



The Future of Information Science Education in Canada: Issues and Discussion

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Introduction

This poster presents issues in the future of information science education in Canada. The poster incorporates selected research completed for the development of the new Bachelor of Information Technology – Information Resource Management program at Carleton University, launched in Fall 2016. www.bitdegree.ca

Methodological approaches

This poster incorporates qualitative methods including literature review, review of labour market statistics and meetings.

Discussion

The poster addresses six key issues in information science education in Canada and identifies possible strategies for future development.

Identifying and addressing skill gaps

- *Training gaps analysis: librarians and library technicians* (2006) examined skill gaps for both Master's of Library and Information Science (MLIS) and Library and Information Technology (LIT) graduates.
- One of the most prominent skill gaps is the lack of formal training in information technology such as programming, web interface development and database construction. Addressing this key skill gap will be important for the employment prospects of graduates.
- There is "some urgency to re-vision LIS education" so graduates can take advantage of growing employment opportunities in information technology many of which will be outside the Library sector (Abels, Howarth, Smith 2016, 86).

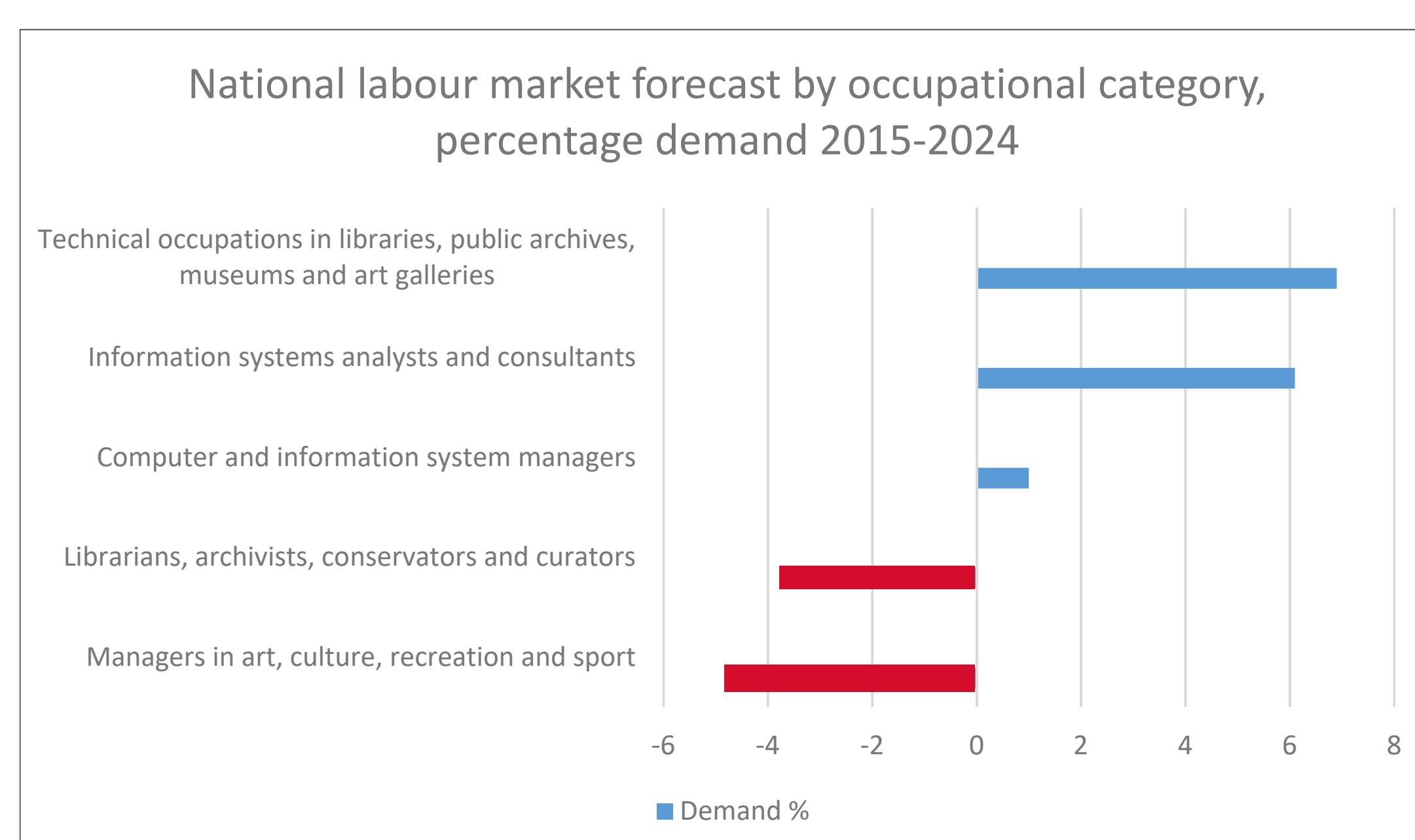
Curriculum development and the development of student competencies.

