

Other Duties as Assigned

A Reexamination of Roles in
Resource Acquisition and
Management

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Pacific University

- Private university founded in 1849
- 2018 enrollment 3,937 students
- 70 undergraduate liberal arts programs; 20 graduate health sciences programs



UNC Greensboro

- Public university founded in 1891
- 2018 enrollment 20,106
- 72 master's programs; 27 doctoral programs



The Question...

What are the attitudes held by librarians and library support staff toward individuals with an MLIS degree working in a support staff position?

What's in a name?

Professional librarian – typically requires an MLIS or equivalent

Library support staff – a position that typically does not require an MLIS

Technical Services

- Acquisitions
- Cataloging
- Metadata
- Electronic Resources
- Serials
- Collection Development
- Processing
- Gifts

LIS Faculty Interview

Asked about graduates with an MLIS taking jobs as support staff

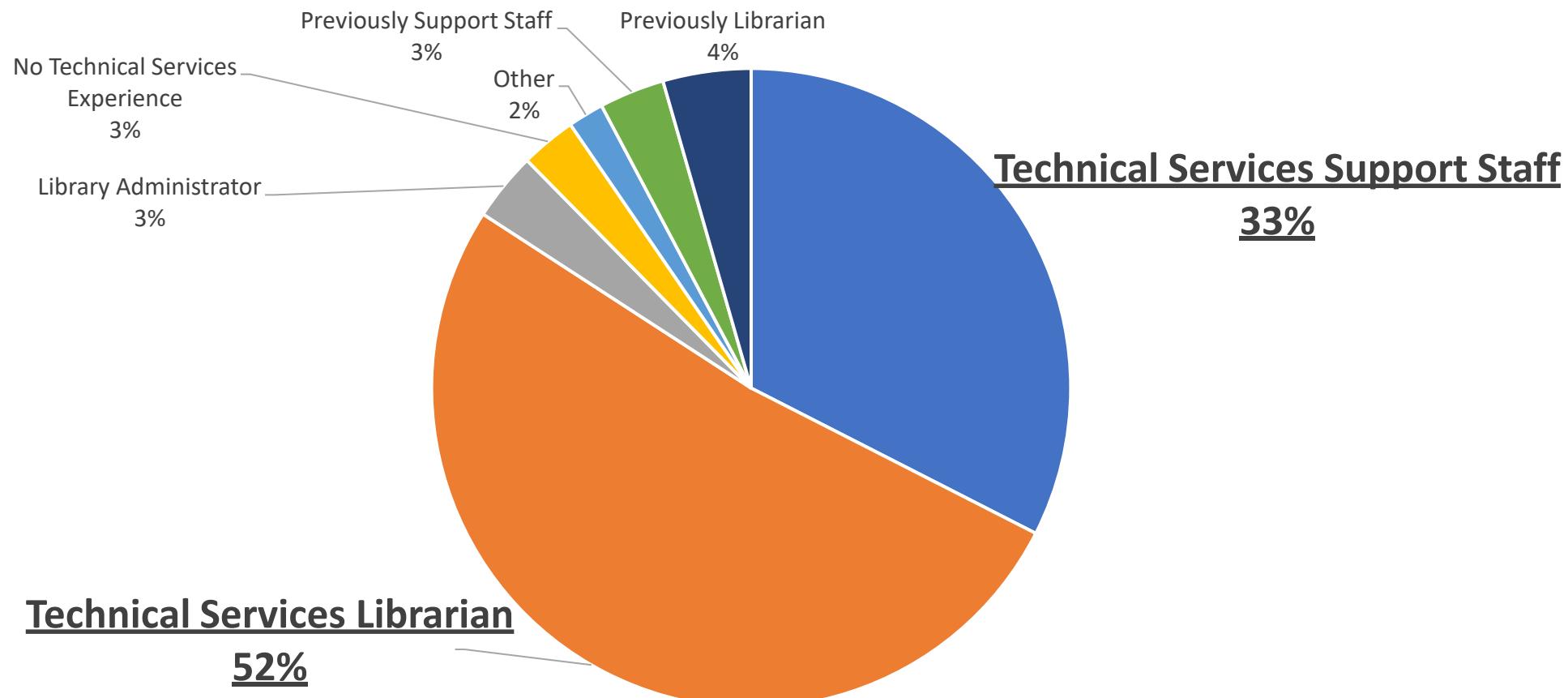
“That is my hardest, hardest thing. I find this really hard when students tell me they are going to do this, and I’m unhappy with employers that do it.”

“But then you go back to the individual decision that people make and they want to be here and they feel they were glad to get the degree but they still need to have a job. So this had been a perennial argument.”

