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Degree Pedigree: Assessing the Effect of Degree-Granting Institutions' Ranks on Prospective Employment at Academic Law Libraries

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Degree Pedigree: Assessing the Effect of Degree-Granting Institutions' Ranks on Prospective Employment at Academic Law Libraries*

Ashley Ahlbrand** and Michael Johnson***

In the academic law library hiring process, candidates are assessed based on a variety of factors. The study conducted here focuses on education—specifically the institutional rank of degree-granting law and library science institutions—to explore how the rank of one's graduate education might influence hiring decisions at academic law libraries.

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Introduction

¶1 When searching for jobs in academic law librarianship, one is confronted with conflicting views on which factors employers seek. While several articles suggest that personality and potential are key factors for employment,¹ other findings

* © Ashley Ahlbrand and Michael Johnson, 2012. The authors would like to thank Professor Cassidy Sugimoto for her guidance in the execution of this study.

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1. See Gregory K. Raschke, *Hiring and Recruitment Practices in Academic Libraries: Problems and Solutions*, 3 PORTAL: LIBR. & ACAD. 53, 53–54 (2003); see also Ronald E. Wheeler, Nancy P. Johnson &

suggest that one's degree-granting programs weigh significantly in hiring decisions.² To address this question, we examined the credentials of current law school library faculty, looking for any patterns connecting prestige of educational background and career placement.

¶2 Law schools as well as library science programs are ranked annually by *U.S. News and World Report* (*U.S. News*) according to a variety of factors; though they share much of the same core curriculum, the schools in each discipline vary in many ways, including (but not limited to) choices in electives, internship and clinical programs, subject specialty focus, and instructional method. Often, though, it seems that a program is better known for its rank than for the unique educational experiences it offers. By examining the credentials of librarians at law schools currently ranked within the top fifty, this study explores the relationship between the ranks of law school and library science programs attended and the potential for obtaining a position at the library of a top fifty law school. To do this, we examined the educational credentials of dual-degreed law librarians as publicly posted on institutions' web sites.³

¶3 School rankings were based on *U.S. News* rankings for 2011. Schools characterized as unranked were labeled as such based on the *U.S. News* definition, meaning that they failed to provide sufficient statistical data for *U.S. News* to furnish a ranking.⁴ For the purposes of our study, "degree pedigree" encompasses the schools issuing the librarians' M.L.S. and J.D. (or equivalent), what dates they were earned, and at what academic law library the librarian has obtained employment. We did not consider other potential hiring factors, such as personality or work experience, but looked only at the question: Does the rank of one's library science and law education affect one's ability to attain professional library employment at a top fifty ranked law school?

¶4 No previous studies could be found directly addressing this question. While the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) conducts a biennial salary survey that asks what degrees law librarians in the field possess, the names of the degree-granting institutions are not sought.⁵ The results of this study could impact those interested in pursuing law librarianship who have not yet chosen where to obtain their degrees (for both law and library science). It could also impact the curriculum at law schools and library science programs, by encouraging a greater emphasis on those courses that would most benefit students pursuing careers in

Terrance K. Manion, *Choosing the Top Candidate: Best Practices in Academic Law Library Hiring*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 117, 126–27, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 5, ¶ 39–43.

2. See Rhonda Hankins, *How to Get Behind the Reference Desk: Academic Directors Share What They Look for in Reference Librarians*, AALL SPECTRUM, Feb. 2003, at 12, 13.

3. Credentials for two of the librarians in the study could not be found on the schools' web sites, but were instead located on Google+ and LinkedIn profiles, then verified against faculty directory listings on the institutions' web sites.

4. See Sam Flanigan & Robert Morse, *How U.S. News Calculated the 2013 Graduate School Rankings*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (Mar. 12, 2012), <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/articles/2012/03/12/how-us-news-calculated-the-2013-graduate-school-rankings?page=2>.

5. See, e.g., AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, THE AALL BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY & ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS 10 (2011), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/salary-survey/pub-salary11.html> (online version available only to AALL members).

law librarianship. Because we looked at only two factors possibly affecting employment, the findings are limited in scope and cannot predict whether or where a law librarian with a certain education will attain employment—they are best viewed simply as a very preliminary initial answer to the question of whether where a librarian goes to graduate school affects potential employment opportunities.