- In her 2016 study of competency profiles developed by professional associations and employers, Fraser-Arnott suggests that the emerging role of information specialist requires a range of competencies drawn from the fields of information management, records management, librarianship, archives and knowledge management. (Fraser-Arnott 2016, 65-66).
- Kim (2015) asserts that a competency-based approach to curriculum development is "emerging as a necessity" in LIS education to meet the changing needs of employer demand (Kim 2015, 294).
- Ed Cortez, chair of the American Library Association, Committee on Education suggests, "the most important criteria for teaching for the future is to understand and adapt to different learning styles" (Cortez 2016, 222). Technology can be used in teaching to customize content, enable user-directed learning and support individual learning styles and speeds (Cortez 2016, 222).

- Innovations in pedagogy can also focus on problem solving to prepare graduates for the rapidly changing workplace and student involvement in curriculum (Abels, Howarth and Smith 2016, 89-90)

Experiential learning and practical work experience.

- This includes practicums, research projects and co-op placements which are designed and completed in consultation with faculty and external advisors.
- Information science programs can make increased use of advisory boards, alumni associations and build new partnerships with the private sector as well as other universities for these types of learning opportunities (Cortez 2016, 222).
- Experiential learning enables students to acquire practical skills which are relevant to the workplace and valuable in the employment market.



Employment and Social Development Canada. (2016). Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS).

Program assessment.

