
The employment market for Library and Information Management workers in Ireland

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Occasion

This research was facilitated by the 2001 LIRG / Elsevier Award.

Abstract

Research on the employment market for library and information management work in Ireland analysed 301 advertisements / job notices for 323 positions over a 12-month period (April 2001 – March 2002). This article summarises some of the main findings of this project.

Acknowledgement

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Background

This article reports on some of the main findings of a research project which sought to capture and analyse data on employment opportunities for library and information management workers in Ireland over a 12-month period. It builds upon some preliminary research which reviewed library and information service job advertisements appearing in the two most comprehensive appointment sections in Irish national daily newspapers (Cullen, 2000). In its conclusion, this article recognised that a more comprehensive analysis could be provided by:

- reviewing a larger number of appointment sections and notices in the national, local and professional press;
- reviewing relevant websites and mailing lists;
- obtaining job descriptions, application forms and other information where available.

The opportunity to expand the resources from which data could be collected was provided by the LIRG / Elsevier research award. The vast majority of the research funding provided by the award was used to employ a news monitoring agency to scan for positions advertised in the larger number of appointment sections outlined above. This proved to be an essential component in the success of the project; almost 2.5 times as many advertisements were identified in the April 2001 – March 2002 project compared to the 1999 project.

The project proposed to analyse the employment market for workers in the field of library and information management over the course of 12 months (April 2001 – March 2002) by reviewing employment notices, job descriptions and application forms relevant to the sector.

The aims of the project were to report on the library and information management market, both in general, and sectorally, by demonstrating:

- the number of positions available;
- trends in the dissemination of employment vacancy information;
- trends in times of job availability;
- positions available;
- where positions were available;
- salary ranges on offer;
- specific skills sought by employers;
- levels of experience and professional qualifications required.

It was hoped that this information would prove useful to professionals involved in library and information education, potential LIS graduate students considering a career in library and information work and managers charged with recruiting and retaining staff.

Literature Review

There is a significant body of literature relevant to this topic. The full literature review will be included in the final report on this project, which will be published as an occasional paper by the Library and Information Statistics Unit at Loughborough University. The main trends identified in the literature on the subject are summarised below.

The current employment market in Ireland.

The Irish economy experienced significant upturns as a result of factors which include foreign direct investment, governmental fiscal adjustment policies, social partnership, support from the European Union, population changes and sustained investment in developing high standards of education (McSharry and White, 2001). The development of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ coincided with the emergence of Ireland as a knowledge economy. A negative consequence of this rapid economic development was the danger of skills shortages as a result of the thriving employment market (Sexton et al, 2001). The downturn in the US Economy in 2001 had a significant impact on the employment market in Ireland, but ‘a nascent recovery in global economic fortunes augurs well for a return towards trend growth rates by the latter half of 2002’ (McCoy et al, 2002).

The Analysis of Job Postings in Researching Library and Information Management Employment Markets.

Similar studies have been undertaken over the past number of years, and a crucial step in conducting research on library and information employment markets is almost always a review of job advertisements (Wainright, 2000).

Traditional Versus Emerging Information Occupations

The term *the emerging information labour market* has been defined as the ‘broad range of information management positions which are not part of the established LIS field or the information handling component of other established occupations and which fitted... the criterion that the tasks were appropriate ones for LIS graduates.’ (Willard and Mychalyn, 1998). There is little research on this emerging market, and has proved problematic for a number of reasons, including: differing theoretical and conceptual schemes for defining what the emergent market is and evidence of lack of fit between employer expectations and library qualifications (Apostle and Raymond, 1991). One description that elucidates this situation is given below.

