

An Analysis of the Job Market in Library and Information Services in South Africa. Some Thoughts and Empirical Evidence: A paper presented at the 8th LIASA (RETIG) Annual Conference, 25th-30th September, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

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Abstract

A market – type analysis based on the newspaper scanning technique is used to determine the library and information job market in South Africa. LIS related jobs advertised in four South African weekly newspapers with wide national readership (e.g. City Press, Mail and Guardian, Sunday Times, Rapport) were scanned from 2004. Details regarding date and location of advertisement, type of employer, job details and job specifications and requirements in terms of qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes were captured from this source and analysed. Preliminary results deviate from those reported in 2000 and 2001 where the public sector, and in particular public and academic libraries, dominated this segment of the employment market in South Africa. However, the study concurs that a sound education in management, information and communication technologies, searching and retrieval, and information analysis and synthesis, as well as the ability to perform practical work, are still essential.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this survey was to determine the current market in library and information services (LIS) in South Africa to advise LIS training and education departments in the country on LIS education and training needs and career opportunities in the sector. The objectives are to determine current LIS employers, job requirements and specifications, the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by the market and how the information obtained can be used to review the curriculum, advise students on a career path in IS and to advise the employers on LIS job trends and issues

Several studies on LIS training needs/human resource development and curriculum development have been documented. Among those studies, follow-up/tracer studies enjoyed popularity for LIS training needs assessment

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-analysis [Anadiran 1988;Rugamba 1998; Quarmby, Willet and Wood 1994; Schumm 1994; Loughridge, Oates and Speight 1996; Marcum 1997; and Alemna 1991] among those reported in popular journals. For example, follow-up studies of graduates for curriculum review, during the last 15 years, have been conducted by Alemna[1991,1999] and Kisiedu[1993]Ghana, Rosenberg[1994] in Kenya, Aswegen[1997], Ocholla[2001] and Stilwell[2004] in South Africa, Rugambwa[1998] in Ethiopia, Aina and Moahi[1999] in Botswana and Lutwama and Kigongo – Bukenya [2004] in Uganda. Besides follow –up studies, newspaper scanning has also received some attention in the past(e.g. Rosenberg 1988) and more recently as well [Snyman 2000, and Ocholla 2001].Interestingly, despite the time range and geographical location as well as national and international focus of the studies, libraries turned out to be the biggest employer of LIS graduates. Besides libraries, other information-related job markets are increasingly growing. For instance Synman [2000], reporting on the employment market for information professionals in South Africa, based on the scanning of job advertisements from three national weekly newspapers with the highest circulation in the South Africa (Sunday Times, City Press and Rapport), between January and August 2000, identified 250 information-related job advertisements. Of these, 114 positions were in the emerging markets under such categories as information systems specialists, information and knowledge managers, information analysts, research workers, consultants, records managers, and trainers. Unfortunately, this did was not published after the conference and therefore has not been widely exploited. Snyman's study supported Ocholla's [2001] study in demonstrating that libraries in the public sector still offer most information-related job opportunities, but that non-traditional LIS jobs in the emerging market are also on the increase. We cannot establish with accurate certainty the nature and number of information-related jobs in the public and corporate sectors but believe that job advertisements in the public domain can give strong insight into this rapidly diversifying and expanding market on the basis of which LIS training needs, education and markets in South Africa can be determined. Whilst public libraries in the townships that were neglected by the apartheid regime exhibited short-term avenues for LIS graduate employment because of their initial rapid growth from 1994, school library

development has declined in South Africa [see Le Roux 2003, De Vries and van de Merwe 2004 etc], despite the introduction of an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) policy that advocates learner-and resource-based education for primary and secondary schools.

2. Methodology

A content analysis involved advertisements (97) appearing in the Sunday Times weekly (June 2004-August 2005) newspaper that listed library and information services as a job requirement. The Sunday Times is the largest circulating newspaper in South Africa, with around 1.8 million readers weekly. The advertisements were scanned and analysed for details regarding date and location of advertisements, type of employer, job details, specifications, and requirements in terms of qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes. This method has been tried elsewhere [e.g. Rosenberg 1989, Snyman 2000 and Ocholla 2001] with significant success for determining national LIS education and training needs and the job market requirements.