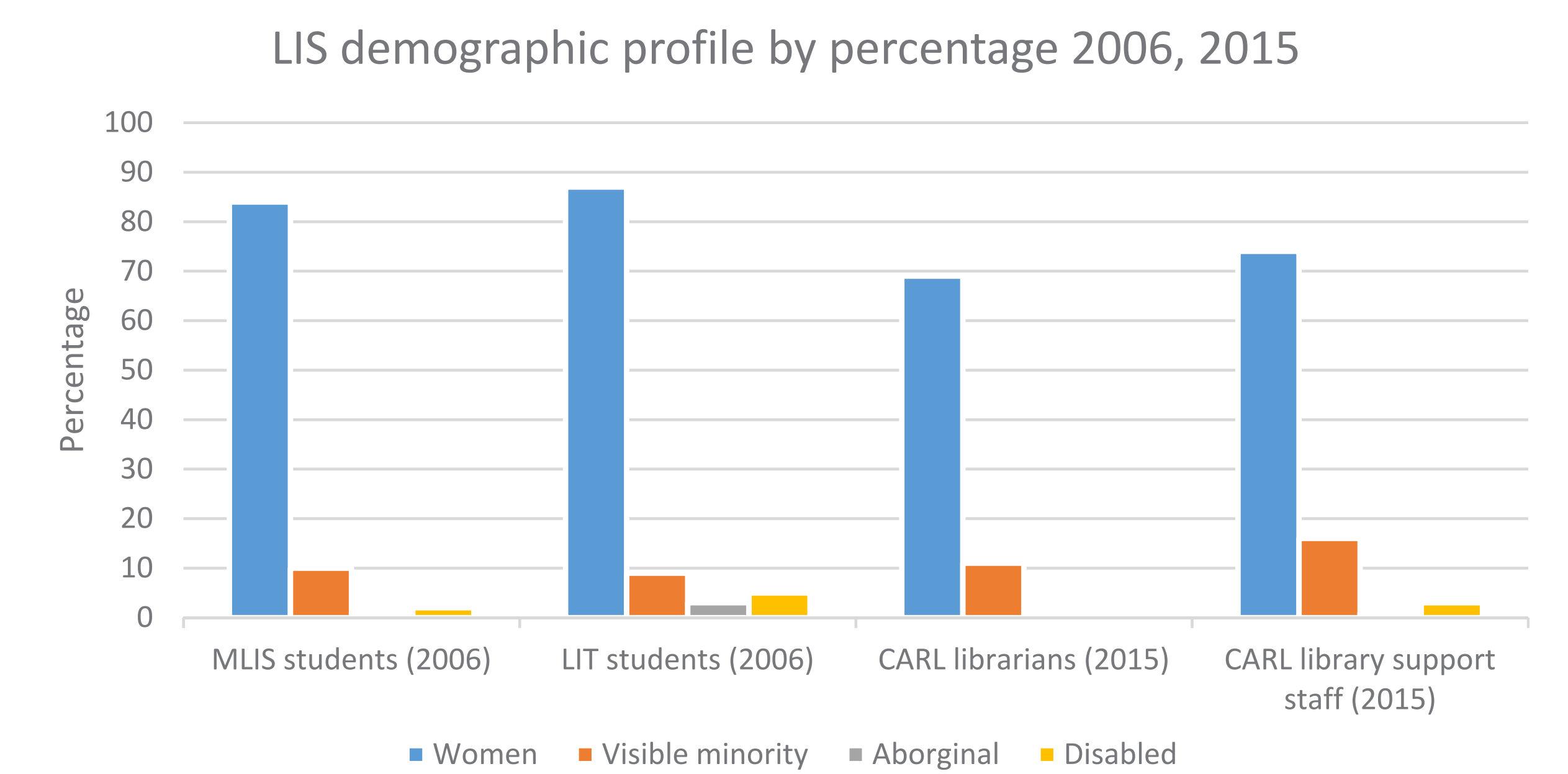
- A robust structure of program assessment, including student learning outcomes, is central for curriculum development to address skill gaps in the information professions.
- Saunders (2015) asserts that the vitality of information science programs is dependent on regular consultation between faculty and practitioners on curriculum issues to keep in sync with current and emerging trends in the field. One participant in Saunders study observed that ...

"employers and faculty should work like informal think tanks" and find ways to "come together around questions and brainstorm solutions" (Saunders 2015, 447-448).

Bridging educational gaps.

- Students with an LIT diploma are unable to continue into MLIS programs without a bachelor's degree. The Bachelor of Information Technology – Information Resource Management (BIT-IRM) program will allow students with expanded technology skills to continue into MLIS programs and provides a pathway for library technicians to move into professional positions.
- BIT-IRM program is a unique joint program offered by Carleton University and Algonquin College which offers integrated learning built on co-operation between university and college sectors.
- Developing relationships between college, undergraduate and graduate programs in information science will help to bridge educational gaps. In particular, bridge the gap between LIT and MLIS programs which are traditionally separate in Canada, identified as "leading to two educational solitudes which must be reconciled in the workplace" (Training gaps analysis 2006, 13).

Recruitment and diversity.



(Training gaps analysis 2006, 41-42 and Delong 2015, 12-15).

A key strategy in educating for the information future is to ... "dispel the stereotype and recruit a broader pool of potential students. There is a perception that the field is only about the book and we need to communicate the broader range of possibilities. We need to increase diversity" (Abels, Howarth and Smith 2016, 87).

New opportunities to build a refreshed "recruitment narrative" for information science (Dali & Caidi 2016, 524-525). Conscious efforts have been made to make the Bachelor of Information Technology – Information Resource Management (BIT-IRM) program attractive to a broad range of students by promoting the degree as an innovative new program which meets the needs of a changing information economy and is applicable to a range of occupations in both the private and public sector.

Future directions.

This poster is a pilot project to gauge if there is sufficient interest to have a panel discussion on information science education at a future CAIS conference. All are welcome to join the conversation!

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