



Archival Internships: High Impact or High Barrier?

*Denise Rayman & Lydia Spotts
Indiana University Indianapolis*



Do archives internships completed during graduate school correlate with greater career success after graduation?

“Career success” is defined as likelihood to be full-time permanently employed in archives 0-12 years after graduation

- Study grant-funded by Society of American Archivists Foundation in May 2023
 - Research participants were paid
 - Mixed methods research approach
- Survey of recent graduates in LIS programs conducted July – Aug 2023
 - Survey invitation & open-access link distributed on SNAP listserv, SAA Annual Meeting 2023 digital platform, and seven MLIS alumni lists
 - We had a spam problem that required data cleanup
 - 273 valid responses
- Interviews of 10 select participants completed May 2024 (qualitative analysis ongoing)

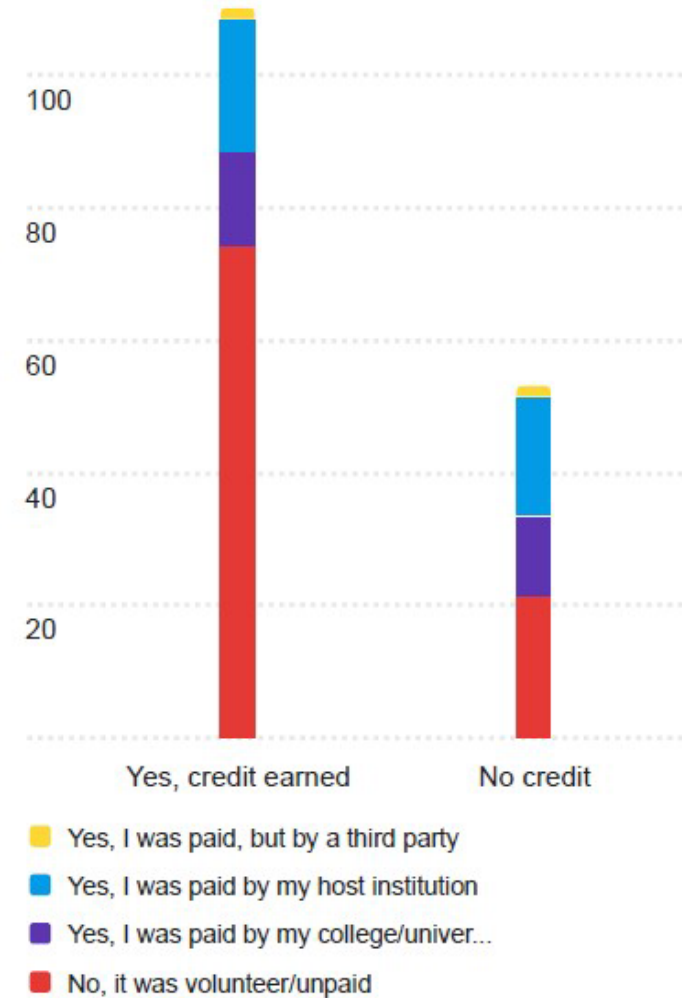


n=273

- Majority of survey respondents reported an internship was not required by their graduate program (60.5%, 147)
- Majority of survey respondents completed an internship (71.2%, 173) and of those, a majority:
 - completed internship for credit (67.6%, 117)
 - were not paid for internship (54.9%, 95)
 - found host independently, not through school (51.3%, 59)

Most common work completed during an internship was Arrangement and Description of Physical Records, Physical Preservation Tasks, and Digitization (scanning or metadata creation)