¶5 Before beginning our study, we first reviewed the literature on law librarian education to determine what academic qualifications most appeal to prospective academic law library employers. We then examined the rankings structure employed by *U.S. News* to evaluate graduate programs. Because *U.S. News* employs different assessment methods for law programs than it does for library science programs, we considered rankings methodologies for each program individually. While the literature recognizes the value of a law librarian's education in terms of degrees and provides lengthy discourse on the positives and negatives of graduate school rankings, no study could be found that analyzes how the rank of a law librarian's degree-granting institutions might affect employment at an academic law library.

Education of Law Librarians

¶6 Law librarianship as a specialized profession is a relatively recent development, which did not take shape until the twentieth century. Several scholars over the years have produced research into the qualifications and status of law librarians as professionals. Courses in law librarianship did not appear until the middle of the twentieth century,⁶ so much of the early scholarship emphasized other nonacademic qualities required for the profession. One of the earliest scholars on the subject, E.A. Feazel, emphasized personal qualities such as flexibility and cooperation.⁷ He further discussed the diversity of fields from which law librarians of the time were drawn—nonspecialized librarians, clerks, lawyers, and those who simply had political connections—and suggested that this diversity led to unpredictability in skill sets for the profession.⁸ Although he outlined specific areas of knowledge he believed most important for the law librarian to master—law, library science, and legal bibliography—Feazel doubted the feasibility of creating a formal education program for law librarians because he believed the field was too small to warrant even one course at a traditional library science program; instead, he advocated self-education and a “professional spirit among those already in the work.”⁹ Other scholars of the time focused even less on educational requirements and more on practical skills required for the job: not only the ability to parse legal texts, but also the instructional ability to pass on this skill to law students.¹⁰ Thus, in the early decades of the twentieth century the educational backgrounds of law librarians

6. See Marian G. Gallagher, *The Law Librarianship Course at the University of Washington*, 5 J. LEGAL EDUC. 537, 537 (1952–1953) (noting the establishment of the course at the University of Washington in 1940).

7. E.A. Feazel, *The Status of the Law Librarian*, 2 LAW LIBR. J. 21, 24 (1909).

8. *Id.* at 23.

9. *Id.*

10. See Frank B. Gilbert, *Duties of the Law Librarian*, 2 AMER. LAW SCH. REV. 85, 89–90 (1906).

were diverse; librarianship programs and law programs existed, but with no known or even expected overlap, leaving many of the skills of the profession to be self-taught.¹¹

¶7 By the 1930s, dialogue supporting the need for more formalized education had grown, but opinions differed as to proportion. The consensus was that some training in law and library science was necessary, but where one scholar emphasized education in legal bibliography,¹² another focused on knowledge of legal terminology,¹³ and another argued for a more complete education in the law.¹⁴ Despite their differences, all seemed to agree that formal librarianship training remained a necessity. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) conducted a survey in 1936 to assess the educational background of law school library staff and found that 7% indicated having degrees in both law and library science, 23% indicated education in library science alone, 19% indicated solely a legal education, and the largest group—29%—indicated no college training at all.¹⁵

¶8 With the end of World War II, the number of law schools and law school libraries grew as, correspondingly, did the law librarianship profession. Courses in law librarianship began to emerge, one of the first being at the University of Washington. Harkening back to the concerns about law librarian education voiced over the decades, this program required a degree in law and provided a focused education in law librarianship that balanced the necessary knowledge with the required skills.¹⁶ Development of these programs further emphasized the need to combine legal and library education, but the popularity of the programs was slow to build.¹⁷

¶9 In the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, scholarly research into qualifications of law librarians began to focus more on work experience and extraneous skills, specifically technological prowess, than on what degrees a law librarian should hold.¹⁸ Job postings, though, increasingly asked for applicants with both degrees, particularly in academic law libraries.¹⁹

¶10 For several decades, AALL has conducted a biennial survey of law librarians to garner information on the profession's demographics. Among the questions asked is what degrees the librarian-respondent holds. Whereas the 1936 survey indicated that the largest number of respondents held not even a college degree, a survey in 1976 indicated quite different results. In that year, the largest number of academic law librarian respondents, 50%, held a library science degree only;

11. See Theodora Belniak, *The Law Librarian of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: A Figure in Flux*, 101 LAW LIBR. J. 427, 434, 2009 LAW LIBR. J. 24, ¶ 29.