The relevant data in the advertisements were scanned, and downloaded on to a spreadsheet and relevant data captured. The scanned and captured information was sorted out in alphabetical order using a sorter from the spreadsheet. This made it easy to determine the number of times a particular data unit was entered and also to group related data units together for frequency analysis. In most cases a long list, alphabetically organised, comprising over 50 entries, was created. In the subsequent level of analysis, the items or entries in the list were categorised into major subject groupings (e.g. archives and records management, knowledge management, librarianship, etc) for effective conceptualisation and communication. The full analysis of the other three newspapers (Rapport, City Press and Mail and Guardian) is incomplete. However, important observations have been made.

3. Results

The results comprise: general information (e.g. employers, activity, and job titles), job specification/description, and remuneration, job requirements (qualification, experience, knowledge, skills and attitude)

3.1. General Information.

While over 260 posts have been identified from the four weeklies, 98 posts were identified from the Sunday Times from June 2004 to August 2005. Advertisements captured most of the information required for this analysis. Most advertisements gave the applicants 2-3 three weeks to respond.

3.1.1. Where vacant positions were advertised

Central government (50) followed by local and provincial government (28) and parastatal (largely tertiary institutions) (13) advertised most jobs. Private for profit organisations (4), International Organisations (2), foreign countries (1) followed. Results from a previous study [Ocholla 2001] were lead by parastatal, followed by local and provincial government. Interestingly, central government came last with only 3 adverts at that time.

Table 1: Advertising Institutions/Employers

Arts and Culture	8	INSTITUTIONS WITH ONE ADVERT EACH Dept. Land of Affairs (SA); Dept. of Health and Social Development; Dept. of human resource management and development; Dept. of Public Service and Administration; Dept. of Public Works; Dept. of Transport, Roads and Public works, Northern Cape; DPW; Dept. of Education; Ekurhuleni Municipality; Free State province; IDT (development agency); King's School; Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature; National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism; National Prosecuting Authority of SA; National Treasury; North West Provincial Legislature; Northern Cape Government Dept. of Sport; Office of the Auditor General; Pan- African Parliament; Peninsula Technikon(CPUT); Road agency Limpopo; SADC Secretariat, Botswana; SAHRC; SAPS; Solly Tshiki & Associate SA; SSSBC (Bargaining council); Thornhill Primary school; Tshwane University of Technology - Pretoria campus; UNISA; University of Limpopo; water affairs and forestry
Limpopo Provincial Govt	5	
Robben Island Museum	5	
Statistics SA	5	
Dept. of Justice and Constitutional Development	4	
Dept. of Correctional Services	3	
Dept. of Land Affairs	3	
Rhodes University	3	
City of Cape town	2	
Communications RSA	2	
Constitutional Court Library	2	
Debswana Diamond Company	2	
Dept. of Agriculture	2	
Dept. of Arts, culture and tourism (KZN)	2	
Dept. of Foreign Affairs	2	
Dept. of Health, Eastern Cape	2	
Dept. of Provincial & local Government	2	
Dept. of Social Development	2	
KZN Legislature	2	
Parliament of the RSA	2	
Pinpoint one	2	
SAPS KZN	2	
SARS	2	
Vaal University of Technology	2	

3.1. 2. Activity

Analysis according to type of activity revealed that most adverts originated from the service sector (82) followed by educational institutions (17) and the industrial (1) sector. There were no adverts from research, commercial and religious institutions.

3.2. Job Details

The details includes job titles, job description and remuneration

3.2.1. Job Titles

A diversity of job titles is used for information-related jobs. Most job titles refer to librarian (36) and information manager/specialist/officer (31), archives and records manager (9), knowledge manager (8) and researcher (6). Notable titles, arranged in the order of their frequent usage are reflected in Table 2. Detailed titles are provided in Appendix One.

Table 2: Job Titles



Librarian	9
Information Officer	6
Researchers	6
Chief Information Officer	4
Assistant Director: Archives	3
Assistant Librarian	3
Administrative Officer (Information management, UHC)	2
Deputy Director: Spatial Planning Information Services	2
Deputy Manager: Information	2
Communication officer-Directorate: agricultural Information Services	2
General Manager: Public Libraries Information and Archival services	2
Information specialist	2
Senior Librarian	2
Others (Titles with one posting each)	62

3.2.2. Job specifications/description

Job description is essential for determining training needs. However, the specifications are aligned to each job and would sometimes be extremely descriptive (including them here would take a lot of space). A general representation of job specifications are reflected in the job requirements such knowledge, skills and attitudes discussed in 3.3.

