



Librarians as Students: A Survey of Librarians and Archivists Pursuing Advanced Degrees

Lily Todorinova

abstract: This study examines the motivations, experiences, and challenges of academic librarians and archivists in the United States who pursue advanced degrees while already established in their careers. Drawing on 126 survey responses, the findings reveal a profession marked by intellectual curiosity, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Participants cited a range of motivations—from career advancement to personal fulfillment—but also noted unclear promotion pathways, inconsistent institutional support, and high personal costs. While many found the experience rewarding, others expressed uncertainty or disillusionment. The study highlights the need for clearer professional development structures, stronger mentorship, and a recognition of the expansive roles librarians and archivists play within the academic community.

Introduction

As experts and collaborators, librarians and archivists shape academic life alongside faculty, students, and administrators. Many already hold advanced degrees beyond their graduate training in archival or library studies. While employed, some choose to take additional courses and formally enroll in graduate programs. The relationship between these pursuits and their work responsibilities, however, remains largely unexplored. What drives these professionals to return to the classroom? How do these academic pursuits intersect with their work, their identities, and their sense of purpose? These insights invite a deeper look at the library and information science (LIS) profession itself. The desire for additional degrees may reflect growing demands within the field, or a search for a new direction amid professional uncertainty. In some cases, going back to school suggests a sense of possibility; in others, a feeling of being stuck.

portal: Libraries and the Academy, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2026), pp. 127–147.

Copyright © 2026 by Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD 21218.



While advanced study can enrich both individuals and their institutions, it also raises concerns about the toll such efforts may take on already overcommitted professionals.

This study explores the motivations, experiences, and challenges of librarians and archivists who pursue advanced degrees, while balancing their professional roles. It examines how these pursuits interact with their day-to-day responsibilities, influence their work-life balance, and shape their career trajectories. It also considers the support professionals rely on—or wish they had access to—in managing the dual demands of advanced education and full-time work. By providing the direct perspectives of librarians or archivists who also navigate life as students, this study aims to offer a deeper, more nuanced understanding of their place within the academic community.

Literature Review

Research on librarians pursuing advanced degrees while working is limited; however, studies focus broadly on themes that are relevant, such as credentialing and professional development. Librarian credentialing is a long-standing conversation, raising critical questions about the relevance and future of the field.¹ Archivists have similarly debated the value of certifications.² Janice Cooper, Janet Gertz, and Miriam Sandler discuss the transition of PhD holders into librarianship, examining the motivations and challenges of retraining through an MLS. They highlight concerns about job prospects, professional identity, and the value PhD holders bring to academic libraries.³ Yulia Sevryugina, Craig Smith, and Gabriel Murdoch revisit this topic decades later to reassess the role of PhD holders in academic librarianship. While the authors do not advocate for making a PhD a requirement, they emphasize the benefits of embracing diverse academic backgrounds and assert that librarians with PhDs strengthen their connections with academic communities and enhance their institutions in a variety of ways.⁴

There is evidence that library professionals find value in pursuing advanced degrees outside of credentialing factors, as well. In the context of school librarianship, Daniella Smith and Melissa Johnston discuss several factors that may influence librarians' decisions to pursue a PhD. Though not a formal study, their piece highlights motivations such as a desire for personal growth, a passion for research, and the potential for career advancement. Smith and Johnston also discuss the challenges librarians face, such as balancing work, family, and coursework, as well as navigating the transition from a professional to an academic mindset. Additionally, the article emphasizes the sense of fulfillment that comes with obtaining a PhD.⁵

More recently, Michael Ridley's article "Academic Librarians and the PhD" provides some data on the experiences of librarians with PhDs, or those currently pursuing a degree, offering a small-sample analysis within a Canadian university context. Ridley suggests that additional degrees are becoming increasingly important as academic librarians' responsibilities grow in complexity. Ridley's work also shows that librarians' motivations for pursuing a PhD are multifaceted. Overall, his findings reveal ambivalence among professionals regarding the advantages of a PhD. While the primary benefits may lie in personal intellectual development, professional gains are not defined or guaranteed.⁶

Professional development, often linked to tenure and promotion, can be part of the expectations of many academic roles. In contrast, pursuing additional degrees is



generally optional. However, literature on professional development can be pertinent to cases where librarians and archivists are required or highly incentivized to obtain additional degrees. For the purpose of this article, the literature review will point to a few key elements of the broader professional development body of research. The term “professional development,” often paired with “continuing education,” can take place in many ways, but in this case it refers to intentional and structured skill development in the form of coursework.⁷

Khurram Shahzad, Shakeel Ahmad Khan, Yasir Javed, and Abid Iqbal summarize several studies that have explored the motivations behind librarians’ pursuit of professional development opportunities. Their findings highlight several factors, including career advancement, personal interest, and institutional support. They also emphasize the complexity and realities of the library profession, which may demand more versatile skillsets.⁸

In her 2017 piece, Ramirose Ilene Attebury similarly argues that ongoing changes in academic libraries require librarians to pursue professional development. Through interviews with ten librarians, Attebury highlights the role of reflection and social interaction as crucial elements of meaningful professional development. Additionally, experiencing discomfort and eye-opening moments enhances learning by encouraging librarians to recognize their own professional limitations—a self-awareness that is essential for continuous growth. While Attebury acknowledges time and cost as potential challenges, the author ultimately concludes that such learning opportunities offer significant benefits for both professionals and their institutions.⁹

Methodology

The study collected insights from both university librarians and archivists, as they are similarly integrated within academic departments as subject specialists and curators. Despite key differences in their roles and training, they share comparable schedules, demands, and tenure and promotion processes. Many attend the same LIS programs, specializing in different tracks. Although this article occasionally uses the term “librarians” when referring to all study participants, for brevity, it acknowledges the distinct roles of these groups and hopes to offer insights that are relevant to both.

