



Where Did All The Good People Go?

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Abstract

According to the slogan “Where did all the good people go?” students of the Berlin School of Library and Information Science (IBI) set up, organized and executed a career history study, addressing alumni who graduated in their major subject at the institute between 1999 and 2010.

The study was conducted in four workgroups: Organization and planning, survey design, survey administration and analysis. The workflow, including problems and challenges encountered during the project as well as the result are discussed in this paper. It appears almost 2/3 of all the surveyed participants graduated with a "Magister"-degree (64%). Already 35% finished their studies with a Bachelor or Master of Arts.

Skills imparted by the IBI like organization management, information literacy, IT-skills and abilities to work autonomously turn out to have influenced the alumni's careers in a positive way. Especially the theoretical knowledge gained throughout their studies, e.g. information service, library-IT and knowledge management were very helpful in many alumni's professional lives. According to the participants, the IBI offers a good learning atmosphere, good support from its lecturers and student advisory service, and seems to prepare its later Alumni successfully for their professional careers.

Introduction

In line with the realization of the Bologna process, the Berlin School of Library and Information Science has reformed the courses of study in order to support internationally accepted degrees and to enhance job chances. To investigate the impact of this reform, a career history study was conducted addressing alumni who graduated in their major subject at

¹ the following course participants and tutors contributed to the study: Dr. Gertrud Pannier, Prof. PhD Vivien Petras, Maria Behrendt, Mona Marlena Lemke, Bernd Große, Katja Urwank, Maria Welke, Elin Zincke, Christin Pohl, Maike Schmidt, Violeta Sekulovic, Christiane Waldau, Alissa Blinow, Laura Hoffmann, Maureen Riedel, Anika Witt, Alexandra Baldt, Stefanie Müller, Marie Pangritz, Sabine Richter, Vivian Ruhmann, Violeta Sekulovic

the institute between 1999 and 2010². Participants of the seminar “Where did all the good people go?” set-up, organized and executed the study with the aim to investigate:

1. potential job fields
2. important skills that are required for the professional life and
3. the acceptance of Bachelor and Master-degrees.

According to the workflow six groups were formed: Alumni- Access, Survey-Design, Survey-Administration, Survey-Analysis, Establishing and Management.

The following section describes the teams as well as their main problems.

Study Preparation and Execution

The management team was mainly concerned with administrative work like the coordination and delegation of the other teams and jobs.

In order to compile a list of graduates who finished their studies between 1999 and 2010, the “Alumni-Access” team used different internal and external sources like the institutes own social network “IBI Alumni-Portal”, social media portals (XING, Facebook) and called for participation via German mailing lists. Moreover, a project website³ went online as well as flyers and posters distributed. In the end more than 250 names and Email-addresses were identified. In the beginning of project the groups discussed the main research questions that should be answered through the study, e.g. area of activities the alumni now work in, required skills on the job market, accreditation of Bachelor- and Master degrees on the job market and evaluation of the course of studies. According to these fields the “Survey-Design” group developed a questionnaire, which was tested and improved through several pretests.

The print pretests as well as the actual online questionnaire were organized by the “Survey-Administration” group. During June 2011 a print-survey was distributed at the “100. Deutscher Bibliothekartag” in Berlin, where 43 questionnaires were received. In addition an online questionnaire using the online survey tool LimeSurvey⁴ was provided.

The Survey-Analysis merged both, the print and online survey-data gathered and processed the data for further analysis and interpretation.

Results

Through the print and online survey a response rate of 38% (102 out of 264 potential participants) was reached.

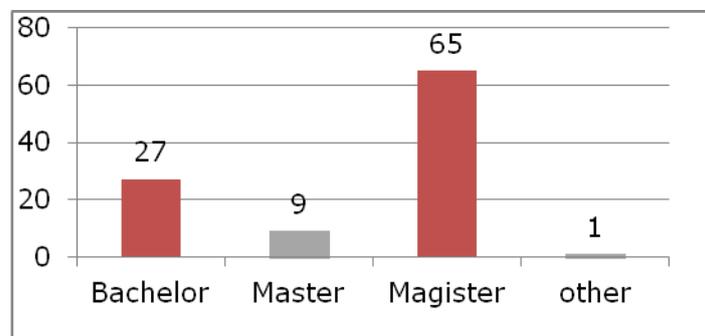


Figure 1: Graduates at IBI between 1999 and 2010

² Corresponding students of the Berlin School of Library and Information science department were analyzed in another career history study (Puppe 2006)

³ <http://www.ib.hu-berlin.de/verbleibstudie/>

⁴ tool available at: <http://limesurvey.com/>

It appears, that almost 2/3 of all participants graduated with a Magister degree (64 %). Already 35 % finished their studies with a Bachelor or Master of Arts. This allocation originates from the Bologna-reform, turning the studies from a Magister to a Bachelor-subject in 2003 (followed by the Master degree in 2005).

The vast majority stated they did not start any further apprenticeships. In addition, most of the respondents are employed at the moment. Altogether 12 % of the participants completed an additional academic study, especially language courses were chosen. Skills and courses offered by the IBI, like organization management, information literacy, IT-skills and abilities to work independently, influenced the alumni careers in a positive way.