3.2.3. Remuneration

The system of remuneration is diversified and differs from organisation to organisation and by levels of appointment. Salaries and wages have always determined the worth of a job and helped with decision-making on career path to pursue in the job market. Arguably a high paying profession/job is a preferred profession as it provides security, status and motivation. Largely, there is consistency in salary scales paid in the public sector compared to those paid to information specialists/workers (see some examples in Table 3)

Table 3: Remuneration

Remuneration			
R 503,541 pa.	2	R 144,986	1
R 453,147 pa	1	R 139,302 pa	2
R 453,147 pa	1	R 133,176 pa;	5
R 427,497	1	R 125,400 – R145,584 pa	1
R 271,797 pa	1	R 125,400 pa	5
R 246,624 pa	1	R 116,658 pa	2
R 233,394 pa	3	R 112077 pa	2
R 205,461 pa	1	R 111,528 pa	4
R 194,892 pa	2	R 94,746 pa	1
R 193,920 pa	4	R 84561 pa	5
R 182,598	1	R 84,561	1
R 177,696 –R 196,164 pa	1	R 76,419 – R 88,725 pa	1
R 171,664pa	1	R 72,096 pa	2
R 167,286 pa	2	R 49,227 pa	1
R 166,095 pa	1	US \$ 15,120 pa	1
R 156,516 – 181,710 pa	1	R173,868 pa	1
		R133,176 pa	1

2004 (June) – 2005(September)

3.3 Job Requirements

Includes academic qualifications, knowledge, skills and attitudes

3.3.1. Qualification

Essentially, most jobs require any first three-year degree (37) qualifications followed by largely a three year professional degree qualification (31). Jobs requiring post-graduate qualifications were insignificant (10) with only one requiring a masters degree. There was no job requiring a PhD qualification although this would normally be the case when teaching positions in tertiary institutions are advertised

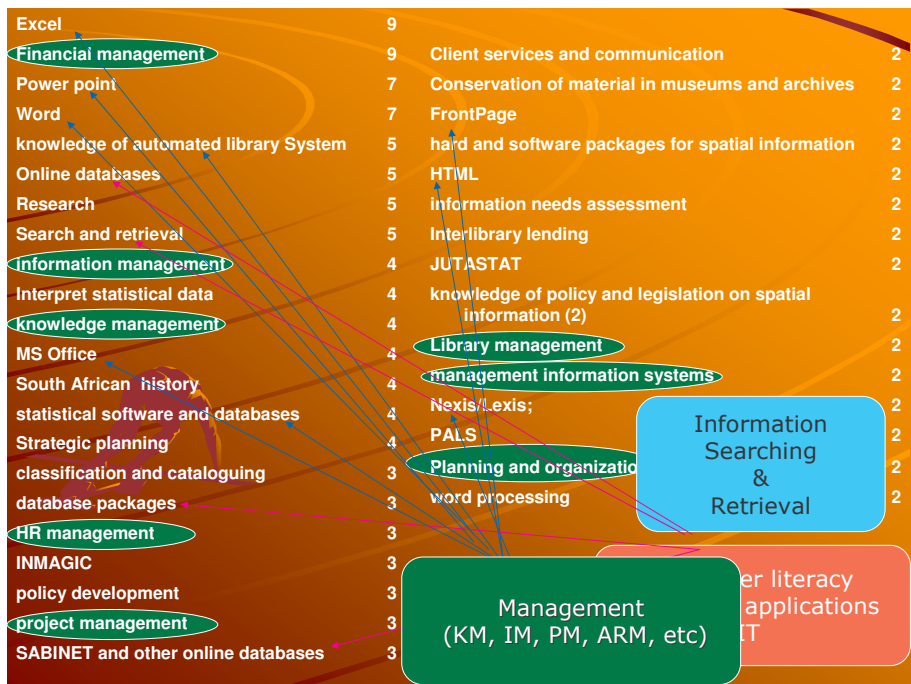
3.3.2: Experience

Previous working experience is still significant for most jobs. A large number of jobs require 2-5yrs working experience in the relevant field that includes relevant knowledge and skills

3.3.3. Knowledge

A strong knowledge of management (e.g. information and knowledge management, archives and records management etc) and Information and Communication Technologies for information services is highly essential. Knowledge of information retrieval such as web information seeking/retrieval, organisation of knowledge, research and presentation is also significant.