'At the risk of oversimplifying, the market for information professionals is three-layered: the heartland, the hinterland and the horizon. The heartland can be defined in terms of traditional library or information units, largely staffed and managed by graduates of library and information science programs. The contexts and opportunities which characterise the hinterland are not defined in an institutional sense. This is the world of libraries-without-walls and distributed information systems, where disciplinary pedigree and professional affiliation matter less than perceived competence and adaptability. Here, diverse groups, ranging from information systems analysts through information scientists to communications specialists happily co-exist and inhabit a wide array of occupational niches (e.g., marketing information specialist, database co-ordinator, information manager). The third layer, the horizon, is the natural habitat of software engineers, business computing specialists, and telecommunications managers, whose focus tends to be the hardware or systems component, rather than information content and packaging.' (Cronin, Stiffler and Day, 1993).

Changing Skills Requirements and the Potential for Skills Transfer.

Studies have noted significant fundamental change in the working life of librarians which are due in no small part to the rapid pace of societal change and the impact of technology (Watson-Boone, 1998). Other key skills requirements include management and communications skills.

Some papers highlight the existence of a market for library skills outside a traditional library market. One US paper states ‘The best prospects [for library school graduates] will be among information brokerages, private corporations and consulting firms.’ (Anacker, 2001).

Value of professional qualifications

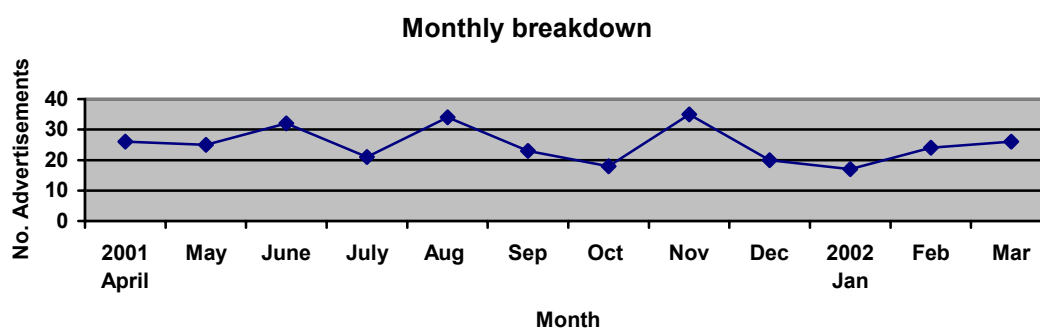
It has been pointed out that some employers do not necessarily seek qualified librarians for information management posts, and often seek persons with experience or qualifications relevant to the work of the organisation (Cronin, Stiffler and Day, 1993). Library school curricula will have to be revised if the qualification is to be made relevant to emerging markets (Apostle and Raymond, 1991). ‘...Library and information qualifications alone are usually not sufficient to obtain employment in the emerging market. Some other qualification or close identification with the employing organisation is usually necessary.’ (Moore, 1987). Fears have been stated that this mismatch will soon extend to the traditional library sector (Seiss, 2000). That said, 47% of the advertisements in the existing study of the Irish library and service employment opportunities stated that a professional qualification in LIS was essential or desirable (Cullen, 2000).

Main Findings.

Number of positions advertised

The project found that between April 2001 and March 2002, there were 301 advertisements for a total of 323 positions.¹ The monthly breakdown of this rate of advertising is demonstrated on figure 1, below.

Figure 1: Monthly Advertising Frequencies



Most positions were advertised in August (34), and least in January (17). The average amount of jobs advertisements and notices appearing each month was 25.

Sources of Data

As stated above data collected by systematic news scanning which was undertaken by the researcher and a news monitoring agency. 160 (53%) advertisements were identified solely by the researcher, 24 (8%) by the agency and 117 (39%) by both.

The *main* sources in which advertisements for library and information management work appeared are represented in the table below.

Table 1: Sources of Advertisements

Source	Number of advertisements
Irish Times	176
Irish Independent	144
Sunday Independent	42
HEAnet Job Vacancies Website	36
LIR Mailing List	29
Irish Library News	16
The Examiner	12
Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioner Website	6
Western People	3

¹ One of these advertisements was for one full-time and one half-time post; the advertisement communicated this as 1.5 posts. Another advertisement stated that a number of positions were available, but no further data has been received. In the light of this, the advertisement has been treated as one position.