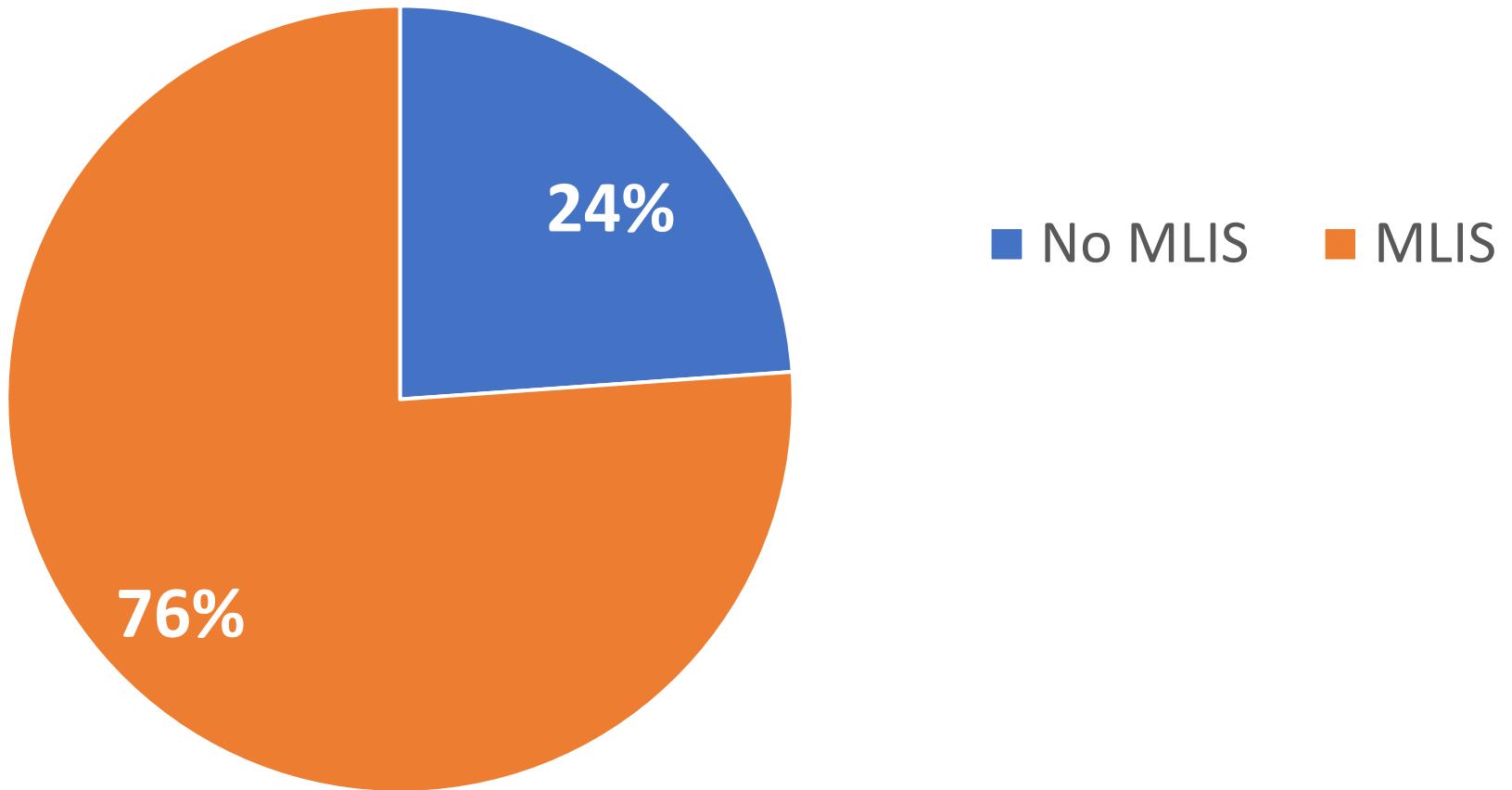
Survey

- Distributed to listservs between September 24-October 10, 2018
(colldv, acqnet, NCLA, OCLC-CAT, eril, autoCAT, Alma-L, OrbisCascadeTS)
- Voluntary and anonymous
- No required responses
- Three demographic questions
- Five multiple choice
- Two open ended questions