Table 4: Knowledge required



3.3.4. Skills

Fundamentally, communication and interpersonal skills (47), computer literacy (46), writing and verbal communication in English (26), research and analytical (thinking) skills (22) are highly recognised.

Table 5: Skills requirements for LIS jobs

communication and interpersonal skills	47	cost control	1
computer literacy	46	customer focus	1
Writing and verbal skills English	26	customer relations	1
project management skills	13	Desktop	1
Research and analytic skills	11	Email	1
analytical thinking (3) and skills	11	facilitation skills	1
report writing	9	Financial management skills	1
Planning and evaluation skills	8	Financial/budgetary skills	1
another African language	7	information search and retrieval	1
problem solving skills	7	Innovation	1
Management skills	6	Library and information skills	1
training skill	6	marketing & advocacy	1
budgeting	5	Membership of the professional bodies	1
leadership skills	5	networking skills	1
presentation skills	5	proven managerial skills in Information Management	1
negotiation skills	4	publications of research articles	1
organisational skills	4	e-databases	1
supervisory skills	4	Spreadsheets	1
customer service	2	statistical and data analysis skills	1
People management skills	2	team leadership skills	1
policy development and formulation skills	2	telematic education	1
public relations skills	1	Typing skills	1
advanced internet search skills	1	word processing	1
conceptual skills	1	Strategic planning skills	1

3.3.5. Attitude

A positive attitude is strongly recommended for fulfilling any job. Working under pressure (15), working independently (11) are highly rated. Some jobs also require a valid driver's license (15)

Table 6: Attitude desired for LIS jobs



Work under pressure	15
Working independently	11
Flexible travelling	9
Flexible hours (evening, weekends)	7
Teamwork	5
Accuracy	3
Innovative quick thinker	2
Innovative thinking of service delivery	2
Assertiveness	1
Client service orientation	1
Confident	1
Cost management discipline	1
Creative	1
Energetic & dynamic achiever	1
Excellent judgement	1
High integrity	1
Interest for archival collections	1
Loyal	1
Organized and efficient	1
Passion for development	1
Pleasant but assertive disposing	1
Positive self image	1
Self managing	1
Vision	1

4. Discussions

Preliminary results based on data obtained from advertisements, (approximately 98 job vacancies) in the Sunday Times for June 2004 to August 2005, scanned for this study provides much evidence on employers, employment specifications and requirement based qualifications, the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by employers. There is no single employer with overwhelming job vacancies for IS workers as most of them advertised only one post during this period. We however note that there could be incidences of internal advertisements for deploying and promoting staff within an organisation. But this case does not normally lead to creation of new posts or employment of new staff. There are several more job titles in the broad information service or the emerging market than was experienced in the previous studies (Snyman 2000 and Ocholla 2001). Similarly, there is a significant increase of senior information and knowledge management positions than was reported in the previous studies. Although librarianship related job titles are eminent, the number of such titles has significantly decreased when compared to earlier reports (Ocholla 2001). The decrease of

librarianship based titles could be attributed to the increase of other competing IS job titles in the market, but also to the decreasing number of jobs from local and provincial authorities in the public libraries, that overwhelmingly dominated the LIS job market in that study(Ocholla 2001). It would not be wildly incorrect to observe that the LIS job market pattern is seasonal and unpredictable. We have noted a large increase of job titles in the emerging IS. While there are jobs that specify information related qualification requirements as represented in Table Two, we have also noted a gradual increase in information related jobs open to all degree holders, including those with LIS degrees/qualifications. Qualifications for most jobs (over 95%) required only a three year first degree in LIS or any other kind of qualifications. Thus, employers are ambivalent to the duration of an LIS degree be it three or more years. Academic libraries, though, do normally require post-graduate qualifications. Salaries and remunerations provided in the advertisements were consistent with job levels and those existing in the public service as a whole. Thus, IS workers are not discriminated or disadvantaged in terms of remuneration in the market. Most job descriptions emphasised management and ICT knowledge. The knowledge and skills required that can be obtained in a well-designed learning programme were varied. Some of the knowledge and skills can be obtained from other academic programmes that students may be encouraged to enrol for during the duration of their study.