12. Arthur S. McDaniel, *The Educational and Cultural Background of a Law Librarian*, 23 LAW LIBR. J. 68, 71 (1930).

13. *American Association of Law Libraries Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting*, 26 LAW LIBR. J. 51, 128 (1933) (remarks of Lotus Mitchell Mills).

14. William R. Roalfe, *Status and Qualifications of Law School Librarians*, 8 AM. L. SCH. REV. 398, 399 (1936).

15. Laurent Frantz, *The Education of the Law Librarian*, 44 LAW LIBR. J. 94, 97 (1951).

16. See Gallagher, *supra* note 6, at 538.

17. Belniak, *supra* note 11, at 442, ¶ 67.

18. *Id.* at 445–46, ¶¶ 79–80.

19. *Id.* at 447, ¶ 82.

another 26% held a degree in law only; and 17% held both.²⁰ The 1993 biennial survey showed that the number of academic law librarians holding a library science degree alone remained close to half of respondents, 57%; the number holding only a law degree dropped to 16%; and the number holding both degrees had grown slightly to 26%.²¹ In the latest iteration of the survey, those law librarians holding positions at academic libraries reported the following results: those with only a library science degree dropped significantly to 33%, those with only a law degree dropped dramatically to 6%, and those with both rose considerably to 55%.²² Table 1 shows the trend in degrees held by academic law librarians. These surveys indicate a trend toward hiring law librarians in possession of both a library science and a law degree for positions at academic law libraries; still, these surveys fail to address is whether any relationship exists between the institutions where these degrees were earned and the institutions where these librarians are now employed.

Table 1
Degrees Held by Academic Law Librarians

	1976 Survey	1993 Survey	2011 Survey
Library Science Degree Only	50%	57%	33%
Law Degree Only	26%	16%	6%
Both Library Science and Law Degrees	17%	26%	55%

U.S. News & World Report Rankings
Ranking Law Schools

¶11 *U.S. News* began ranking law schools in 1990, and from the beginning their evaluations have come under heavy criticism from the law school community. Among the complaints, the two most fervently addressed are (1) that the rankings do not accurately reflect the value of a law school (more measurement factors need to be addressed), and (2) that the factors that are measured are being measured inaccurately.²³ *U.S. News* ranks law schools based on a multifactor analysis: 25% comes from peer assessment, 25% comes from the selectivity of the law school, 15% is based on faculty resources, 20% is based on placement success after graduation, and the final

20. *The Condition of the Law Librarian in 1976*, 69 LAW LIBR. J. 626, 628 (1976) (remarks of Michael L. Renshaw).

21. Katherine E. Malmquist, *Academic Law Librarians Today: A Survey of Salary and Position Information*, 85 LAW LIBR. J. 135, 143 (1993).

22. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *supra* note 5, at 12.

23. Russell Korobkin, *In Praise of Law School Rankings: Solutions to Coordination and Collective Action Problems*, 77 TEX. L. REV. 403, 405–06 (1998).

15% comes from an assessment of law schools by judges and lawyers.²⁴ For the current rankings, measured in 2012, 199 law schools were surveyed.²⁵

¶12 Law schools know that rankings have a significant effect on prospective students, and increasingly on legal employers as well; members of this latter group even have a separate, hybridized rankings bulletin that utilizes the *U.S. News* rankings to guide recruitment of law school graduates.²⁶ Of particular interest to this study is the assessment from lawyers and judges, which can provide an idea of how employers' perceptions of graduate program rankings affect employability.

¶13 A 1998 study commissioned by the American Association of Law Schools assessed the validity of *U.S. News* law school rankings. Providing a detailed analysis of each factor, the authors pointed out that, although 1310 lawyers, partners, and judges were sent surveys, only one-third responded, and the sampling methodology was not reported; thus the generalizability of this factor cannot fairly be determined.²⁷ In addition, the authors suggest that, because respondents for this factor are asked to rate their perception of each law school, their answers are entirely subjective and may grossly misrepresent the quality of the programs, since no respondent will have firsthand knowledge of all law schools under consideration. Thus, this factor becomes more of a popularity contest than a sound evaluation of program quality.²⁸

Ranking Library Science Programs

¶14 Library science program rankings have not been as diligently pursued by *U.S. News* as law school rankings, but before *U.S. News* came on the scene, various scholars in the field conducted several rankings studies to evaluate library science programs. The first was a study out of Berkeley in 1956 that simply asked deans of library science programs in the United States and Canada to rank what they considered to be the top ten library science programs, apart from their own. This study created considerable controversy in the field as being far too subjective to provide a true evaluation of the best programs in library science.²⁹ Despite this criticism, another study in 1968 also asked respondents to rank their perceptions of library science programs, and the results were quite similar.³⁰ In 1981, Herbert White published a slightly different study, in which deans of library science programs were asked to rank schools based first on their master's degrees in library science, then

24. Robert Morse & Sam Flanigan, *Methodology: Law School Rankings*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (Mar. 12, 2012), <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/articles/2011/03/14/law-school-rankings-methodology-2012>.