Single advertisements appeared in 1 other national Sunday newspaper and 26 local newspapers. 2 advertisements appeared in 8 local newspapers. There was also significant cross-advertising in the various media (e.g an advertisement for one post appeared in 6 different local newspapers). This table should not be taken to indicate that one source is preferable to another for job-hunters. For example just under half of the positions advertised in the *Irish Independent* were not also advertised in the *Irish Times*, and 57.7% of the positions advertised in the *Irish Times* were not advertised in the *Irish Independent*. Obtaining a complete picture of the Library and information management employment market is dependent on examining the widest possible variety of information sources.

171 positions were advertised alongside other institutional advertisements, and 110 were single, stand-alone advertisements (17 were advertised only in electronic format, and 3 in a mixture of single and multiple advertisement formats). 20 advertisements were printed in colour, and 23 were re-advertisements.

Location of employment opportunities

Positions were advertised in following counties.

Table 2: Locations of Available Positions

County	No of Adverts	No. of Positions	Adverts as percentage of total	Positions as percentage of total
Carlow	3	3	1%	0.93%
Clare	3	3	1%	0.93%
Cork	11	11	3.65%	3.41%
Donegal	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Dublin	195	201	64.78%	62.23%
Galway	11	11	3.65%	3.41%
Kerry	6	9	1.99%	2.79%
Kildare	8	8	2.66%	2.48%
Kilkenny	3	3	1%	0.93%
Laois	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Laois / Offaly ²	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Limerick	5	9	1.66%	2.79%
Longford	2	2	0.6%	0.62%
Longford / Westmeath	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Louth	3	3	1%	0.93%
Mayo	3	4	1%	1.24%
Meath	2	2	0.66%	0.62%
Monaghan	3	3	1%	0.93%
Offaly	6	6	1.99%	1.86%
Outside Ireland	8	8	2.66%	2.48%
Roscommon	2	2	0.66%	0.62%

² In two cases, positions were advertised as serving a dual county area.

Sligo	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Tipperary	2	2	0.66%	0.62%
Various locations	1	9	0.33%	2.79%
Waterford	10	10	3.32%	3.1%
Westmeath	3	3	1%	0.93%
Wexford	2	2	0.66%	0.62%
Wicklow	4	4	1.33%	1.24%

One advertisement sought to fill 9 positions in various locations throughout Ireland.

Employment opportunities by sector.

One hundred and ninety five (60%) of the positions advertised were for ‘traditional’ library work (13 of these positions (4%) were for work as archivists). 128 (40%) were for work in the *emerging* and non-traditional information work market.

Positions were advertised in fourteen distinct sectors.