5. Conclusions

Evidently the public sector, and in particular the central and provincial governments dominate the LIS segment of the employment market in South Africa. This study confirms the findings of other studies conducted by this author that emphasise sound education in management, information and communication technologies, information searching, analysis and synthesis, as well as the ability to perform practical work.

Newspaper scanning provides worthwhile results when a policy on advertisement of vacant posts, both in the public and private sector, preferably in open newspapers, is enforced by law, as is the case in South

Africa and when such advertisements are properly made. Significantly, depending on the newspaper scanned (e.g. local, regional or national or international), newspaper scanning provides well balanced results by which decisions on manpower needs and curricula reviews can be made. However, triangulation of related methods in the study such as follow-up/tracer studies, focus group interviews/methods[see e.g. Curran, Bajjal et al 1998;Kerslake and Groulding 1996], reviewing existing curriculum, reviewing the literature, consulting with colleagues (including use of Delphi's technique), observing national and international trends, and organising focus groups for academic programme development is also essential. We are already experiencing diversified information based job opportunities in South Africa. The need for competitive information-oriented knowledge, skills and attitudes in the IS market has arrived for LIS schools to explore and exploit.

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Appendix One : Job Titles

Librarian	9
Information Officer	6
Researchers	6
Chief Information Officer	4
Assistant Director: Archives	3
Assistant Librarian	3
Administrative Officer (Information Management, UHC)	2
Deputy Director: Spatial Planning Information Services	2
Deputy Manager: Information	2
Communication Officer-Directorate: Agricultural Information Services	2
General Manager: Public Libraries Information and Archival Services	2
Information specialist	2
Senior Librarian	2
Administrator University Library	1
Administration Officer (Information Specialist)	1
Archivist	1
Assistant Director (Library) strategic management	1
Assistant Director: Client Services	1
Professional Archivist	1
Assistant Director: Information Administration: Investing in Culture	1
Assistant Director: Library Services	1
Assistant Director: Outreach & Publications	1
Assistant Director: Reference Services at Constitutional Court	1
Assistant Director: Resource and Information Centre	1
Assistant Director: Technical Services	1
Assistant Photographic Archivist	1
Cataloguer	1
Chief Marine Conservation Inspector: Serious Offences Unit: Information Co-ordination	1
Control Project Co-ordinator: Information	1

Deputy Chief Education Specialist: Education Library & Learning Reporting	1
Deputy Chief Education Specialists: ELITS (Education Library Information and Technological Services)	1
Deputy Director: Meta-Information	1
Deputy Director: Compliance Information Management	1
Deputy Director: Information strategy and planning	1
Deputy Director: Knowledge Management	1
Deputy Director: National Records Manager	1
Deputy Director: Research Participation	1
Deputy Director: Resource/Library Manager	1
Deputy Manager: Records Management	1
Director: Innovation, Information and knowledge Management	1
Director: Knowledge Management	1
Documentation Assistant	1
Documentation Officer	1
Executive Director	1
Head of Dept.: Research and Documentation	1
Information Administrator	1
Knowledge Management Specialist	1
Learning and Knowledge Management Officer	1
Information Centre Manager	1
Library Assistant	1
Head of Dept: Periodicals, e-resources & ILL	1
Library/Resource Centre – Inspector	1
Library/Resource Centre – Senior Registration Clerk/Library Assistance	1
Manager: Electronic Resource Centres & Internet Centres	1
Manager: Information Technology Programme and Administration	1
Manager: Library and Information Services (LIS)	1
Middle manager (Information management, UHC)	1
Photographic Archivist	1
Principal Communications Officer	1
Principal Librarian	1
Professional Archivist	1
Records Manager	1
Reference Librarian	1
School Librarian	1
Senior Administration Officer (Records Management)	1
Senior Archivist (Historical papers & Rare book collections)	1
Senior Librarian (LIS) User Services	1
Senior Management: Information Officer	1
Senior Manager: Information and Records Management	1
Senior Manager: Knowledge and Information management	1
Senior Manager: Knowledge Management	1
Sound and Oral History Archivist	1
Subject Librarian	1
Systems Librarian	1
Teacher Librarian	1