25. *Id.* Our study was conducted before the 2012 rankings, and was based on the 2011 rankings of 199 schools.

26. Andrew P. Morriss & William D. Henderson, *Measuring Outcomes: Post-Graduation Measures of Success in the U.S. News & World Report Law School Rankings*, 83 IND. L.J. 791, 795 n.15 (2008) (citing THE 2007 BCG ATTORNEY SEARCH GUIDE TO AMERICA'S TOP 50 LAW SCHOOLS (2006)).

27. Stephen P. Klein & Laura Hamilton, *The Validity of the U.S. News and World Report Ranking of ABA Law Schools* (1998), available at <http://www.aals.org/reports/validity.html>.

28. *Id.*

29. See J. Periam Danton, *Notes on the Evaluation of Library Schools*, 24 J. EDUC. LIBRARIANSHIP 106, 107 (1983).

30. *Id.* at 108.

on doctoral degrees in library education and research, then on doctoral degrees in library administration, and finally on faculty contribution to the profession.³¹ Finally, in 1983, Robert Hayes conducted a study to rank library science programs based on citations and publications of the program faculty;³² this study stands out from the rest for its basis in objective criteria.³³

¶15 In an article comparing the results of each of these studies, Periam Danton found that among the peer assessment studies, the same group of schools was nearly always listed in the top ten, with their order slightly different between studies. When compared to Hayes's citation study, the top schools changed significantly, resulting in very little correlation between rankings based on objective criteria and rankings based on subjective criteria.³⁴ This brings under serious scrutiny the merit of peer-ranking surveys. Similarly, Blaise Cronin and Kara Overfelt in 1996 compared White's 1981 perception-based study of faculty scholarship to a study that monitored faculty scholarship from library science programs over an eleven-year period.³⁵ The results of Cronin and Overfelt's study revealed, as Danton had suggested in 1983, that the rankings based on perception substantially differed from the rankings based on citation study, leaving the trustworthiness of perception-based studies in question.³⁶

¶16 Despite the controversy and doubt surrounding perception-based rankings studies for library science, when *U.S. News* began its assessment of the field, this is precisely the method they followed, and they continue to follow it today. Compared to law school rankings, *U.S. News* rankings of library science programs are far less in-depth and are less frequently collected. The latest rankings are from 2009.³⁷ Library science programs are ranked based on a peer assessment survey of "the dean of each program, the program director, and a senior faculty member" that asks respondents to rate fifty library science programs on a five-point scale, five being "strong" and one being "marginal"; if a respondent is unfamiliar with a particular program he or she is asked to respond "don't know."³⁸ This method of evaluation has raised some concern within the librarianship community, particularly the worry that such a method of analysis results in little more than a popularity contest, rather than a genuine evaluation of a program's strength.³⁹ As to the effect that

31. Herbert S. White, *Perceptions by Educators and Administrators of the Ranking of Library School Programs*, 42 COLL. & RES. LIBRARIANSHIP 191 (1981).

32. Robert M. Hayes, *Citation Statistics as a Measure of Faculty Research Productivity*, 23 J. EDUC. LIBR. 151 (1983).

33. Danton, *supra* note 29, at 111.

34. *Id.* at 113-14.

35. Blaise Cronin & Kara Overfelt, *Postscript on Program Rankings*, 47 J. AMER. SOC'Y INFO. SCI. 173, 173 (1996).

36. *Id.* at 174-75.

37. *Library and Information Studies*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-library-information-science-programs/library-information-science-rankings> (last visited Aug. 14, 2012).

38. Robert Morse, *Methodology: Graduate Library and Information Studies Rankings*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (Mar. 12, 2012), <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/articles/2011/03/14/library-and-information-studies-rankings-methodology-2012>.