The study employed an online survey, which was sent using the American Library Association (ALA)’s Connect platform and archivist-focused listservs in February 2025 (see Appendix). These networks reach approximately 20,000 subscribers collectively, though the exact number of professionals within these groups is unknown. The selected listservs were chosen in order to reach the largest number of participants efficiently, though there are other listservs available, and no single one serves as a primary source. The methodology used a non-representative sample, as it only includes responses from individuals who self-selected to participate. Responses were screened to ensure

Professional development, often linked to tenure and promotion, can be part of the expectations of many academic roles. In contrast, pursuing additional degrees is generally optional.



participants were academic librarians or archivists working in academic institutions in the United States, with two non-qualifying responses excluded from the analysis. To safeguard privacy, no personally identifying information was collected.

Results

Demographics

The survey received 126 eligible responses. 122 of the participants were employed full-time and 4 were employed half-time in academic libraries and archives. The majority (83) had faculty status in their institution, while 43 participants were in non-faculty or administrative roles. A further breakdown revealed that over half of those with faculty status were either tenured or were on a tenure-track (47), while 35 were non-tenure track. Figure 1 shows the distribution of years of experience within the profession.

The majority of respondents (51) indicated working in a large public R1, R2, or equivalent institution. Twenty-three worked in a public small or medium-sized institution, 23 worked in a private small or medium-sized institution, 15 worked in a private large institution, 6 in a community college, and 7 respondents indicated working in either a for-profit college or university or having an appointment that was not affiliated with the choices presented. Table 1 presents respondents' work specialization within libraries and archives, showing a wide variety of responsibilities.

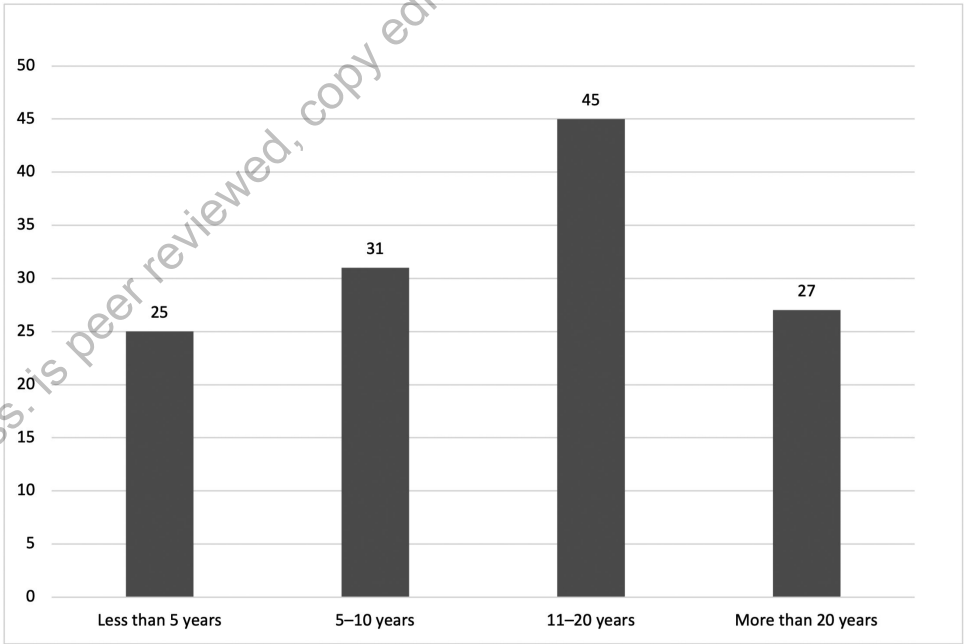


Figure 1. Study participants' longevity in the profession (in years).

Table 1.
Participants' specializations

| Specialization | Count |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Archives/special collections | 26 |
| Information literacy instruction | 77 |
| Reference and research assistance | 74 |
| Collection development and management | 47 |
| Liaison work with academic departments | 66 |
| Technology or digital services support | 21 |
| Library administration and management | 32 |
| Outreach and community engagement | 40 |
| Scholarly communication and publishing support | 22 |
| Other (manually write in) | 13 |
| Acquisitions, Electronic resources, access services, IT support, circulation, cataloging, management, assessment, digital preservation | |

Reasons for Pursuing Additional Degrees

Figure 2 shows the participants' motivations for pursuing advanced degrees. Some of the "other" responses mentioned the appeal of reduced tuition, the potential for salary increases or improved financial prospects due to the degree, and the need for additional training to enhance their performance in their current roles. For some, obtaining an additional advanced degree was explicitly required for promotion purposes, while several expressed a desire to transition to an entirely new career.

When asked whether a specific person or event inspired them to pursue the degree, respondents cited a range of personal and professional influences. These included conferences they attended, scholars they admired, and encouragement from colleagues—both within and outside of libraries—who recognized their talent or aptitude for the new field.