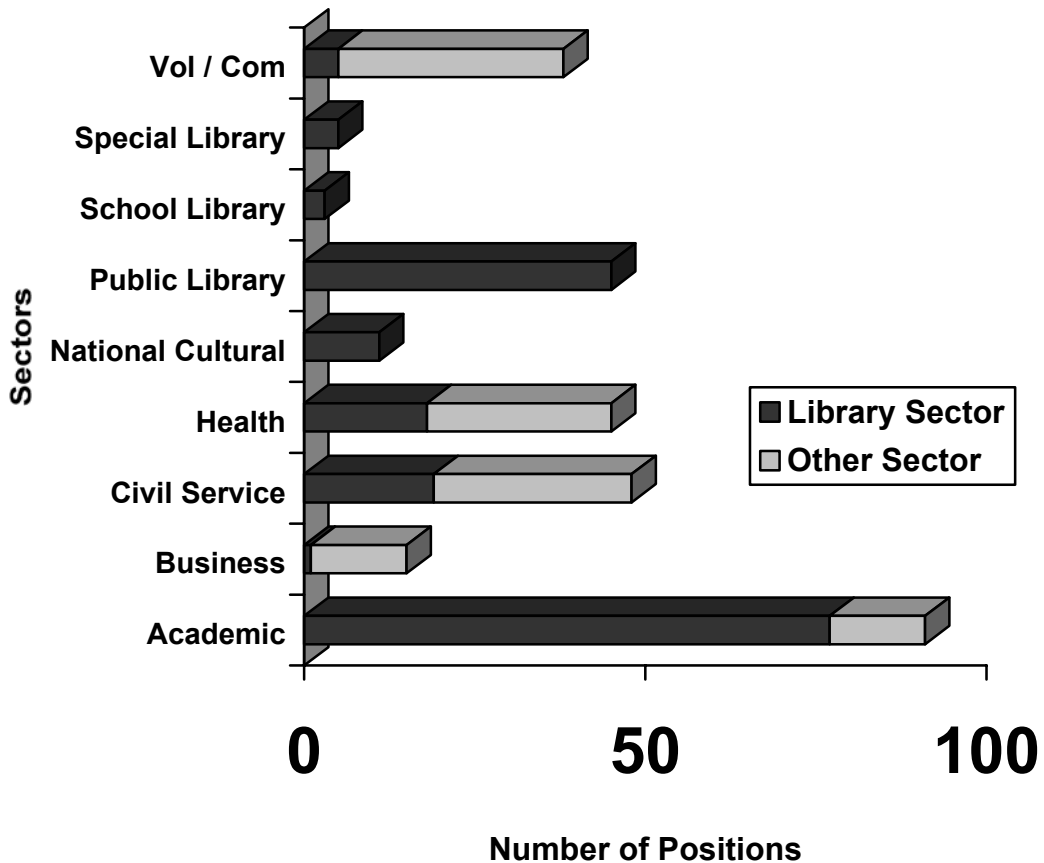
Table 3: Sectors where positions were advertised

Sector	No of Adverts	No. of Positions	Adverts as percentage of total	Positions as percentage of total
Academic Library	77	79	25.58%	24.46%
Academic – Other	14	14	4.65%	4.33%
Business Library	1	1	0.33%	0.31%
Business – Other	14	18	4.65%	5.57%
Civil Service Library	19	19	6.31%	5.88%
Civil Service-Other	29	33	9.63%	10.22%
Health Library	18	20	5.98%	6.19%
Health – Other	27	27	8.97%	8.36%
Libraries in National Cultural Institutions	11	11	3.65%	3.41%
Public Library	45	45	14.95%	13.93%
School Library	3	3	1%	0.93%
Special Library	5	6	1.66%	1.86%
Voluntary / Community Sector Library	5	5	1.66%	1.55%
Voluntary / Community	33	42	10.96%	13%

Sector – Other				
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This data is represented graphically in the graph below.

Figure 2: Sectoral Breakdown



Job Titles

The research produced a vast array of job titles. I hope to present these results in more detail in my larger report. In the interests of brevity, the positions identified fitted into the following broad categories of job titles.

Table 4: Main Job-Title Groupings

Job – title grouping	No of Adverts	No. of Positions	Adverts as percentage of total	Positions as percentage of total
Archivist	14	14	4.65%	4.33%
Assistant Librarian	47	48	15.28%	14.86%