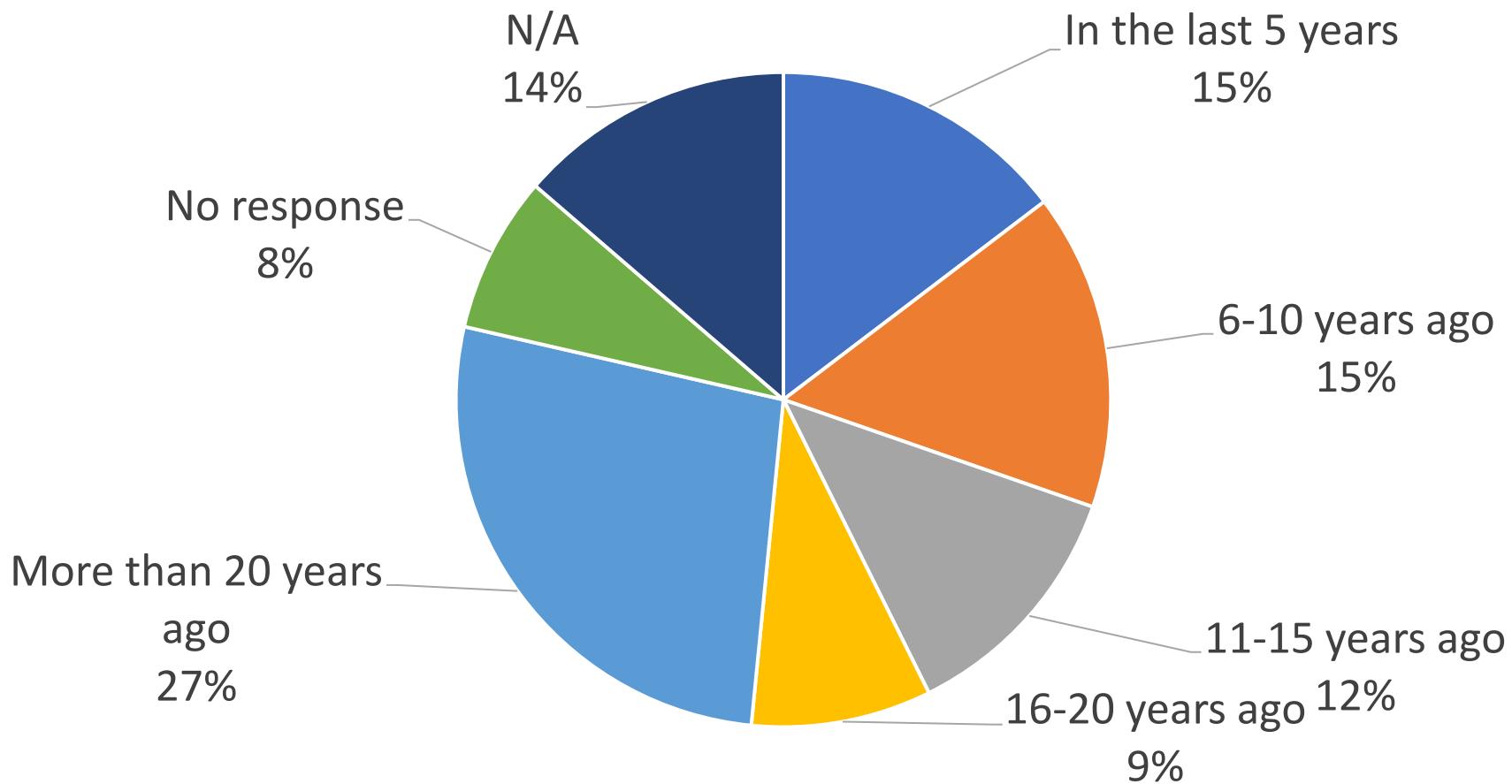
607 respondents work...



