“The question of the MLIS”: The need for the professional credential
ALA Executive Director Search

MLIS Preferred or MLIS Required?
Why did we conduct this research?

Link to Trevor’s blog post.
It's been several months since ALA was in Atlanta for the Midwinter Meeting, and a couple of months or so since the retirement of Keith Michael Fiels, former and longtime ALA Executive Director. This morning word went out to the Council list and beyond that the search committee to find the next Executive Director was not making a recommendation for finalists.

In Atlanta I brought before Council a resolution, drafted by the Executive Board, and submitted to Council without prejudice. The resolution proposed that the requirement for an ALA-accredited Master’s Degree or a CAEP-accredited Master's Degree with a specialty in school library media become a preferred quality instead. The resolution circulated among Council well in advance of Midwinter, and when it came to the floor, it resulted in lengthy and impassioned debate. When the vote was called, it was a narrow defeat for the resolution. The requirement stood.

I did not enter the debate with a clear sense of how I would vote. I had a preference for one side of the issue (to remove the requirement), but I also had a willingness to listen and to be persuaded. I was. I voted to defeat the resolution.

What swayed me was the notion that the Executive Director, alongside the association president (and sometimes in place of), is the most prominent public face to the association. Given that, I felt it important that someone with one of the professional degrees be in that role, so as to be able to speak from a shared experience with a majority of the members, to speak from shared values with us. This feels all the more crucial to me in the event that someone without the degree were to be president (after all, any member of the association should be able to stand for election to the presidency, and among the membership, there are many library workers or library advocates such as trustees who do not have the professional degree). I would like the Executive Director to represent the profession.

Among the arguments in favour of the resolution was the notion that a requirement would limit the pool. Too few librarians, it was argued, would meet the other position requirements for there to be a sufficient population to draw upon. I, and others, placed our faith in the search process.
“To allow the possibility of hiring a non-MLS executive director is tantamount to dismissing the value of the MLS degree,” argued another. “It would most certainly put the credibility of the association into question.”

Athitakis, February 26, 2018

associationsnow.com
According to a recent ALA member demographics survey, 61.7% of ALA members have an MLS degree and 38.3% do not. Please indicate how satisfied you are with this.

63.29% (n=50) were neutral
Do you think that it is necessary for a library director or other senior library administrator (e.g. Dean, Vice Provost, Associate Vice Provost) to hold an MLS or MLIS degree?
Earned degree

The MLIS is not a “golden ticket.”

– Joseph Janes
Hiring Factors

How important are the following hiring factors to ARL Directors?
ARL Directors were asked:

Please indicate the level of importance you place on the following hiring factors for a library director or other senior library administrator position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hiring Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Related Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution(s) where degree(s) last earned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution last employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Institutional Diversity Mandates (Gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Institutional Diversity Mandates (Ethnicity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate’s Salary Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Candidates are given preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Candidates are given preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential longevity with the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency with required technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Peer-reviewed publications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most Important Hiring Factors: Top 3 Extremely Important or Very Important

- Institution last employed: 60.98% Extremely/Very Important
- Relevant Related Experience: 57.32% Extremely/Very Important
- Degrees: 56.10% Extremely/Very Important

Key:
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- Null
Least Important Hiring Factors: Bottom 3 Slightly Important / Not at All Important

Age
- Extremely important: 59.76%
- Very important: 25.61%
- Moderately important: 10.98%
- Slightly important/Not at all important: 3.66%

External Candidates are given preference
- Extremely important: 60.98%
- Very important: 12.20%
- Moderately important: 9.76%
- Slightly important/Not at all important: 3.66%

Potential Longevity with the institution
- Extremely important: 34.15%
- Very important: 26.83%
- Moderately important: 6.10%
- Slightly important/Not at all important: 3.66%

Key:
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- Null

85.37% Slightly Important/Not at all important
73.17% Slightly Important/Not at all important
60.98% Slightly Important/Not at all important
Where do we go from here?
What does this research tell us?

Trevor A. Dawes
~ Librarian and Educator ~

I have an MLS, do you? Do you need it?

Posted by tadaes in Uncategorized
≈ 8 Comments

I have sat back and read the various posts in many places about the "need" for the new executive director of the American Library Association (ALA) to have an "ALA-accredited Master’s Degree or a CAEP-accredited Master’s Degree with a..."
Contact Information

Trevor A. Dawes
University of Delaware

tadawes@udel.edu

Russell Michalak, MLIS
Director, Goldey-Beacom College

michalr@gbc.edu

Monica Rysavy, Ph.D.
Director, Goldey-Beacom College

rysavym@gbc.edu