Choosing the Program

Fifty-four respondents reported pursuing a master's degree (with some already holding multiple master's degrees in addition to an MLS or MI degree), 51 were currently working on a doctoral degree (EdD, PhD, for example), and 7 were pursuing a certificate. Table 2 loosely summarizes the degrees and concentrations, showing that the most

For some, obtaining an additional advanced degree was explicitly required for promotion purposes, while several expressed a desire to transition to an entirely new career.

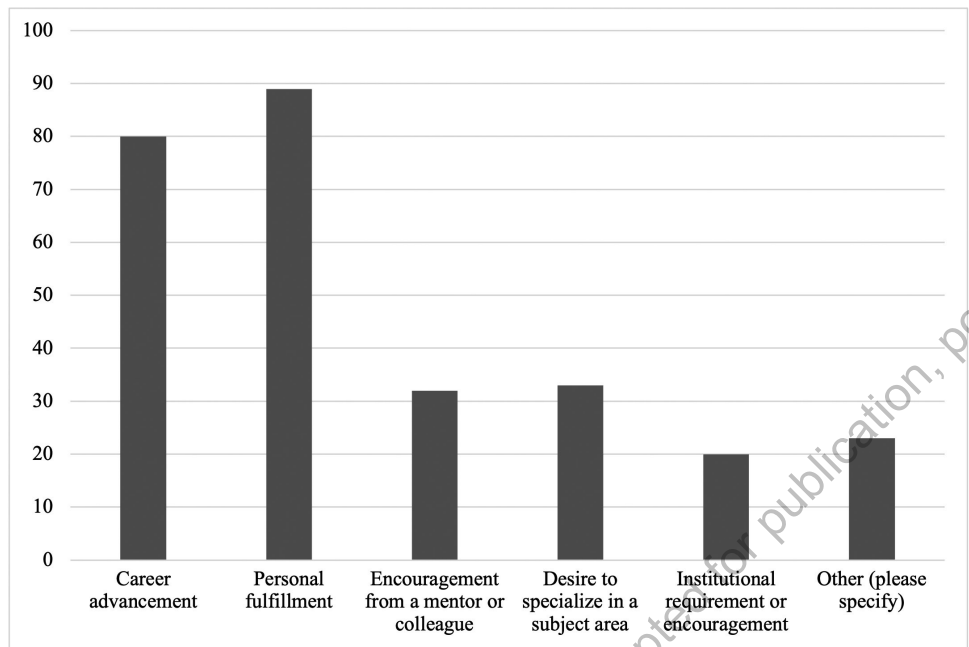


Figure 2. Study participants’ motivations for pursuing an additional advanced degree.

popular fields were Education and Library and Information Studies. Most respondents (87) reported being enrolled part-time. Just over half (63) were enrolled in a program at the same institution where they were employed, while the remaining 51 reported attending a different institution. It also seemed common for participants’ employers to cover the costs of the degree, either fully or partially. However, 24 participants were pursuing a different degree without any financial support from their employer.

Cost considerations and proximity to work and home were the most frequently selected factors in choosing a program. Others were drawn to the hybrid or virtual modality of their program’s coursework, as well as the availability of a particular subject area.

General Experiences

Most participants reported that they had no challenges being accepted into their program. Some admission concerns were raised regarding part-time status, as it was not ideal for

Cost considerations and proximity to work and home were the most frequently selected factors in choosing a program.

their program of choice. Figure 3 shows the evenly divided responses to the question “Is pursuing a degree encouraged by your workplace?” No respondents indicated that the practice was actively discouraged. Further, most participants indicated that pursuing the degree has interfered with their work and/or personal life. Table 3 presents a thematic breakdown based on categories of impact, including select anonymous quotes. Figure 4 zooms



Table 2.
Participants' selected degrees and concentrations

| Field of Study | Concentrations | Number of responses |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Archival Studies | Library Science, Public History | 7 |
| Art History | | 1 |
| Business | Business Administration, Business Analytics, Master of Business | 4 |
| Communications | | 2 |
| Education | Adult Education, Cultural Studies, Curriculum and Teaching, General, Leadership, Philosophy and History of Education, Organizational Change, Psychology, Public Policy, STEM, and Teaching and Learning. | 16 |
| | Higher Education (including Administration and Leadership) | 20 |
| | Learning and Developmental Sciences, Learning Technologies, Instructional Design | 4 |
| English | Cultural Studies, African American Literature, Literature, Creative Writing, Literary Studies | 7 |
| History | U.S. History, History of Religion, Theater History | 7 |
| Interdisciplinary | | 3 |
| Labor Studies | | 1 |
| Leadership | | 2 |



Table 2., Cont.

| Field of Study | Concentrations | Number of responses |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Library and Information Science | Information and Interaction Design, Information Science, Information Studies (including PhD), Library and Information Science, Library and Information Studies, Digital Humanities | 12 |
| | Analytics and Information Management, Data science, Data analytics, Human Centered Computing | 4 |
| Liberal Studies | | 5 |
| Philosophy | | 1 |
| Psychology | Industrial and Organizational Psychology | 1 |
| Public Administration | | 2 |
| Sociology | | 1 |
| Statistics | | 1 |
| Supply Chain Management | | 1 |
| Certificates | Advanced Study, Design History, Information Accessibility and Policy, Research and Evaluations Methods, Sexual Health Education | 5 |

in on the perceived impact of pursuing another degree on the librarian or archivist's work specifically.