MLIS status of respondents

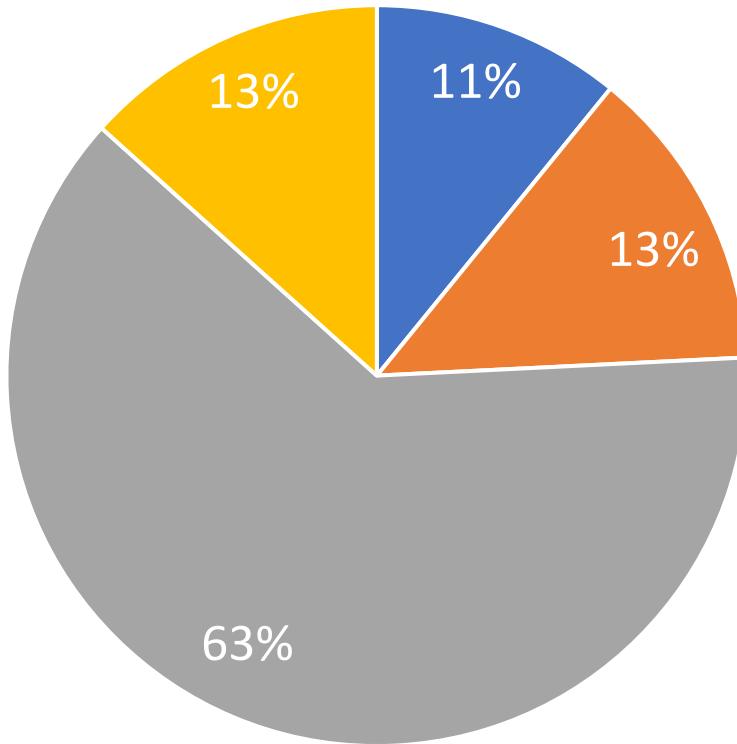


Recency of MLIS

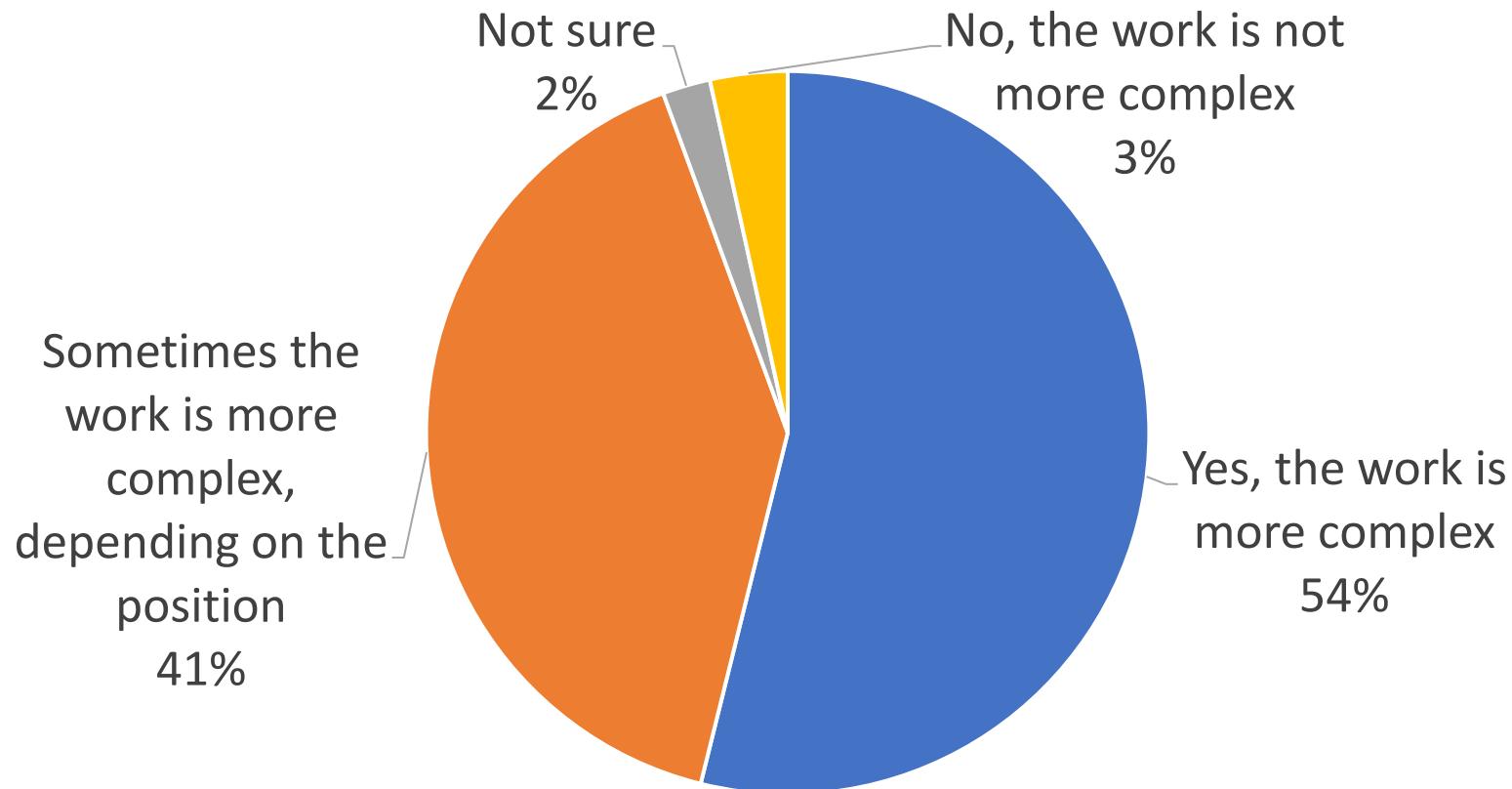


Q1: In your experience has the number of support staff positions...

