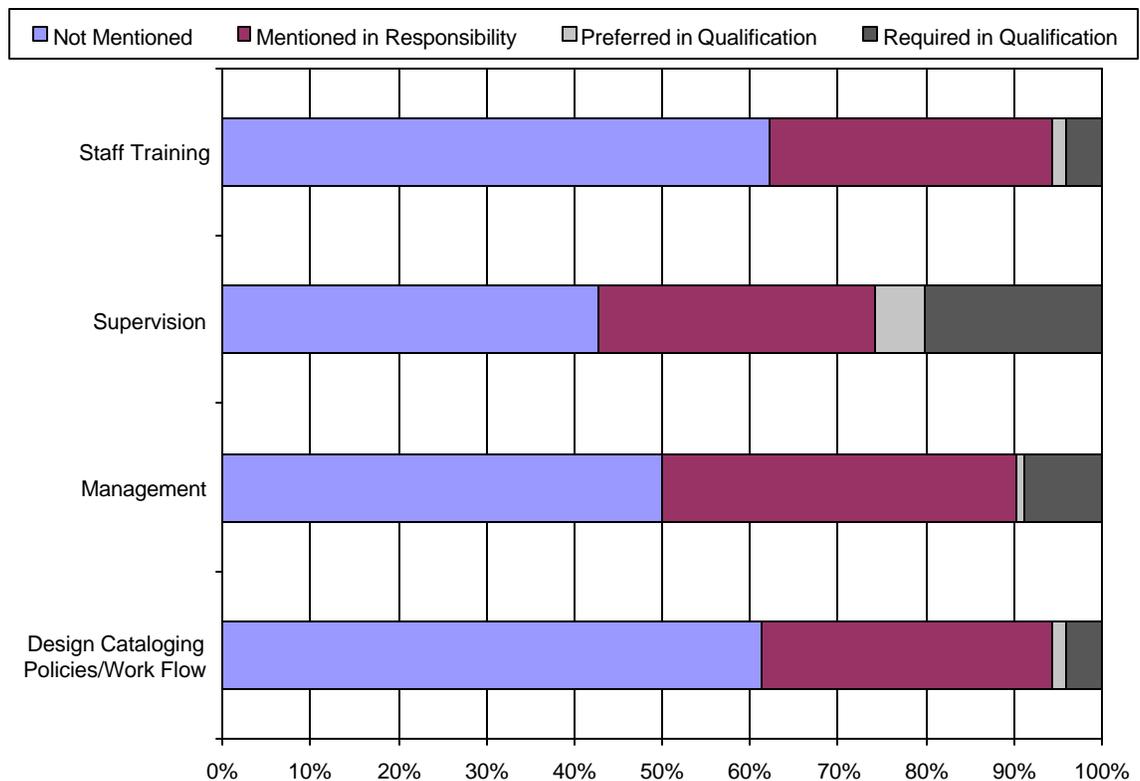
Chart 4: Special Cataloging Skills and Responsibilities

Managerial Responsibilities and Skills

Supervisory skills and responsibilities were most frequently mentioned (71 postings or 57%) among the managerial skills and responsibilities. A breakdown of this figure shows that 25 positions (20%) list supervisory experience as a requirement. The figures for other managerial responsibilities and skills were also high: 62 postings (50%) for management, 48 (39%) for designing cataloging policies/work flow, and 47 (38%) for staff training. This may indicate that, with outsourcing and “down-shifting” of cataloging responsibilities, professional catalog librarians are being increasingly involved in management. The survey of catalog librarians by Buttlar and Garcha (1998) found even higher figures for catalogers’ involvement in management: supervision (78.1%), manage work flows (71.3%), design cataloging policies (77.7%), and train staff (55.5%). It is

very possible that job advertisements do not indicate every required or preferred skill and responsibility related to a job, and details might not appear in written job advertisements. At the same time, it is possible that catalog librarians are performing duties not listed in their job descriptions. Either way, job applicants need to be aware that managerial skills are becoming very important for catalog librarians. The findings of the current study are shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Managerial Skills and Responsibilities