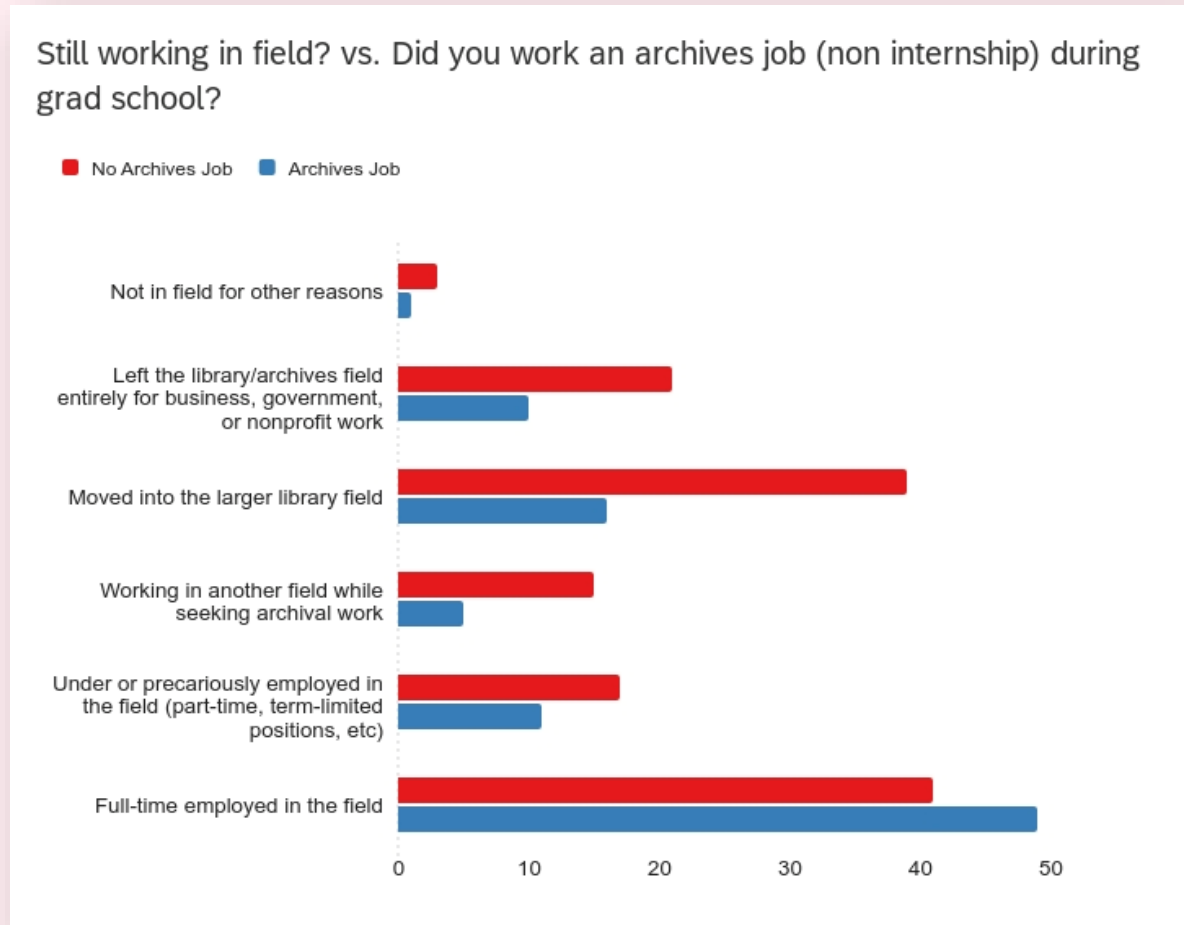
Earning graduate course credit vs. payment for internship





MIXED EVIDENCE

- Students who worked at a job in an archives before AND/OR during their graduate school program were more likely to be employed in the field
- Students who completed an internship for credit vs ad-hoc were more likely to still be employed in field



- Students who completed an internship are more likely to still be employed in the field at time of survey
- Students who completed an internship spent less time job hunting
- Students who were paid in their internship are more likely to still be employed in the field





**How do we
interpret and use
this data?**

- More research is needed!
 - Many correlations without statistical significance indicates something is happening here, but we did not capture it with our sample
 - Limitations
- Strong and significant correlation between jobs but not for internships – what makes a student job different (better?) than an internship for future employment?
- What makes a for-credit internship more impactful than an ad-hoc one?
- What is the impact of quality mentorship within or outside of internships?