39. Tina S. Ching & Hollie C. White, *Breaking Down the Rankings: Law Librarians Respond to the U.S. News and World Report Ranking of Law Librarianship Programs*, AALL SPECTRUM, Nov. 2006, at 12, 13.

rankings have on employability, reactions seem to be mixed. In their article regarding the 2006 rankings results, Tina Ching and Hollie White interviewed directors from several law libraries and found that most were unconcerned about the ranking of applicants' library science programs, and were more interested in the degree itself and any coursework or experience pertaining to the field.⁴⁰ However, as that article was mainly anecdotal in nature, the results of these interviews cannot be generalized to the entire population of academic law librarians.

¶17 Reviewing the literature on law librarianship degrees and program rankings presents more questions than answers. Legal employer reliance on law program rankings is effectively set in stone, but reliance on library science program rankings is less certain; further, reliance on rankings for either program by academic law library directors is unknown. The trend in law librarianship shows that more and more law librarians are earning both law and library science degrees. When evaluating candidates for academic law librarianship positions, therefore, is it simply possession of both degrees that matters, or do employers also place emphasis on where those degrees were obtained? Given the vast difference in ranking methodologies for law and library science programs, is it more likely that employers will place significance on the rank of one degree over another?

Study Methodology

Description of Sample, Population, and Sampling Technique

¶18 Our study used two samples. Using the 2011 *U.S. News* rankings, the top fifty law schools were selected, and data were collected on their current law library professional staff.⁴¹ A second sample of thirty randomly generated ABA-accredited law schools was drawn for comparative analysis. To generate this latter sample, all 199 ABA-accredited law schools were alphabetized and then run through a random-number generator from Random.org to create the sample.⁴² Once the data for each sample were retrieved, there were 259 librarians in the top fifty sample and 107 librarians in the random sample.

Data Collection: Methods, Variables, and Categories

¶19 Data were collected from mid-September to mid-October of 2011 by looking at all information posted on the selected law school web sites pertaining to law library professional faculty and staff. From the information present, the following variables were sought: institution of employment, job title, institution granting librarian's law degree, institution granting librarian's library science degree, and date each degree was earned; using the latest iteration of the *U.S. News* rankings, current ranks of the librarians' institutions of employment, institutions granting

40. *Id.*

41. Although there were 199 ABA-accredited law schools, data on only the top fifty were collected because we believed analysis of this limited number would adequately address our research question.

42. RANDOM.ORG, <http://www.random.org> (last visited Aug. 14, 2012) (using the True Random Number Generator).

J.D., and institutions granting M.L.S. were also gathered. These variables were put into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

¶20 The data were collected manually through analysis of staff listings on the sampled institutions' web sites. For institutions not listing library staff credentials, staff directories on the institutions' web sites were used to locate staff members' names, and Internet searches were conducted to see whether credentials could be found on other publicly available sites. Where this occurred, some missing data were able to be located in publicly available profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+.

¶21 In keeping with the study's narrow focus, data were only collected on librarians holding degrees in both law and librarianship. For the purposes of the separate analysis of law library directors, data on all directors were gathered, including those holding only a library science or law degree and those with foreign equivalent degrees. These data were used to measure frequencies in the following areas for each sample: rank of degree-granting institutions for library science and law, order of degrees earned, and years between the granting of each degree.

¶22 Although more than one entity produces rankings of graduate programs each year, we chose the *U.S. News* rankings for this study for both law and library science programs because it provides one standard across both groups. The rankings were obtained through the *U.S. News* web site. In a few instances, however, librarians had earned M.L.S. degrees at programs no longer in operation. To obtain rankings on these programs, some of which had closed prior to when *U.S. News* began ranking library science programs, the 1980 edition of the *Gourman Report*, a separate rankings system that predates *U.S. News* but ceased publication in 1997, was used.⁴³ The 1980 edition specifically was used because it was published at a time when nearly all of the missing library science programs were still operational. The two former library science programs whose ranks could not be obtained by either method were coded as unranked.⁴⁴

Limitations of Methods

¶23 Although the information being analyzed in this study divided relatively naturally into categories (date, degree-granting institutions, job title, etc.), because the information was collected solely through analysis of web resources, the study relied on institutions to post the required information, and not all organizations displayed the same amount of information, rendering collection in some areas, such as information on directors, more complete than other areas, such as years degrees were earned. While the categories in the coding scheme fit most of the collected information well, some information had to be normalized to fit the scheme: Interim directors were coded as directors, and librarians listing an expected date that a degree would be earned were assumed to have completed the degree on that