Branch Librarian	4	4	1.33%	1.24
Cataloguer	4	4	1.33%	1.24%
Data / Database Manager /Worker	13	13	4.32%	4.02%
Development Manager (Citizens Information Centre)	6	6	1.99%	1.86%
Documentation Worker / Manager	3	3	1%	0.93%
Editorial Assistant on library/archive projects	2	2	0.66%	0.62%
Freedom of Information Co-ordinator / Officer	8	8	2.66%	2.48%
Information Manager	9	9	2.99%	2.79%
Information Officer	49	59	16.28%	18.27%
Information Specialist	4	8	1.33%	2.48%
Librarian	23	23	7.64%	7.12%
Librarian – Other ³	17	17	5.65%	5.26%
Librarian / Information Officer	4	4	1.33%	1.24%
Library Assistant	50	56	16.61%	17.34%
Library (service) Manager	6	6	1.99%	1.86%
Library systems staff	4	4	1.33%	1.24%
Medical Records Officer	2	2	0.66%	0.62%
Senior Library Assistant	12	12	3.99%	3.72%
Sub – Librarian	3	3	1%	0.93%
Trainee / Studentship	5	6	1.66%	1.86%
Unique posts ⁴	8	8	2.66%	2.48%
Untitled library service post	4	4	1.33%	1.24%

Salaries

Payment arrangements were stated in 229 records (76.08%). 212 of these were annual salaries, 5 were weekly wages, and 12 were for hourly rates of pay.

Salary scales were reported in only 51 records. The minimum number of salary points recorded was 4 and the highest was 15. In cases where only one salary point was indicated, this was estimated at the first point of the scale. The average annual salary for lower and single scale points was €27063.24.

The lowest salary stated for a part-time post was €8207.59; the lowest for a full-time post was €13858. The largest salary on the highest scale point was €65472.77.

Qualifications

The following qualifications were stated as necessary.

Table 5: Qualifications Sought

Qualifications	No.	Percentage
Degree	24	7.97%
ECDL	1	0.33%

³ This grouping includes Executive, City, County Librarians, Institute, Reference, Regional, Senior, Research and School Librarians etc.

⁴ These included job-titles which did not fit easily under the designations above. Examples are: library attendant, Know-How Officer and lecturer in library and information studies.

'General education'	2	0.66%
None Stated	75	24.92%
Postgraduate research degree	1	0.33%
Professional Qualification	3	1%
Professional archive qualification	13	4.32%
Professional library qualification	97	32.23%
Qualification in an information related discipline	2	0.66%
Recognised IT Qualification	1	0.33%
'Research Degree'	1	0.33%
School leaving qualification	47	15.61%
Suitably qualified	12	3.99%
To third level	21	6.98%
'Well educated'	1	0.33%

Experience

Experience was stated as essential in 160 (53.16%) of advertisements and advantageous in 48 (15.95%). 92 (30.56%) did not state that experience was necessary and a single advertisement stated that experience was not needed. Of the 160 advertisements which stated experience was essential, 26 also identified other areas of experience which would prove advantageous. Most of the experience sought was for work in a specific field or sector.

Length of experience necessary was stated in 55 records. Of these, the average amount of experience required was 2.47 years (the maximum stated was 5 years and the minimum was 1).

Competencies and skills

110 advertisements (36.54%) sought good communication skills or abilities (91% of these sought communication and / or interpersonal skills). 24 advertisements (8%) stated that flexibility was important, 42 (14%) sought ability to work as part of a team, and 21 (7%) asked that applicants be self-motivated. 68 advertisements (22.59%) required knowledge of languages (87% of these asked for some level of knowledge of the Irish language).

47 advertisements (15.61%) sought a number of traits in applicants (including enthusiasm, ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines, outgoing personality, initiative, etc.). 82 (27.4%) sought management skills such as problem solving, ability to supervise staff and planning. 139 (46.18%) sought IT skills which ranged from word processing to a high technical level. 52 advertisements (17.28%) sought a range of other skills.

Contract Details

Details of the types of contract available per advertisement are illustrated on the table below.

Table 6: Contract Types

Type of Contract	No.	%
Permanent Full-Time	81	26.91
Permanent Part-time	8	2.66%

Part-time (Unstated)	8	2.66%
Not Stated	95	31.56%
Temporary Full-Time	83	27.57%
Temporary Part-Time	9	2.99%
Panel Full-Time	5	1.66%
Panel Mixture of Full-time and Part-time Posts	8	2.66%
Panel Temporary	1	0.33%
Job-Sharing	3	1%

In the 91 records which stated length of contracts, the following data was received.