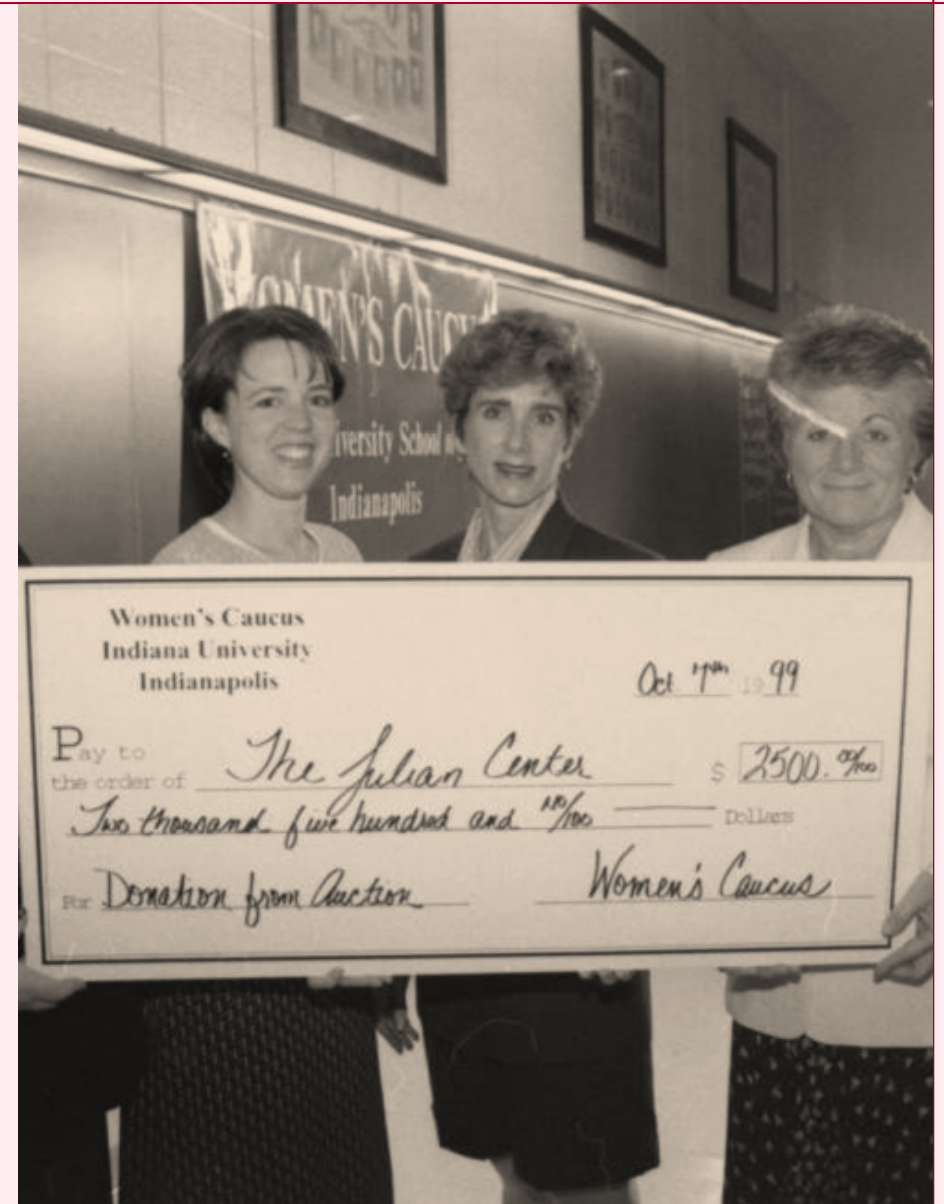


What do you want a new archivist to know?

Train the profession you want to see!



- Move away from volunteer as the default!
- An intern working 180 hours for \$15/hr costs you just **\$2,890** (including taxes)
 - This flat-dollar ask goes down smoother with upper administrators
 - Looking for a grant? Write an internship into it!
 - Library/Archives Friends groups have sponsored interns
- How to make an unpaid internship tolerable:
 - Be flexible! Respect their paid work schedule
 - Free parking
 - Random perks – send them to SAA & other annual meetings or workshops!
 - Offer remote work!



Feed an intern today!

Denise Rayman

drayman@iu.edu

Lydia Spotts

lcspotts@iu.edu

All photographs are from IUPUI Image Collections:

<https://iuidigital.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/IUPUIphotos/>