43. JACK GOURMAN, *GOURMAN REPORT* (1980).

44. These two programs were attended by only two librarians in our samples, and thus the study's conclusions were not significantly affected. Rather than remove these two librarians from the population, we felt that assigning these two programs an "unranked" status would provide a fair means of including the two librarians in the study without significantly altering the study's results.

date. Finally, some law and library science programs are unranked, which posed an obvious problem for a rankings study. To account for this, any law or library science programs that are currently unranked by *U.S. News* were coded as having one rank lower than the lowest ranked school; this means that unranked library science programs were coded as “rank” 45, because library science rankings currently run through 44, and unranked law schools were coded as 146, because law school rankings currently run through 145. This allowed for a comparison between the unranked and ranked programs.

¶24 Although the limitations to this study are numerous, we believe that the results are still compelling and worth examining. What these limitations demonstrate, however, is the need for further analysis of the data through other studies whose methods could fill the gaps these limitations create. As an exploratory study, the research described here is only a starting point that we hope will spark greater interest in the meaning behind these emerging patterns and trends.

Possible Ethical Issues

¶25 Hiring criteria can be highly sensitive and individual to a specific institution; employers may place different levels of emphasis on different criteria. To avoid ethical concerns, we looked only at publicly available data, and librarian and institution names, though noted during data collection, were eliminated from the study's results to protect the anonymity of those in the sample.⁴⁵

¶26 Finally, it bears repeating that the results of the study only intend to show patterns of employment in a limited scope, and the findings are not intended to suggest that rank of schools attended is the sole, or even the most significant, basis of hiring decisions.

Results

¶27 The data collected were analyzed through the use of frequency statistics and chi-square calculations.⁴⁶ These two methods of analysis were chosen as the best fit for a study seeking to identify patterns between the rank of the institution where members of the sampled populations work and the ranks of the institutions where members of the sampled populations earned their graduate degrees. Chi-square analysis was conducted in the following areas: for the top fifty and random samples, chi-square analyses assessed the rank of law school education received, the rank of library science education received, and the overall rank of education for librarians in each sample who attended library and law programs of similar rank; these three comparisons were replicated on librarians working at the top twenty-five and top ten law schools; finally, these three comparisons were conducted on

45. Complete data collected are on file with the authors.

46. Chi-square analysis is a common method of data analysis which indicates whether groups created within the data by merging two variables together are larger or smaller than they would be if the variables were not related. This method allows one to compare data collected from one sample to data collected from another sample to see whether the numbers one is observing are significant, i.e., whether they differ from what should be expected. See BARBARA M. WILDEMUTH, APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS TO QUESTIONS IN INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SCIENCE 349 (2009).

law library directors from each population. Of the twelve chi-square analyses performed in this study, only three produced significant results;⁴⁷ these will be discussed below.

¶28 To better understand the population analyzed, information on the date and order in which degrees were earned was first analyzed. Chi-square analyses in this area revealed nothing of significance, with the data distributed evenly across all samples. Generally it was discovered that librarians in this study tended to have earned their library science degrees before their law degrees, and the average amount of time between the earning of each degree was between two and six years. While analysis in this area revealed no significant differences among the samples, it did provide a better picture of the study's population, rendering the results of the educational rank analysis all the more interesting.

Law School Education

¶29 Chi-square analyses of law school education first compared librarians in the top fifty and random samples who received their law degrees from schools ranked 1 to 10, 11 to 25, and 26 to 50, as displayed in table 2. In this analysis, the data were evenly distributed across these two samples, meaning that no significant difference existed between the law school education ranks for librarians working at the top fifty law schools and those of the librarians in the random sample.

Table 2

Rank of Law Degree Granting Institution, Top Fifty and Random Samples

Sample Populations	Rank 26 to 50	Rank 11 to 25	Rank 1 to 10
Top Fifty Sample (n=259)	22% (n=57)	20% (n=51)	15% (n=40)
Random Sample (n=107)	23% (n=25)	12% (n=13)	5% (n=5)

NOTE: Some percentages do not add up to 100% due to inclusion of directors in the data, some of whom hold only one of the two degrees or a foreign equivalent.