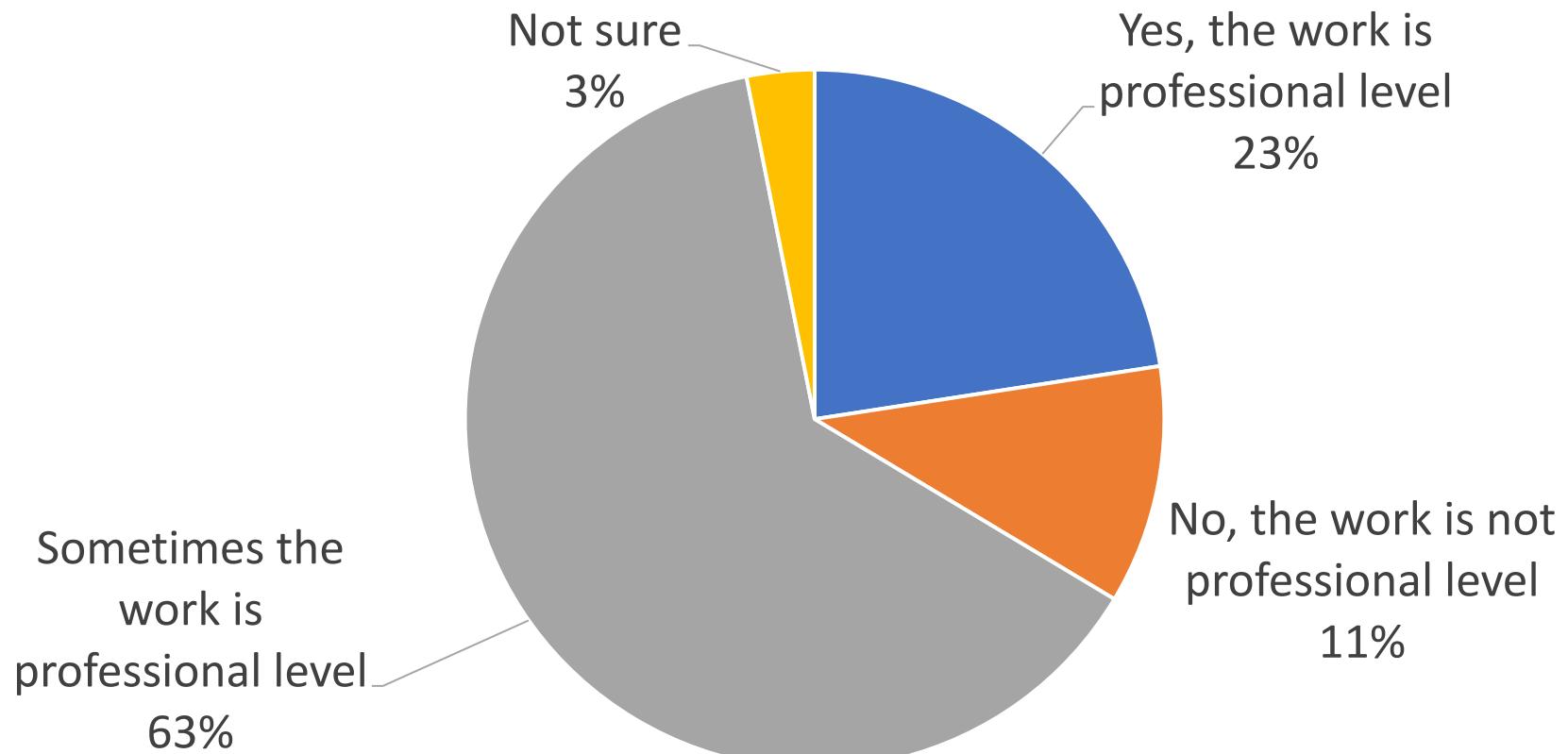
- Increased
- Remained the same
- Decreased
- Not Sure



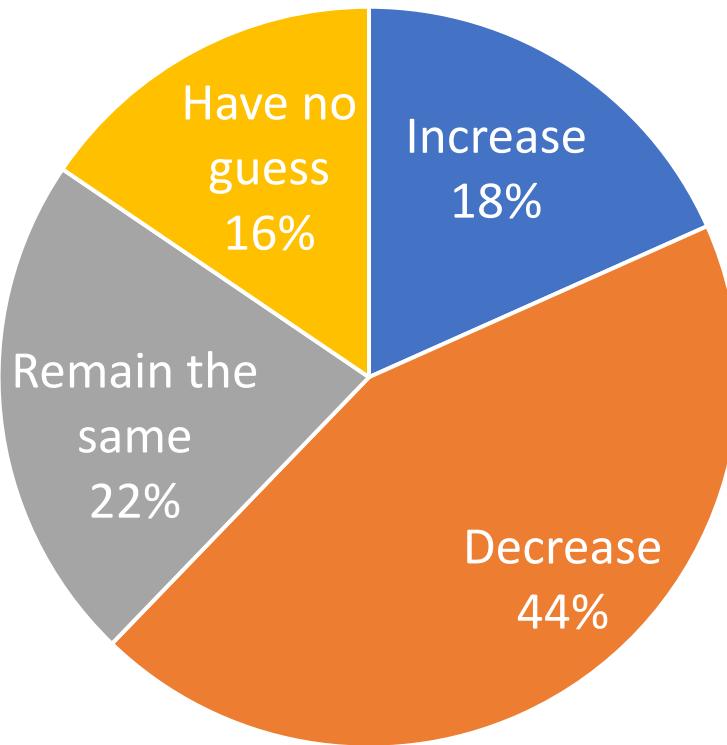
Q2: Is the work more complex?