In response to the question "Has your relationship to teaching faculty been affected by your pursuit of an advanced degree?" 52 respondents said that it was positively affected, and 43 indicated that there was no change in their relationship to teaching faculty. Additionally, the majority (63) reported that their role as a librarian or archivist was respected and valued within the department of their field of study. Only four reported that they were viewed as an outsider. Figure 5 shows responses to the question "How do you find the experience of switching between your role as a librarian and a student within the same institution (if applicable)?" The responses show that while approximately half of the respondents had no difficulty switching roles, the remaining respondents did experience some discomfort. Some of the responses indicate that the experience can be complex, sometimes seamless and at times challenging, due to their role as a librarian or archivist.

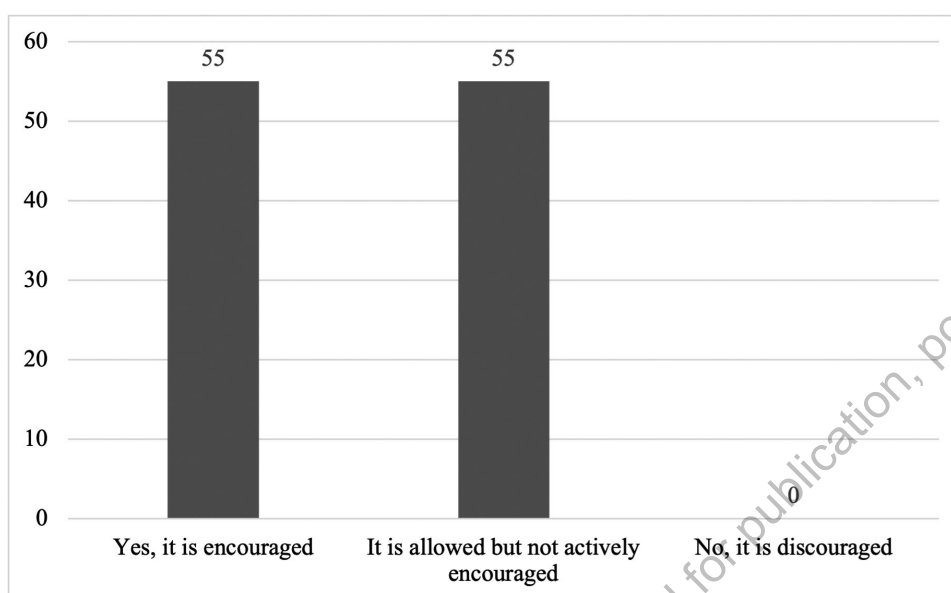


Figure 3. Study participants' responses to the question "Is pursuing an advanced degree encouraged by your workplace?"

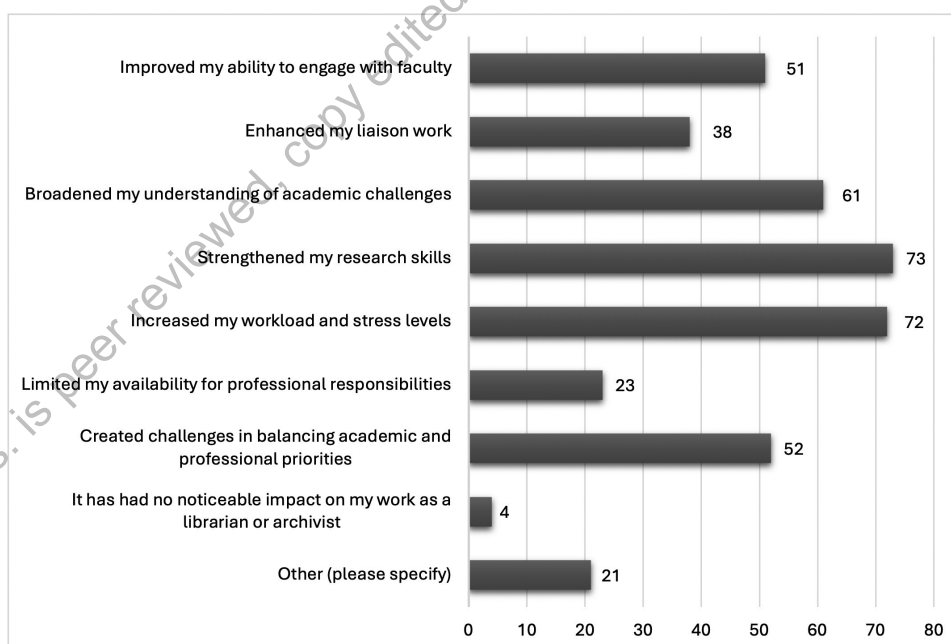


Figure 4. How pursuing an advanced degree has impacted participants' work as librarians or archivists.



Table 3.

The impact of earning additional degrees on individuals' professional and/or personal lives

| Theme | Response |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact on personal life | <p>–"It's hard to have a personal life while in grad school and working full time."</p> <p>–"More stress outside of work."</p> <p>–"It significantly impacted my personal life. Nights, weekends, and summer breaks were taken up by schoolwork. This left little time for restorative activities."</p> <p>–"Working while being a full-time student means that there is less time for other things, such as personal or social time."</p> <p>–"I have worked hard to ensure that pursuing my degree has not affected my work, but I have much less free time in my personal life and have had to sacrifice certain events that I would otherwise have had time for."</p> |
| Impact on professional life | <p>–"I find that the degree program takes time and attention away from the work I could be doing for the institution."</p> <p>–"Since the degree is required by my job, I take time out of my workday to complete coursework, and relate as much coursework to my job as possible."</p> |
| Time management and organization | <p>–"I have to be sooooo organized, but so far it's good."</p> <p>–"It doesn't 'interfere,' but it does require a lot of discipline and consistent time-management practices."</p> <p>–"I have to be very strategic with my time."</p> <p>–"Since I am also tenure-track, I have to be sure that being in school doesn't take away from the requirements that I have to meet in order to achieve tenure. This means LOTS of time management and organization."</p> |