¶30 When a final chi-square analysis of law school education comparing librarians working at the top twenty-five and top ten law schools was conducted, however, dramatically different results emerged. Results of this analysis can be seen in table 3 and figure 1. The probability value generated in this chi-square analysis was 0.01, resulting in a rejection of the null hypothesis.⁴⁸ Distribution of law school education rank varied significantly between the top twenty-five and the top ten samples, indicating that those working at a top ten law school were more likely to have attended a high-ranked law school than those working in the top twenty-five

47. A significant result in a chi-square analysis means that the results between the two samples were different enough to be statistically significant. A chi-square analysis begins by assuming the results between the compared samples will be similar, and thus a significant result disproves that assumption. *Id.* at 350.

48. When undertaking a chi-square analysis, one begins with a null hypothesis, an assumption "that no difference exists between the two groups being compared." *Id.* at 384.

law schools. This suggests that the rank of one’s law school education becomes more significant when seeking positions at the highest-ranked law schools.

Figure 1. Comparison of Rank of Law Degree Granting Institution for Top Twenty-Five and Top Ten Samples (No. of Librarians)

Table 3

Rank of Law Degree Granting Institution, Top Twenty-Five, and Top Ten Law Schools			
Populations	Rank 26 to 50	Rank 11 to 25	Rank 1 to 10
Top Twenty-Five Sample (n=140)	14% (n=20)	23% (n=32)	17% (n=24)
Top Ten Sample (n=42)	12% (n=5)	10% (n=4)	40% (n=17)

Library Science Education

¶31 Analysis of library science education rank began with a comparison of the top fifty and random samples; but unlike the similar law school education assessment, a chi-square analysis of library science education for these two samples yielded a probability value of 0.01, requiring a rejection of the null hypothesis. Distribution of rank varied significantly between these two sample populations, and it was found that those in the top fifty sample were more likely to have attended a high-ranked library science program than were those in the random sample. Full results can be seen in table 4 and figure 2.

Table 4

Rank of Library Science Degree Granting Institution, Top Fifty and Random Samples

Samples	Ranked 21 to 44	Ranked 11 to 20	Ranked 1 to 10
Top Fifty Sample (n=259)	27% (n=70)	8% (n=21)	57% (n=148)
Random Sample (n=107)	33% (n=35)	17% (n=18)	42% (n=45)

NOTE: Because the rankings for library science currently only extend to 44, these programs were broken down into top twenty and top ten rather than top twenty-five and top fifty as for law schools.

¶32 Subsequent chi-square analyses of library science education for law library directors and for those working at the top twenty-five and top ten ranked law schools were more evenly distributed, indicating that these populations are more similar to each other than the top fifty and random samples; however, it should be noted that in both of these analyses the sample size of at least one population in each analysis fell below thirty, rendering the results inconclusive.⁴⁹

Figure 2. Comparison of Rank Library Science Degree Granting Institution for Top Fifty and Random Samples (No. of Librarians)

Librarians Holding Mutually High-Ranked Degrees

¶33 While the previous analyses focused on either law education or library science education, a final analysis examined the overall rank of education for librari-

49. It has been found that once a sample size reaches thirty the distribution curves normalize; thus researchers seek sample populations of at least thirty subjects in order to obtain more dependable analytical results. RICHARD LOWRY, *A First Glance at the Question of Statistical Significance*, in CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS OF INFERENCE STATISTICS, <http://vassarstats.net/textbook/ch4pt1.html> (last visited Aug. 14, 2012).

ans in each sample; that is, this analysis examined those librarians who attended similarly ranked law and library science programs. Chi-square analyses were again conducted comparing the random sample to the top fifty sample, the top twenty-five sample to the top ten sample, and the directors in each of these samples. Of these analyses, only the comparison of the random to the top fifty sample of librarians yielded significant differences. Results can be seen in table 5 and figure 3.

Table 5

Librarians with Similarly Ranked Law and Library Science Education,
Top Fifty and Random Samples

Samples	Law Rank 26 to 50, Library Science Rank 21 to 44	Law Rank 11 to 25, Library Science Rank 11 to 20	Law and Library Science Rank 1 to 10
Top Fifty Sample (n=259)	31% (n=80)	18% (n=47)	7% (n=17)
Random Sample (n=107)	30% (n=32)	5% (n=5)	3% (n=3)

¶34 The probability value in this comparison was 0.05, revealing a varied distribution of the data across these two populations. This finding indicates that librarians working at top fifty ranked law schools are more likely to have received an overall high-ranked education than those in the random sample of law librarians.