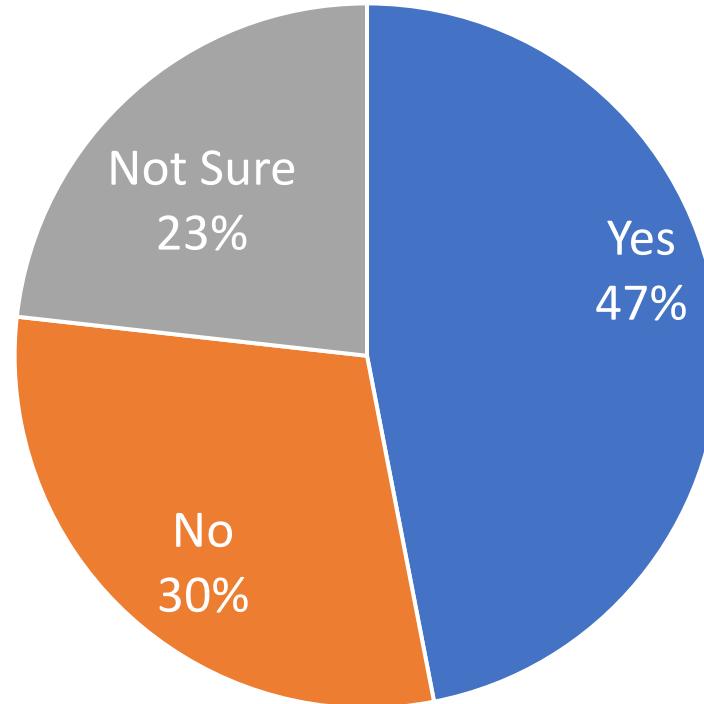
Q3: Is the work professional level?



Q4: Will the # of support staff positions...



Q5: Do you believe the # of support staff positions are increasingly being held by people with MLIS degrees?



Trend 1

There are fewer positions in technical services.

The work is becoming more complex.

Therefore technical services departments have fewer people doing more complex work than previously.

Trend 2

There is an overabundance of capable, educated, and motivated people in the current job market.

“As long as willing graduates keep working library jobs that suck for terrible wages, libraries have no incentive to make changes for the good of the employees. That’s the real economic lesson to be learned.”

How do you feel about individuals
with MLIS degrees being hired for
library support staff positions?

What are librarian attitudes about this trend?

“I feel it degrades the profession, and exploits peoples situation in regards to needing employment ...” (professional librarian MLIS 11-15 years)

“I have mixed feelings. I don't want to exploit the MLIS holder's credentials; on the other hand, a staff position may be helpful in later securing a professional position.” (professional librarian MLIS 16-20 years)

“I think it's inherent in the system - you have to have experience to get the professional jobs” (professional librarian MLIS 16-20 years)

What are support staff attitudes?

“I find it insulting and degrading as one of these individuals. For example, I'm gaining no experience to move into a professional library position nor opportunities for professional development. I cannot speak for others in these situations but for myself, it's difficult to perform your best when you're treated with little to no respect by the lucky individuals (and in most cases, less experienced individuals in said positions) in the professional library positions in your particular library. (Support Staff- MLIS 6-10 years)

“I do not believe that people with the MLS/MLIS degree should be hired in support staff positions. They went to school to seek professional positions -- let them do so and let us lowly peons with only BAs and MAs in have the paraprofessional jobs. We are not incapable of doing them, and in my experience the non-MLS holders are often better at their work and of more value to my library than those with the MLS. There are several notable exceptions, but mostly despite the differences in job descriptions our intelligence and dedication are on a par if not superior to those with the MLS at my institution.” (Support Staff- No MLIS)

What are support staff attitudes?