Table 3., Cont.

| Theme | Response |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Challenges due to family responsibilities | <p>–"Time management is difficult, especially with children at home."</p> <p>–"I'm a parent, my spouse has a demanding career that has almost zero flexibility and consistently high volume work weeks, and I'm a library director with lots of demands on my own time professionally."</p> <p>–"I had my first child in the middle of pursuing this degree and balancing all three has been challenging."</p> <p>–"I am also raising two small children so the degree is a strain. It sort of like running on adrenaline all the time."</p> <p>–"I have a young child- so can only take one class at a time and need to balance childcare with my spouse."</p> <p>–"I am raising two small children so the degree is a strain."</p> |
| Support and flexibility | <p>–"I'm fortunate to have an understanding spouse who knows that much of my free time outside of work is taken up by schoolwork."</p> <p>–"My partner, child and supervisor at work have all been very supportive and flexible about time commitments."</p> <p>–"My workplace is very encouraging of considering the degree as part of my workload /workday. So I am able to do the work largely within my working hours, which is nice."</p> |
| Impact on health and well-being | <p>–"I have to limit the activities that I can do with my spouse and children in my time outside of work and it has increased my stress level."</p> <p>–"The stress has negatively affected my mental health at times."</p> |

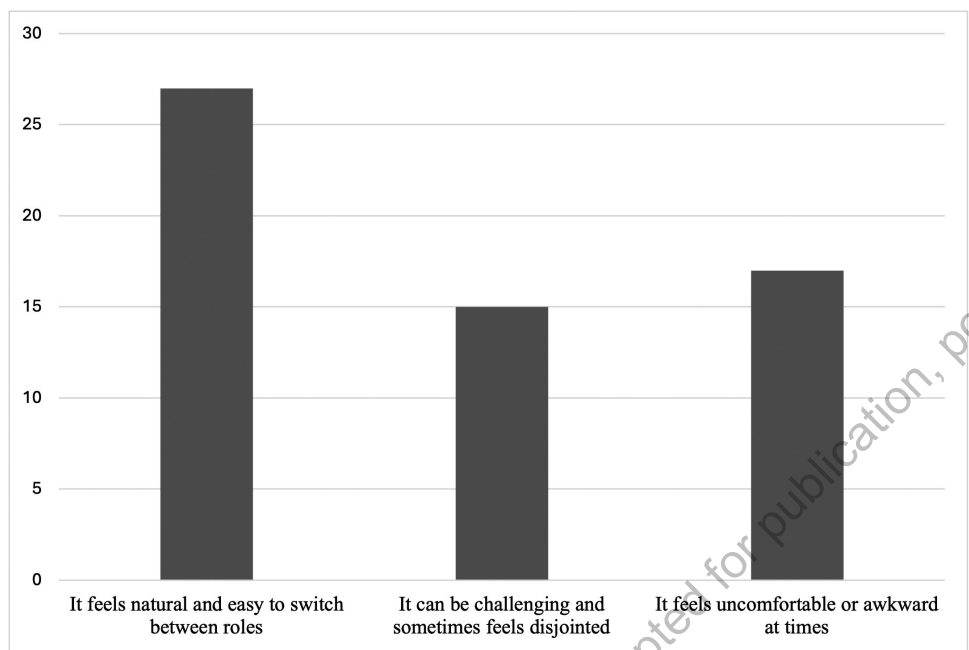


Figure 5. Study participants’ responses to the question “How do you find the experience of switching between your role as a librarian and a student within the same institution (if applicable)?”

Support Network

Seventy-three respondents indicated that they have both a professional and a personal network that they relied on while pursuing the additional degree. The forms of support included emotional, financial, mentorship, and academic support. Twenty respondents

Overall, support networks were highly individualized, ranging from strong multi-layered support systems to isolation.

indicated that they relied only on personal support. The support networks described included friends, family, classmate cohorts, formal and informal study groups, supervisors, colleagues from both inside and outside of their institutions, labor unions, and academic advisors. A closer look at the 75 comments gathered reveals several commonalities, including strong family and spousal support. Tasks respondents received help with

included childcare and household responsibilities. Overall, support networks were highly individualized, ranging from strong multi-layered support systems to isolation. Some in online programs expressed a lack of strong peer engagement. In addition, workplace culture plays a key role, with some institutions fostering academic encouragement and others being more neutral.

Figure 6 presents responses to the question “What type of support do you wish you had? (select all that apply).” Comments under “other” included access to specialized software required for the degree, support seeking grants, more varied support networks (including with other librarians going through this experience in other institutions), and more time to complete the degree.

