

Workforce Issues in Library and Information Science 2 (WILIS 2): Implementing a Model for Career Tracking of LIS Graduates

Abstract

WILIS 2 is a three year national project (2007-2010) designed to implement a career tracking model for LIS graduates. The project builds on WILIS 1, a comprehensive IMLS funded 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.

WILIS 1 is building an in-depth understanding of educational, workplace, career and retention issues faced by those who graduated from six NC LIS programs between 1964 and 2005. One of the NC programs is in a historically Black institution, allowing for data analysis related to the career choices and progression of minority librarians from the HBCU and other LIS programs. WILIS 2 builds on WILIS 1 by fully developing and testing the career tracking model on a national level. WILIS 2 will also explore potential links to the *IMLS National Study on the Future of Librarians in the Workforce* and the *ALISE Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report*. The specific goals of WILIS 2 are to:

- 1) Refine the career tracking model so that it is suitable for all LIS programs to use with their recent graduates.** Using a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach and a Project Advisory Committee (PAC), including LIS program directors, library leaders and workforce experts, WILIS 2 will build consensus on the essential elements of a career tracking instrument for use for monitoring and planning both educational programs and LIS workforce needs. Opportunities will be made available to LIS researchers, educators and practitioners to nominate individuals for the PAC. The selection will be made by the study team on the basis of representativeness and expertise.
- 2) Recruit as many LIS programs as possible to participate in a staged national launch of the career tracking model.** The study team, in concert with the expanded PAC, will recruit LIS programs nationally to participate in an initial pilot and a subsequent national launch with as many programs as possible. Up to 33 LIS programs will be funded through the grant. If more programs wish to enroll, the study team will select a maximum of 33 using criteria that maximize the representativeness of the sample. Programs that are not selected for grant-funded participation will be given the opportunity to enroll for a fee.
- 3) Conduct the surveys and provide access to results for the participating LIS programs.** The full national survey will be launched early in year 3 of WILIS 2. Participating LIS programs will have access to their own datasets, automated reports, analytic tools and analytic benchmarking feedback from the study team.
- 4) Explore options for sustaining the national career tracking model.** The PAC, in conjunction with the study team, will direct and explore avenues for sustainability beyond the grant period. This process will result in a final plan for sustainability generated by the PAC and the study team and systematically presented to other LIS stakeholders not involved in the creation of the plan.
- 5) Disseminate findings and publicize the availability of the WILIS 2 model.** The planned overlap between the original WILIS 1 and WILIS 2 grant periods will allow the study team to synergize travel of the PAC and study team members for implementation, exploration of avenues for sustainability and dissemination opportunities. A full range of communications approaches will be used including a Web site, Web casts, e-newsletters, listservs, presentations and publications.