“...I love my job, and it is directly relevant to my interests. I don't have to publish or teach, and I get to work closely with materials all day. It's what I really wanted to do. [...] However, I was not allowed to negotiate for a higher salary, despite my professional degree and experience, and that has been tough on me financially and emotionally. Also, the job required skills that couldn't be obtained from a bachelor's degree alone, so I'm not sure how they would have gotten someone without an MLIS. It's a unique situation to be in.” (Support Staff- MLIS last 5 years)

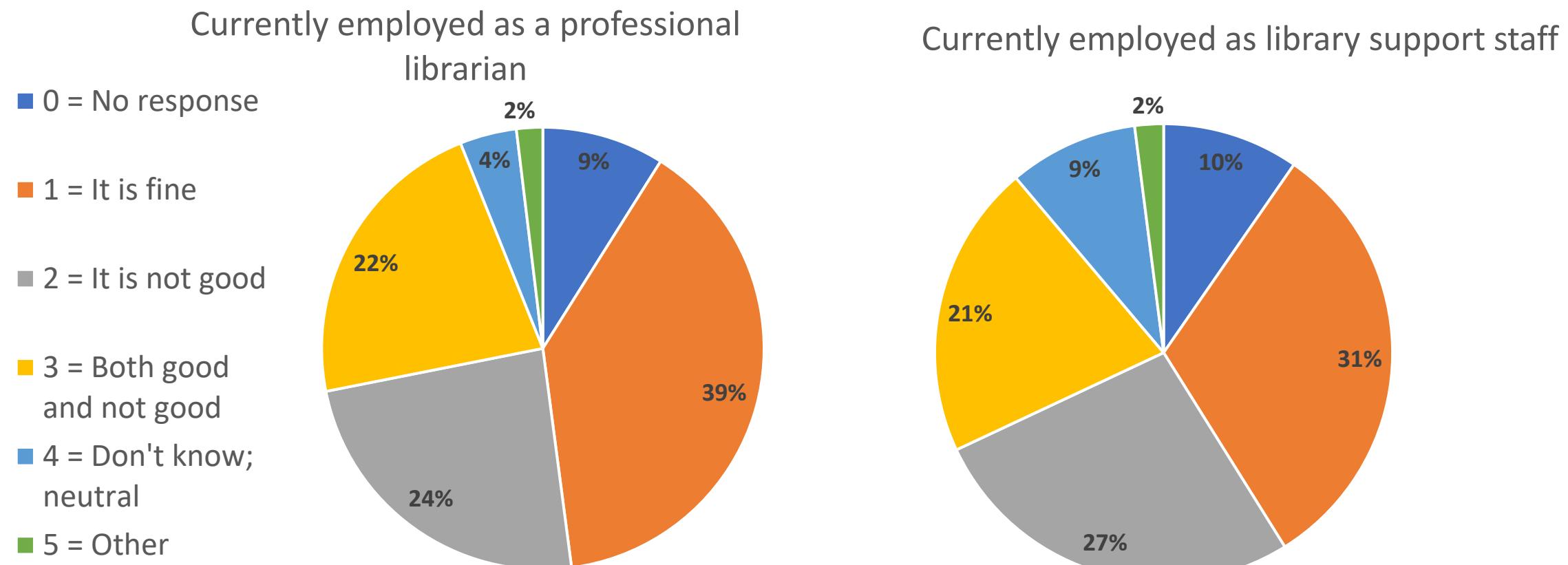
This depends on the position. Having worked in libraries for over 30 years, I find that applicants with an MLIS often have less applicable experience than others. [...] To me, it seems like the person is just trying to get a foot in the door and will be looking for a "professional" position to move to as soon as possible... (Support Staff- No MLIS)

What are support staff attitudes?

“I am one! It is an excellent way to gain hands on experience that is not taught in library school. I also think that coming into the position with a library background is beneficial.” (Support Staff- MLIS last 5 years)

“As long as the person hired for the staff position gets the work done, recognizes the skills of their coworkers, and can work well with fellow faculty and staff members, I don't care if they have 3 PhDs and a Knighthood.” (Support Staff- No MLIS)

How do we feel about it?



What responsibility does a library have to individuals with MLIS degrees in library support staff positions?