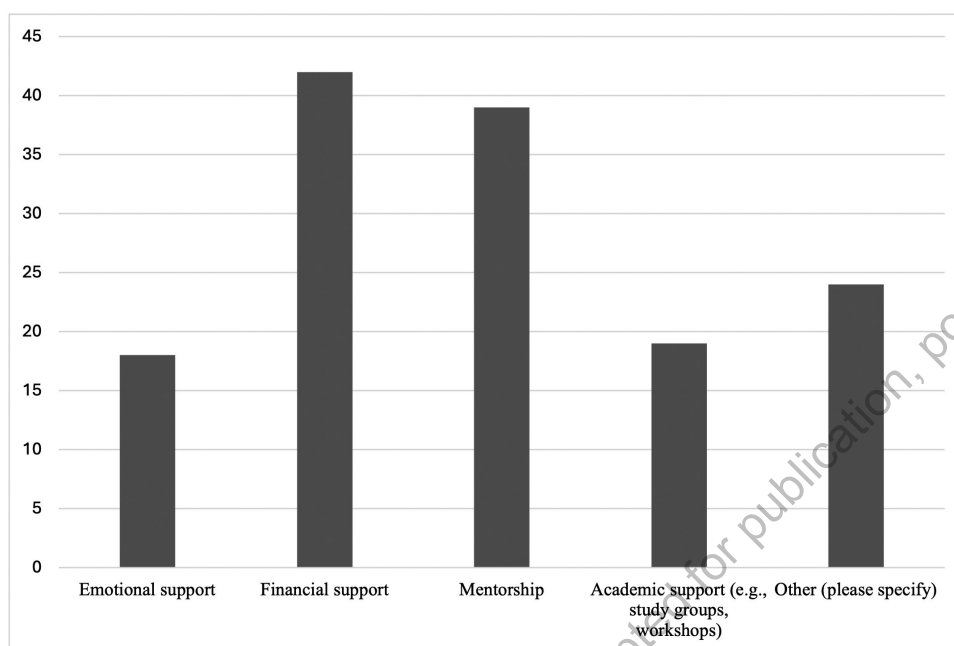


Figure 6. Types of support participants would like to have had while earning additional advanced degrees.

Career Future

Fifty-eight respondents expressed confidence that their additional degree would contribute to meaningful career advancement, while 43 were uncertain, and 9 did not believe it would. Additionally, 60 respondents intended to remain in libraries after completing the degree, 31 were unsure, and 9 indicated plans to transition into a different career path. Respondents also provided general insights about their experiences and future plans, some of which are featured here:

- “I am unsure what will happen with the completion of my degree. While I hope it can help me move into a higher managerial position, I am also open to leaving the field and working elsewhere.”
- “In the last week, I’ve learned of two other library staff members that are pursuing degrees here and one is in a higher role than me. It made me feel a little less alone as someone balancing work and student life at the same institution.”
- “So far, it has been a great experience. I really think that it has allowed me to look at my work as a librarian and educator in a different and positive way. It has allowed me time to pursue topics of interest that I would not likely otherwise have considered. I’ve been able to pull things from my study into the work I do as a librarian.”
- “It has been a bit strange to be back in school now that I’ve been in academia for years. I find myself in classes with first-semester grad students wherein I realize I should take a backseat sometimes in discussion and give them more ground to



speaking and developing. I was nervous about being a non-traditional grad student (as I am older than most of my student peers) but everyone has been very welcoming, which has been lovely!"

- "I am exhausted."
- "I hope to get out of libraries. I've done everything I wanted to do, and my current job is just not intellectually stimulating, which makes me a bundle of negative energy. I'm ready to do something else."
- "I am so glad that I pursued this opportunity... pursuing a leadership/management degree has been surprisingly useful in my work as a librarian/archivist and has had a material impact on my growth in the field."
- "I honestly wouldn't do it again. There just isn't enough reward for the investment of time and energy."
- "The role of libraries in academia is tenuous depending on your campus administration. I want flexibility with an advanced degree, whether to move up, move out, or just do my job better."
- "Pursuing a PhD has done wonders for my professional satisfaction and mental health."
- "Any librarian who teaches should strongly consider some sort of formal pedagogy training."
- "I am enjoying being a student (after decades of being a librarian) and learning new technologies and procedures that didn't exist before. Using different muscles helps me grow personally and professionally and supports me through the tenure process and promotion."
- "As I write this, I am better understanding my drive and motivation for getting this degree. A big part of it is to feel more confident in the role, as well as to better support and gain the respect of the students and faculty in the program."

Discussion

Initial impressions gleaned from the findings highlight what many already know: librarians and archivists are extraordinary professionals with a remarkable depth of knowledge and scope of interests. Some are diving into subject expertise, others into leadership, pedagogy, or critical theory. There is a sense of openness and possibility in how they talk about learning. It is not about checking a box—it is the pure definition of lifelong learning—and they display a readiness to take on new challenges.

The fact that these professionals tend to take this step mid-career suggests that the decision is intentional and strategic—they have had time to build experience and consider their career options, as well as the type of work that feels meaningful. Since the majority of respondents were tenured or on the tenure track, earning another degree may offer a sense of parity with other faculty. It could also imply that they have the flexibility to build on their education and deepen their knowledge across fields and methodologies. Most of those pursuing graduate studies work closely with academic departments through teaching, reference, collection development, and/or liaison roles. This has exposed them to the culture and dynamics of academic departments outside of the library. Based on the responses, this experience has in some cases inspired a deeper interest—an urge to



grow, specialize, and push boundaries. It reflects a reconceptualization of what librarianship is—not static but constantly evolving alongside the communities it serves.

