WORKFORCE ISSUES IN LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE
WILIS

WILIS 2: Implementing a Model for Career Tracking of LIS Graduates

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Background

WILIS 2 is a three year project (2007-2010) to create an alumni tracking system that all LIS master's programs can potentially use. The project builds on WILIS 1, a comprehensive study of career patterns of graduates of LIS programs in North Carolina. LIS programs have generally lacked the time and resources to systematically survey their graduates. As a result, stakeholders lack an adequate understanding of what happens to LIS graduates. LIS educators, in particular, do not have ongoing data about the extent to which their programs meet students' expectations, prepare them for the workplace or meet continuing learning needs. Such an understanding will assist in educating and managing the LIS workforce more effectively.
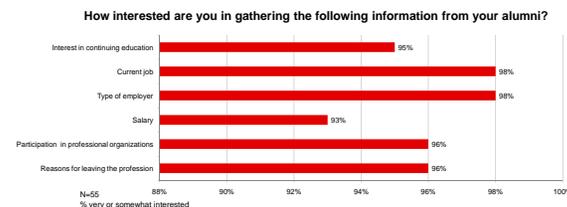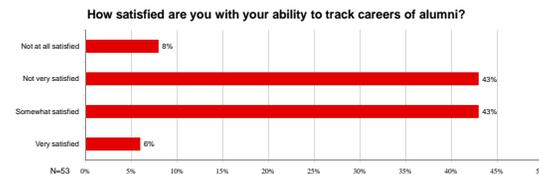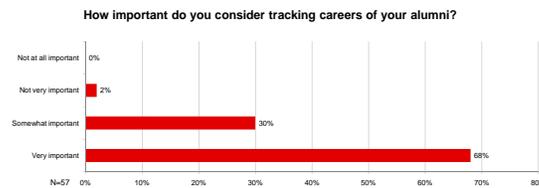
Project Activities

- Refine the WILIS 1 career tracking model so that it is suitable for all LIS programs to use with their recent graduates.
- Recruit as many LIS programs as possible to participate in a staged launch of the career tracking system; up to 33 programs will be funded.
- Conduct the surveys and provide access to results for the participating LIS programs.
- Disseminate findings and publicize the availability of the system.

Career Tracking: The Perspective of LIS Program Deans, Directors, and Chairs

- The project surveyed 99 North American LIS deans, directors, and chairs about their current alumni tracking practices and interest in participating in a shared alumni tracking system.
- 64.6% response rate
- 80% of programs are interested in participating in WILIS 2

How important do you consider tracking careers of your alumni?

Not at all important	0%
Not very important	2%
Somewhat important	30%
Very important	68%

N=57

How satisfied are you with your ability to track careers of alumni?

Not at all satisfied	8%
Not very satisfied	43%
Somewhat satisfied	43%
Very satisfied	6%

N=53

How interested are you in gathering the following information from your alumni?

Interest in continuing education	95%
Current job	98%
Type of employer	98%
Salary	93%
Participation in professional organizations	96%
Reasons for leaving the profession	96%

N=55
% very or somewhat interested

Collaborative Development

WILIS 2 is using a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach that "equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings" (Isrel, et al 1998). A Project Advisory Committee consisting of LIS educators, professional association representatives, LIS employers, practicing professionals, and LIS students is providing overall input throughout the project. Representatives of 8 initial pilot sites are participating in the design of the web-based survey instrument that will be used to collect data from alumni. Survey tools and findings from the WILIS 1 and 2 studies are available at http://wilis.unc.edu/.

Intended Goals

- To build consensus on the essential elements of a career tracking survey instrument.
- To develop a survey that has the potential to serve as part of an ongoing career tracking system for all LIS master's programs.
- To explore the use of the tool as a basis for data and information sharing among the LIS programs.
- To explore opportunities for sustainability of the shared career tracking system with ALISE, IMLS and other stakeholder groups in LIS education.
- To increase linkages among researchers, educators, employers, and practitioners in the field.