Especially the theoretical knowledge gained through the studies, like information service, library-IT and knowledge management were very helpful for most alumni's professional lives. This tendency originates from the high percentage of all Alumni who are working in Libraries, Museums or Archives.

The majority students picked a minor subject in the field of humanities (e.g. German studies, linguistics, sociology, history). It is not quite clear what impact minor subjects have on the graduate's career since there are too many alumni who stated their minor subject was hardly helpful or not relevant at all. Nonetheless, having studied humanistic subject or computer science turn out to be very helpful within one's career. Correlating the very relevant minor subjects to the main group of alumni who now work in libraries (~51%) or documentation (14,7%) it seems that many subject librarians need this kind of background knowledge.

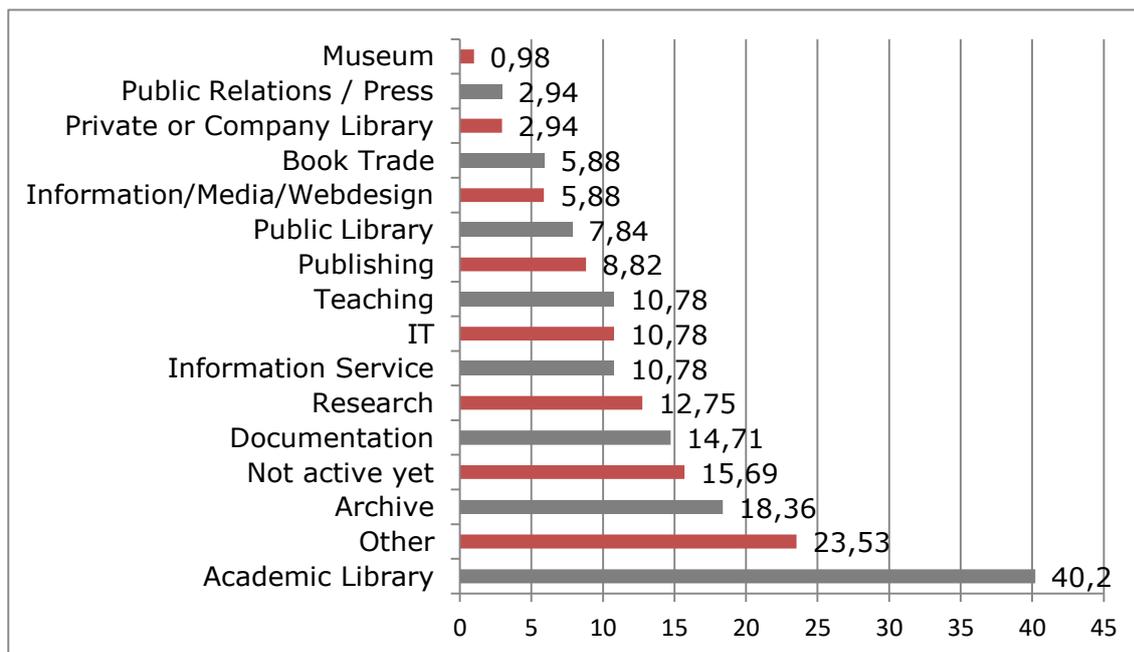


Figure 2: Positions of the Alumni (in %)

Altogether 74 of 102 respondents declared they are currently employed, 12 revealed they are not and 16 alumni didn't want to comment on that question.

While answering the survey more than 80% of the participants stated they are content with their current job position.

Apart from the biographies of its alumni, the Berlin School for Library and Information Science is also interested to know which subjects and skills taught were important for the former students throughout their curricula for their job lives.

Due to the high amount of active librarians most of the alumni benefited from courses in

subject/author approach, basics in computer technology and library-IT, information service and knowledge management. Concerning soft skills the participants acquired the ability to work independently, information and IT-competences, foreign languages as well as management basics.

According to the participants, the IBI offers a good learning atmosphere and good support from its lecturers and student advisory service. Nevertheless many Alumni asked for more practical experiences throughout their studies.

Conclusion

The high ratio of 80% employed alumni who work within the field of library and information science shows a strong correlation between the courses of education offered by the IBI and actual work fields of the former students. Still, many respondents wished training and a more intense instruction into subject and title approach. Likewise half of the respondents found the curriculum to be lacking in giving the students practical experience. The majority of respondents are employed in a position they are content with, mainly in academic libraries, emphasizing the importance of subject and title approach for the IBI.

In the end, having examined the fields the alumni now work in and which skills are in their professional lives successfully, accomplished the first and second main goal of this study. Since we received a comparatively low responds of Bachelor and Master graduates it is hard to state how these new degrees are accepted on the job market. This third main goal could be approached throughout the next career history study again, when more people will have graduated with Bachelor and Master degree.

In general the study showed that the content of teaching offered by the IBI seems to prepare students successfully for their careers, provides a pleasant learning environment and still owns a privileged status as only German institution within the iSchool Caucus.

Further career history studies can help to observe trends and will show to what extend the Bologna Reform influences alumni careers.

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