In fact, what emerges from these responses is the sense that librarianship is uniquely positioned within the academic landscape. It resists easy definition. That elusiveness is not a weakness but a strength—rooted in its interdisciplinarity, responsiveness, and relational nature. That complexity is something to be embraced, leveraged, and fully owned. Yet, as the responses also reveal, these educational pursuits are not always encouraged or even openly acknowledged. In

some cases, they feel like a secret—something pursued quietly on the side. This tension raises important questions about recognition, support, and what it means to embrace the complexity of the profession. While many institutions offer tuition remission or some form of financial assistance, that support does not always extend to cultural or structural encouragement. The fact that so many respondents expressed a desire for mentorship speaks to the solitary, unmapped nature of these pursuits. There is no clear template or defined path for librarians and archivists who choose to deepen their education while working. Instead, they rely on a kind of quiet determination, shaped by individual motivation rather than institutional guidance.

For many participants, pursuing an advanced degree was seen as at least potentially tied to better work opportunities—though the benefit was ultimately unclear. That uncertainty weighed heavily on some of the respondents. Without a clear roadmap for advancement, it appears to be difficult for some participants to justify the time and energy these programs demand, especially when that time comes at the expense of personal life. If not through another degree, then how do library professionals advance? What makes someone promotable in the LIS field, outside of standard tenure and promotion processes? This ambiguity calls for additional research and more open conversations.

While many participants planned to stay in libraries, a current of uncertainty ran through the responses. For some, the degree felt like a door-opener—even if the destination remained unclear. But what compels someone to seek new doors in the first place? If advanced education deepens librarians' academic contributions, is that value meaningfully recognized? It seems that there is an opportunity for library leadership to not only acknowledge these efforts, but to understand their broader potential. Rather than treating additional degrees as employees' personal side projects, administrators could recognize and draw upon the expertise and interdisciplinary relationships that librarians are cultivating. Through teaching, research, and critical inquiry, librarians and archivists extend the library's reach and relevance across campus. These connections are not only enriching—they are strategic. They position the library as a responsive and intellectually engaged partner within the university.

Most of those pursuing graduate studies work closely with academic departments through teaching, reference, collection development, and/or liaison roles. This has exposed them to the culture and dynamics of academic departments outside of the library.



Conclusion

This exploratory study examined the experiences of librarians and archivists who pursued an additional graduate degree while working in academic libraries. It aimed to understand their motivations, the challenges they encountered, and the broader implications for the profession. The responses revealed a complex and deeply personal landscape—one shaped by intellectual fulfillment and evolving professional identities. While individual experiences varied, several common themes emerged. These key findings are summarized here:

- Librarians and archivists embrace lifelong learning.
- Pathways to career advancement beyond tenure and promotion remain unclear.
- The personal cost of graduate study is high, though the professional impact is often positive.
- Institutional support is inconsistent, and mentorship plays a critical role.

Together, these insights offer a snapshot of a profession in motion. Participants described their academic pursuits as meaningful but also marked by pressures. Many found value in expanding their knowledge and building new connections across disciplines, even as they struggled to see clear professional rewards for doing so. The findings suggest the need for deeper reflection within the field. Supporting this kind of growth is not only a matter of offering financial assistance or tuition remission. It requires a broader cultural shift; one that values complexity and interdisciplinarity, encourages innovation, and sees professional learning as integral to the evolving mission of academic libraries.

Lily Todorinova is the undergraduate experience and open educational research librarian at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, email: lily.todorinova@rutgers.edu, ORCID: 0000-0002-1093-0266.



Appendix

Survey Questions

What is your current employment status as an academic librarian or archivist?

- Full-time
- Part-time

Do you have faculty status at your institution?

- Yes
- No

If you have faculty status, what is your current rank?

- Tenured
- Tenure-track
- Non-tenure-track
- Not applicable (explain) _____

How many years have you been in the profession?

- Less than 5 years
- 5–10 years
- 11–20 years
- More than 20 years

What type of institution do you currently work in?

- Public, large (e.g., R1 or R2 research university)
- Public, small or medium-sized
- Private, large (research-focused or doctoral university)
- Private, small or medium-sized
- Community college
- Other (please specify) _____

What is your age?

- Under 25
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65 and over

What degrees have you already completed? (Please select all that apply)

- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree (e.g., MLS, M.Ed., MA, MS)
- Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD, EdD, etc.)
- Other (please specify) _____



What are your primary responsibilities in your role as a librarian or archivist? (Select all that apply)

- Archives/special collections
- Information literacy instruction
- Reference and research assistance
- Collection development and management
- Liaison work with academic departments
- Technology or digital services support
- Library administration and management
- Outreach and community engagement
- Scholarly communication and publishing support
- Other (please specify) _____

What type of advanced degree program are you currently pursuing?

- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD, EdD, etc.)
- Certificate Program
- Other (please specify) _____

What is the subject and concentration (if applicable) of the degree you are pursuing?

Are you pursuing this degree full or part time?

- Full time
- Part time

What motivated you to pursue an additional advanced degree? (Select all that apply)

- Career advancement
- Personal fulfillment
- Encouragement from a mentor or colleague
- Desire to specialize in a subject area
- Institutional requirement or encouragement
- Other (please specify) _____

Was there a specific person or event that inspired you to pursue this degree? If yes, please describe:

How did you select your advanced degree program and institution? (Select all that apply)

- Reputation of the program
- Availability of a specific subject area
- Proximity to home or work
- Cost considerations
- Recommendation from a colleague or mentor
- Reasons related to current role as a librarian (describe) _____
- Other (please specify) _____



Is the program at your current institution (i.e. where you work as a librarian or archivist)?