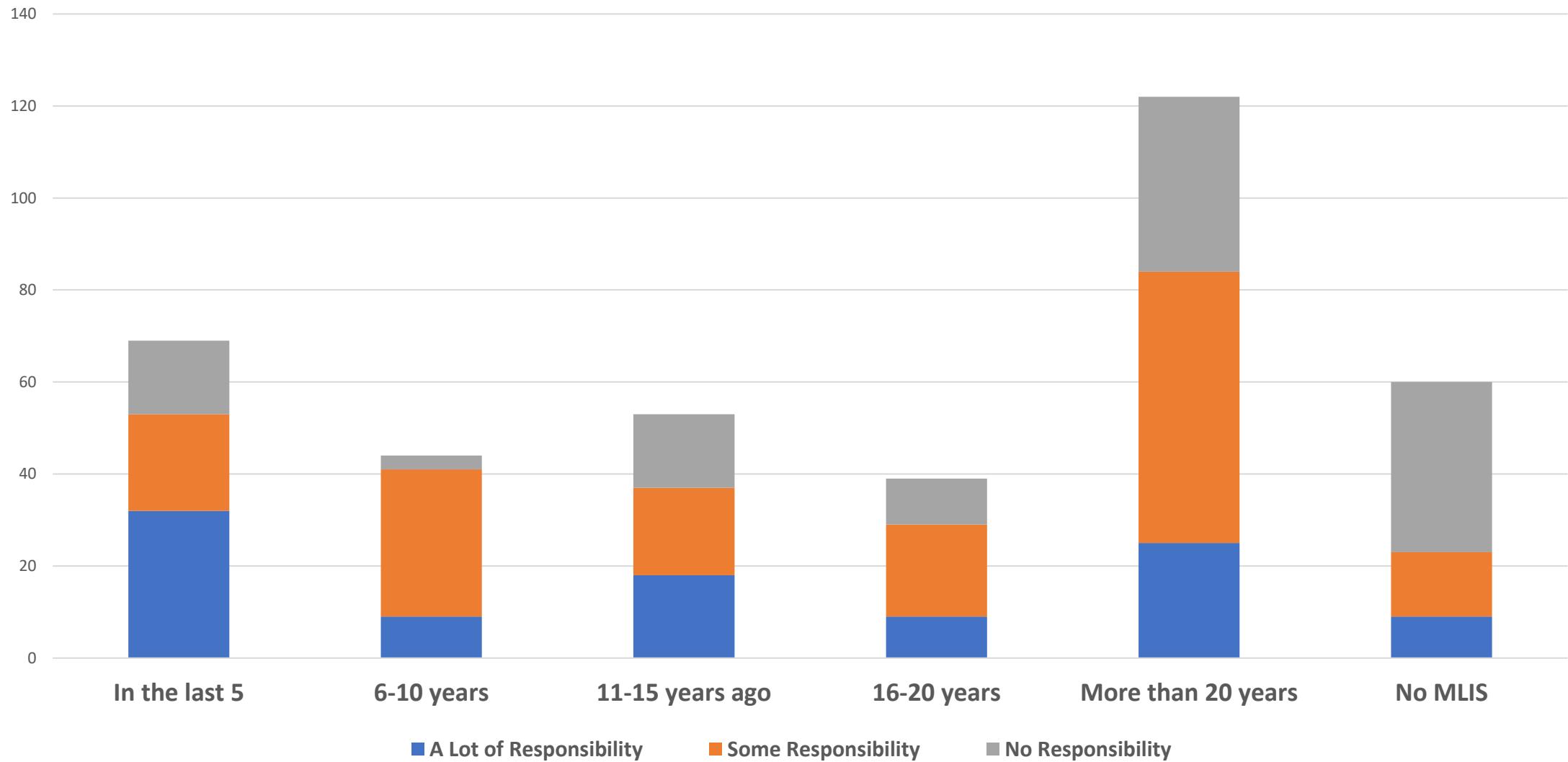
What responsibility does the library hold?

“None. The individuals can apply for professional positions when they open up, just like everyone else.” (professional librarian MLIS over 20 years)

“Ideally the library would provide opportunities for MLIS holders to be promoted into professional positions. It would not be appropriate for the library to have a person in a staff position doing professional level work, even if they have the credentials. (professional librarian MLIS over 20 years)

“GIVE THEM MORE MONEY.” (professional librarian MLIS over 20 years)

MLIS era and Library Responsibility Attitudes



Additional comments from survey

“My intuition says that MLIS degreed professionals will give professional level work even in support positions. Increasingly I am "over" the faculty parts of academic librarianship!” (professional librarian, library administrator, MLIS over 20 years)

“I personally benefited from my experience working as a specialist in a technical services department after receiving my MLIS. My supervisor served almost more as a mentor than a "boss," letting me solve my own problems, create my own projects with any extra time I may have, and encouraging me to participate in professional development activities and courses.” (professional librarian, previously employed as support staff, MLIS in the last 5 years)

Observations/Reflections

- There are plenty of capable, educated, and motivated people in the current job market. Yet are they qualified?
 - Is the MLIS required for technical services work?
- Does an MLIS make you a librarian?
- What do these trends mean for the next five years?

Recommendations

Honesty Respect

Questions or
Comments

Appreciation

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