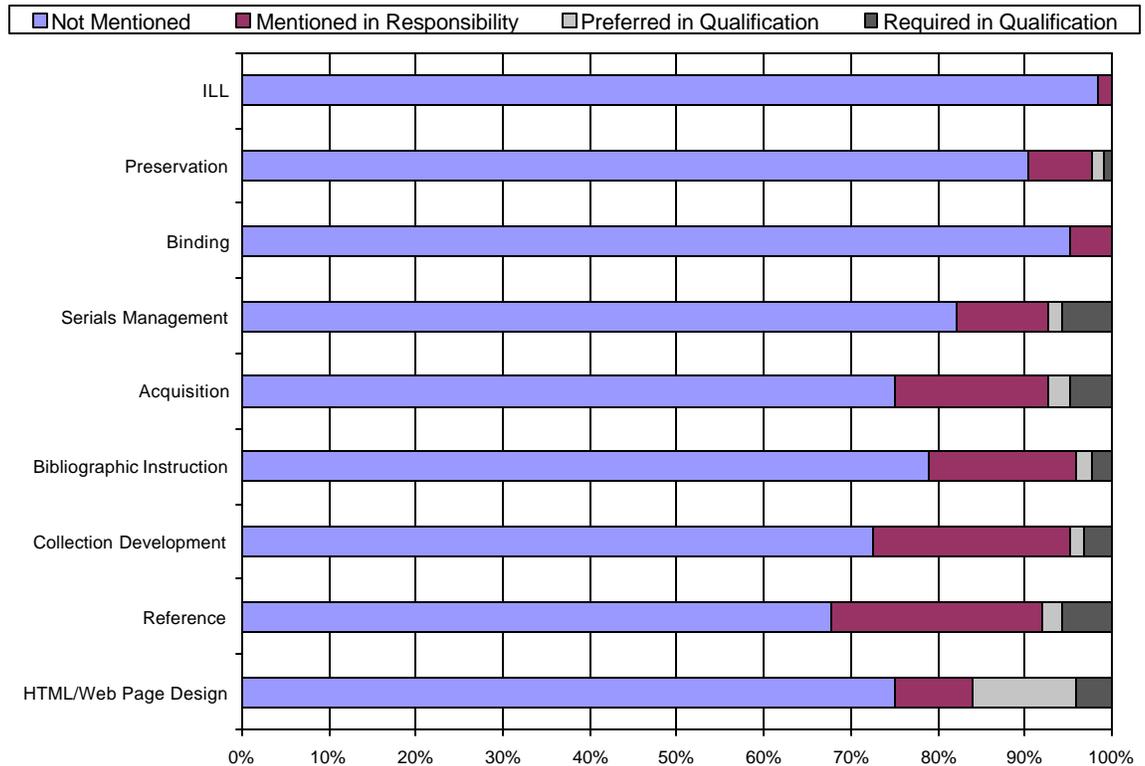


Other Responsibilities and Skills

The findings show that catalog librarians are involved in many different activities other than cataloging. The most frequently mentioned function in job advertisements was reference (40 postings or 32%), followed by collection development (34 postings or 28%), acquisitions (31 postings or 25%), HTML/Web page design (31 postings or 25%),

bibliographic instruction (26 postings or 21%) and serials management (22 postings or 18%). The overview is shown below in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Other Skills and Responsibilities



Interestingly, most of job postings listed these activities as responsibilities rather than qualifications, except for HTML knowledge which was listed as a qualification in 20 postings (21%). It might indicate that libraries realize it is impossible to ask for many different activities as qualifications, but hope to hire versatile catalog librarians due to the pressure that shifts library human resources to public services. However, if that is the case, it is possible that catalog librarians who are less qualified for other activities in libraries are being asked to work in those areas with an expectation that they will grow into the job. Again, the survey of catalog librarians by Buttlar and Garcha (1998) indicates higher figures for those non-cataloging activities suggesting that catalog

librarians have many different responsibilities in addition to cataloging. However, the first step for job applicants is to acquire skills and experiences listed as required and preferred qualifications, while understanding the current trend in hiring practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that most of the job advertisements with cataloging responsibilities involve many different activities, as indicated in the variety of job titles found in the study. The MLS degree was required in almost all the job postings, while the requirement for a second master's degree is still low (5 postings or 4%). However, an increasing number of positions are listing second master's degree as a preferred qualification (26 postings or 21%), and future job applicants who are interested in cataloging work in academic libraries should be aware of this trend and acquire a subject specialty.

A majority of the postings (65 postings or 52%) required at least 1 year of work experience in the area of responsibilities. Thirty-two postings (26%) required at least 3 years of work experience. The true figures of minimum years of experience are expected to be higher than the findings in this study since there were job advertisements that did not specifically mention minimum years of experience but rather listed experience needed. These findings indicate the importance of gaining work experience in addition to the MLS degree for entry-level catalog librarians.

Most positions involved some kind of special cataloging responsibilities and skills. Among the activities mentioned in the job advertisements, special format cataloging, online catalog database maintenance/authority work, foreign language

cataloging, electronic/Internet resource cataloging, and serials cataloging indicated relatively high percentage. The mention of special format cataloging was the highest with 73 postings or 63% in total. Forty-one postings (33%) listed foreign language cataloging as a required qualification. Other activities were more frequently listed as responsibilities rather than qualifications. This might indicate that these activities, especially electronic/Internet resource cataloging, are expected to find fewer highly qualified applicants due to the current nature of the activities, and employers decided to mention them as responsibilities instead of qualifications. This could result in new opportunities for entry-level librarians who acquired those trendy skills in library school. It seems important for students to acquire specialized cataloging skills since catalog librarians are often expected to perform more than traditional cataloging.

For managerial skills, supervisory skill seems to be very important, with 25 postings (20%) listing it as a requirement. As observed in the analysis of minimum years of experience, it is imperative for future job applicants to gain work experience at an earlier stage of the cataloging career since increasing number of professional cataloging positions require various managerial skills, which are hard to obtain without prior cataloging experience. It was also interesting to observe some advertisements emphasized the paraprofessional work experience. Some employers may consider it important for catalog librarians to have paraprofessional experience meaning that they will accept paraprofessional experience in lieu of professional experience, or that catalog librarians may be more likely to communicate well with paraprofessional staff members whom they might be evaluating.

Various non-cataloging activities were mentioned primarily as responsibilities instead of qualifications. Reference, collection development, HTML/Web page design, acquisition and bibliographic instruction were listed in more than 20% of the postings as responsibilities. With more paraprofessional catalogers involved in traditional cataloging, it is understandable for professional catalogers to be expected to be competent in many different activities as well as being managers and problem solvers in cataloging. It may be overwhelming for new catalog librarians, but it is necessary for them to be prepared to acquire many different skills to cope with the pressure of many different responsibilities in libraries. For future job applicants, it would appear important that they indicate the willingness to serve in public service area when necessary since the findings suggest that employers are looking for catalog librarians that are versatile.

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