Table 7: Length of Temporary Contracts

Length of contracts offered.	No.	% of 91 records
To 6 months	12	13.19%
7-12 months	54	59.34%
13-18 months	2	2.2%
19 months -2 years	12	13.19%
Over 2 to 3 years	9	9.89%
Over 3 to 5 years	1	1.1%
5 years +	1	1.1%

Application Details

Methods of application requested in advertisements and documentation are outlined on the table below.

Table 8: Application Methods

Method	No	%
Application Form	138	45.85%
'Apply in writing'	3	1%
CV	77	25.58%
CV and Application form	8	2.66%
Letter of application	2	0.66%
Letter of application and CV	54	17.94%
Not Stated	9	2.99%
Letter of application, CV and application form	2	0.66%
'Please contact' named individual	8	2.66%

The information sought on 148 application / information forms is illustrated below.

Table 9: Information Sought on Application Forms

Information Sought	No.	%
Details of 3rd level education	122	82.43%
Details of 2nd level education	110	74.32%
Memberships	40	27.03%

Library Work Experience	5	3.38%
Previous Work Experience (General)	124	83.78%
Personal Interests	58	39.19%

Referees were requested in 134 instances. Of these, 48 requested that references should not be related to the candidate, 4 stated that at least one reference should be from an academic and 34 stated that at least one reference should come from the present employer. 103 requested 2 references, 28 requested 3, one requested 4 and 2 did not state a number of references required.

Conclusions

The project produced results that greatly expanded on the findings of previous research done on the employment market in Ireland for these professions. Although the data-capture time-span took place during one of the most turbulent economic periods in recent years, it emerged that there is still a strong employment market of library and information management workers in Ireland. Those seeking new positions will benefit from seeking information from a number of different sources.

Most of the positions available in Ireland are located in the Dublin area (62.23%). The majority of positions are available in the established library sector, particularly in academic and public libraries.

Although the largest single job-title grouping was for Information Officer-type positions (18.27%), the largest overall groupings were for professional librarian positions (29.1%) and library assistant/senior library assistant positions (21.06%) which indicates a strong market for professional and paraprofessional library staff.

The most sought after qualification was a professional library qualification, particularly in the traditional library sector; over 90% of positions requiring this qualification were based in this sector. Some form of experience was stated as essential in just over half of the advertisements.

A range of skill-requirements was identified by the research; the most sought after were Information Technology, communications and management abilities.

There were slightly more part-time contract positions available compared to permanent contracts. Nearly 60% of these were for contracts of under 12-month duration. It has certainly been the case that newly qualified librarians and information managers often take contract positions before securing permanent employment. Short contracts afford newly qualified librarians the opportunity to build up CVs and application data which is important as over 87% of application forms require details of previous employment and referees were required in 134 (44.52%) cases.

The research has been useful in providing a picture of an emerging employment market over a specified time period. The benefit of this research is that it creates a picture of the library and information employment market and generates a deeper understanding of the current role of librarians and information workers. It can serve to assist current employees in developing career strategies and highlights areas in which prospective professionals need to develop skills by informing a set of tools and

competencies necessary for career progression. Possible enhancements to the research might include surveys of HR, Library and Information Managers with a view to ascertaining what they see as being core skill and trait requirements to be sought from potential employees, and a review of how education and training programmes meet employer needs.

Misunderstandings about the roles of library and information workers can only be addressed by not only stating the range of tasks that they do, but also by quantifying the growing set of requirements now needed to work in a profession which consistently undergoes continual change. Research on the employment market for library and information work has to be undertaken in an ongoing way; to do so will not only benefit library and information professionals, but also will assist employers, recruiters and managers.

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