- Yes
- No

Is pursuing your program financially supported by your workplace?

- Fully supported
- Partially supported
- Not supported at all

Did you face challenges in being accepted into the program?

- Yes, significant challenges
- Yes, minor challenges
- No challenges
- Not sure

Please describe:

Is pursuing an advanced degree encouraged by your workplace?

- Yes, it is encouraged
- It is allowed but not actively encouraged
- No, it is discouraged

Please explain:

Has pursuing an advanced degree interfered with your work and/or personal life?

- Yes, significantly
- Yes, somewhat
- No

Comments

Do you believe this degree will lead to meaningful career advancement?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comments

How has pursuing this degree impacted your work as a librarian or archivist? (Select all that apply)

- Improved my ability to engage with faculty
- Enhanced my liaison work
- Broadened my understanding of academic challenges
- Strengthened my research skills
- Increased my workload and stress levels
- Limited my availability for professional responsibilities
- Created challenges in balancing academic and professional priorities
- It has had no noticeable impact on my work as a librarian or archivist
- Other (please specify) _____



Has your relationship to teaching faculty been affected by your pursuit of an advanced degree?

- Yes, positively affected
- Yes, negatively affected
- No
- Unsure

Comments

How is your role as a librarian perceived by the faculty and students in the program you are currently pursuing?

- Respected and valued
- Seen as an outsider with limited relevance to the field
- Viewed as a peer or equal in terms of academic engagement
- Ignored or overlooked
- Not sure

Comments

How do you find the experience of switching between your role as a librarian and a student within the same institution (if applicable)?

- It feels natural and easy to switch between roles
- It can be challenging and sometimes feels disjointed
- It feels uncomfortable or awkward at times
- I haven't had to switch between roles much yet
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify) _____

Do you have a professional or personal support network for pursuing an advanced degree?

- Yes, both professional and personal
- Yes, only professional
- Yes, only personal
- No

If yes, what types of support do you receive? (Select all that apply)

- Emotional support
- Financial support
- Mentorship
- Academic support (e.g., study groups, workshops)
- Other (please specify) _____

Please describe your support network:

What types of support do you wish you had? (Select all that apply)

- Emotional support
- Financial support
- Mentorship
- Academic support (e.g., study groups, workshops)
- Other (please specify) _____



After completing your advanced degree, do you plan to continue working in libraries or pursue a different career path?

- Stay in libraries
- Pivot to a different career path
- Unsure
- Other (please specify) _____

Please add any other general thoughts about your experience pursuing additional graduate degrees:

Notes

1. Mary Grosch and Terry L. Weech, "Perceived Value of Advanced Subject Degrees by Librarians Who Hold Such Degrees," *Library & Information Science Research* 13, no. 3 (1991): 173–99; Marybeth F. Grimes and Paul W. Grimes, "The Academic Librarian Labor Market and the Role of the Master of Library Science Degree: 1975 through 2005," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 34, no. 4 (2008): 332–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2008.05.023>; Deanna B. Marcum, "Do Librarians Need PhDs?" *Information Outlook* 16, no. 5 (2012): 33–35; Lance Day and Jaroslaw Szurek, "Beyond the MLS: Reflections on the Role of Professional and Continued Education for Academic Library Liaisons," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 25, no. 2 (2018): 131–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2018.1455547>.
2. Tyler O. Walters, "Possible Educations for Archivists: Integrating Graduate Archival Education with Public History Education Programs," *American Archivist* 54, no. 4 (1991): 484–92, <https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.54.4.rj20243h40463587>; Richard J. Cox, "The Society of American Archivists and Graduate Education: Meeting at the Crossroads," *American Archivist* 63, no. 2 (2000): 368–79, <https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.63.2.r64t27100718121r>; Ashley Todd-Diaz and Alex H. Poole, "Who Is This Godot? The Academy of Certified Archivists and Graduate Archival Education," *American Archivist* 85, no. 2: (2022), 678–99, <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.2.678>.
3. Janice Cooper, Janet Gertz, and Miriam Sandler, "From PhD to MLS: Retraining in Librarianship," *Library Journal* 112, no. 8 (1987): 41–42.
4. Yulia V. Seviyugina, Craig Smith, and Gabriel Mordoch, "Challenges, Successes, and Possibilities: How MLS- and PhD-Holding Librarians Perceive Their Roles in Academic Libraries," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 24, no. 2 (2024): 361–403, <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2024.a923711>.
5. Daniella Smith and Melissa P Johnston, "Why Not a PhD?" *Knowledge Quest* 38, no. 5 (2010).
6. Michael Ridley, "Academic Librarians and the PhD," *Partnership* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v13i1.3971>.
7. Ramirose Ilene Attebury, "Adult Education Concepts in Library Professional Development Activities," *New Library World* 116, no. 5/6 (2015): 302–315, <https://doi.org/10.1108/NLW-08-2014-0100>.
8. Khurram Shahzad, Shakeel Ahmad Khan, Yasir Javed, and Abid Iqbal, "E-Learning for Continuing Professional Development of University Librarians: A Systematic Review," *Sustainability* 15, no. 1 (2023): 849, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010849>.
9. Ramirose Ilene Attebury, "Professional Development: A Qualitative Study of High Impact Characteristics Affecting Meaningful and Transformational Learning," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 43, no. 3 (2017): 232–41, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2017.02.015>.

This mss. is peer reviewed, copy edited, and accepted for publication, portal 26.1.