Figure 3. Comparison of Similarly Ranked Law and Library Science Education for Top Fifty and Random Samples (No. of Librarians)

Discussion

¶35 It would have been reasonable to assume going into this study that the results would reveal a strong emphasis on the rank of either library science education or law education, or both. However, as the results ultimately revealed, no one field of education truly dominated.

¶36 It is striking to note that, across all categories, law librarians sampled tended to have earned their library science degrees from much higher ranked library science programs as compared to the rank of the law schools where they earned their law degrees. The chi-square analyses confirm this, as the comparison of library science education for the top fifty and random samples rejected the null hypothesis whereas the analysis of these same samples for legal education did not. This suggests that the rank of one's library science program might have a more significant effect on job placement generally than the rank of one's law school.

¶37 The rank of law schools does appear to be quite significant, however, when looking at the data on law librarians working at top ten law schools. For this sample, a much higher percentage of the population earned their law degrees at top ten institutions, and a chi-square analysis comparing the top ten to the top twenty-five successfully rejected the null hypothesis as confirmation, suggesting that the top ten sample is significantly different from the top twenty-five sample.

¶38 This might suggest that, for law libraries at top ten law schools, a more equal weight is put on the rank of candidates' library science and law educations. Thus, if one's goal is simply to be an academic law librarian, regardless of the rank of the hiring law school, the data suggest one should focus more effort on attending a high-ranked library science program than a high-ranked law program; if, however, one's ambition is to be a law librarian at a high-ranked law school, particularly a school in the top ten, one might better serve this goal by attending higher-ranked programs in both fields.

¶39 For the analyses conducted on law library directors alone, it was hypothesized that educational rank would be more significant for library directors. Each analysis, however, revealed similar distributions of data across library directors in each population. No population of directors stood out from the rest, and the patterns of data on directors roughly followed the patterns for the corresponding law librarian populations. This suggests that some other factor apart from education enhances the qualities of candidates for law library director positions. Determining what those factors might be is a subject for another study.

¶40 As a purely quantitative study, many explanations can be made for the results reached. For instance, the suggestion from the data that library science education may bear more weight than law education in hiring decisions could be explained by there being far fewer ranked library science programs (44) than there are ranked law school programs (199). In addition, there may be less competition to get into higher-ranked library science programs than there is for similarly ranked law programs, again explaining away the data.

¶41 The meaning to be garnered from the results of this study is quite limited because of the study's narrow scope and purpose. This study was only intended as an exploration of patterns and trends between rank of degree-conferring institu-

tions and rank of hiring institutions for academic law librarians. While the results might offer suggestions of educational paths for aspiring academic law librarians, it can by no means predict what types of jobs individuals with a certain educational background will acquire. Factors such as prior experience, personality, and skills, often sought by hiring employers, cannot be ascertained from the data in this study.

Conclusion

¶42 Since the founding of AALL in 1906, the point at which law librarianship was first officially recognized as a distinct profession, law librarianship has continued to grow in popularity and numbers, becoming an increasingly attractive career prospect for those with an interest in law and legal scholarship. The educational background of those in the profession has always ranged between those with a legal background and those with a library science background, but studies in recent decades have shown an increasing trend toward professionals in the field earning both degrees. This study expands on this trend by questioning whether one's choice in degree-granting institutions might inform future employment prospects at academic law libraries.

¶43 While this study cannot predict where a law librarian will be hired purely by following a particular educational path, the findings here may help to inform prospective law librarians' educational decisions based on their career goals. Those seeking employment at an academic law library generally, regardless of the institution's rank, may want to put more emphasis on the rank of the library science program they attend, while those specifically seeking employment at the most prestigious law schools may want to strive for high-ranked educations in both degrees. As the scattered findings of our analysis of law library directors' education demonstrates, rank does not stand alone as a predictor of success.

¶44 What this study cannot hope to answer is to what degree other factors, such as work experience, skills, and personality, might influence an employing institution's hiring decision. More qualitative studies would be necessary to answer this question. It is recommended that this study be replicated in five or ten years to see how the educational landscape of the profession has evolved. Although the hiring process certainly includes other evaluative factors that may hold greater weight in hiring decisions, the findings of this study make clear that educational rank does indeed matter, but how much it matters may depend on one's individual career aspirations.