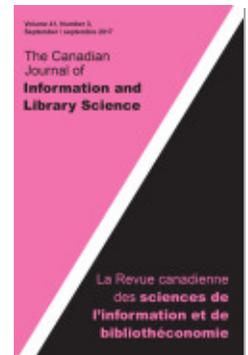Identifying as a Librarian: When LIS Graduates in Non-Library Roles Use the Title "Librarian" / S'identifier comme bibliothécaire : quand les diplômés BSI utilisent le titre de « bibliothécaire » en dehors du milieu bibliothécaire

Melissa Fraser-Arnott

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Identifying as a Librarian: When LIS Graduates in Non-Library Roles Use the Title "Librarian"

S'identifier comme bibliothécaire : quand les diplômés BSI utilisent le titre de « bibliothécaire » en dehors du milieu bibliothécaire

Melissa Fraser-Arnott
San Jose State University–Queensland University of Technology Gateway
PhD Program
melissa.a.fraser@gmail.com

Abstract: This study addresses how library and information science (LIS) graduates who work in non-library roles label themselves. The LIS community as the profession is undergoing a time of transition. Given the changing nature of the work that is being performed by LIS graduates both inside and outside of libraries, the timing is appropriate to explore how practitioners choose to label themselves as professionals. LIS graduates working in non-library roles were selected as the target population of this study because their work provides them with myriad possibilities for self-labelling. Participants exhibited four response patterns: (1) always identifying as a librarian; (2) sometimes identifying as a librarian; (3) never identifying as a librarian; and (4) identifying as a "non-practising" or "non-active" librarian. The three motivations observed in selecting a label were strength of affiliation with that label, perception of conflict with others inside or outside of the professional group caused by the use of a given label, and the impact that the use of a label could have on the achievement of one's professional goals.

Keywords: information professionals; librarians; non-library roles; professional community; professional identity

Résumé : Cette étude aborde la façon dont s'étiquettent les diplômés en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information (BSI) qui travaillent en dehors du milieu bibliothécaire. La communauté BSI et la profession de bibliothécaire sont dans une période de transition. Compte tenu de la nature changeante du travail effectué par les diplômés en BSI au sein et en dehors des bibliothèques, le moment est opportun pour étudier comment les praticiens choisissent de s'identifier en tant que professionnels. La population cible de cette étude est l'ensemble des diplômés en BSI travaillant en dehors des bibliothèques, parce que leur travail leur offre de nombreuses possibilités d'auto-identification. Quatre profils de réponse ont été observés chez les participants : (1) s'identifie toujours comme bibliothécaire, (2) s'identifie parfois comme bibliothécaire, (3) ne s'identifie jamais comme bibliothécaire et (4) s'identifie comme bibliothécaire « non pratiquant » ou « non actif ».

Trois facteurs guidant le choix d'une étiquette sont observés, soit la force de l'affiliation à l'étiquette, la perception de conflit avec d'autres personnes à l'intérieur ou à l'extérieur du groupe professionnel causée par l'utilisation d'une étiquette donnée, ainsi que l'impact potentiel de l'utilisation d'une étiquette sur la réalisation de ses objectifs professionnels.

Mots-clés : professionnels de l'information; bibliothécaires; rôles non bibliothécaires; communauté professionnelle; identité professionnelle

Introduction

The library and information science (LIS) profession is undergoing a time of transition. Positions for LIS graduates in "traditional" library-based settings are becoming increasingly rare (Clark 2013; Fialkoff 2009; Royal Society of Canada 2014; Stronski 2004; Szkolar 2012). There is a perception that traditional LIS jobs are disappearing as a result of changes in today's information environment. These traditional jobs include librarian positions in academic, public, school, and special library settings. This perception is supported by several sources including studies suggesting that there are fewer job opportunities available (Stronski 2004) and observations that there is significant competition for available opportunities, particularly at the entry level (Clark 2013). In 2004, Lisa Stronski (2004) observed a decline in the number of positions for special librarians (50). In 2009, Francine Fialkoff (2009, 8) reported that there were 12.5% fewer jobs in public libraries than in 2007 and that overall salary levels had decreased. A 2011 study reported that the average search time for entry-level LIS jobs was more than five months (Clark 2013, 472), and, in the same year, a Forbes online article described the master's in library sciences degree as one of the worst degrees that a student could take in terms of post-graduation job prospects (Szkolar 2012). At the same time that reductions in traditional job opportunities are being reported and staff in traditional work environments such as libraries and archives are being cut, there is optimism about the future for LIS graduates, with authors highlighting the myriad opportunities available to LIS graduates in the information economy (Fagerheim 1999; Hovendick 2009).

The relationship between librarianship and information sciences has been explored by several researchers in the past. Marcia Bates (1999), in particular, has explored both the range of roles available to LIS graduates and the nature of the LIS profession. In her 1999 article "The Invisible Substrate of Information Science," Bates explores both the "below-the-water-line" elements of the information science paradigm and the relationship between librarianship and information science. She identifies these below-the-surface factors that might attract researchers and practitioners to a field as including cognitive styles, research interests, and values (1043) and identifies the following attributes of information scientists "wide subject interests, good skills with language, with getting the big picture about subject matter, rather than just working in the subject matter" (1046). She describes the shared information perspective of librarians and information scientists but differentiates them based on history

and, in particular, value perspectives, with information scientists tending to follow a "value-neutral" approach, while librarians follow a "service-oriented and empowerment-oriented" value system (1049).

Given the changing nature of the work that is being performed by LIS graduates both inside and outside of libraries, the timing is appropriate to explore how practitioners choose to label themselves as professionals. LIS graduates working in non-library roles were selected as the target population of this study because their work provides them with myriad possibilities for self-labelling. They could elect to label themselves either as librarians or information scientists reflecting either of these profession's value systems, or they could elect to label themselves using job titles or descriptors that more closely reflect the work they do or the industry within which they work. Understanding how these practitioners, whose work may represent new areas of opportunity for LIS graduates, represent themselves and conceptualize their work has important implications for the LIS profession(s). Understanding how these practitioners choose to identify themselves to individuals inside and outside of the LIS community can contribute to an understanding of how librarianship and information science are understood, how accepted individuals in non-library roles feel in relation to this community, and how they believe that the LIS profession is perceived by others outside of the field.

Literature review

Literature reviews play a slightly different role in the grounded theory methodology than in other methodologies due to the importance of theoretical sensitivity in this methodology. Some grounded theory researchers (Birks and Mills 2011; Dunne 2011; Glaser 1998; Walls, Parahoo, and Fleming 2010) recommend that literature reviews not be conducted before data collection and analysis because an early literature review can either result in the collection and review of literature areas that do not prove to be relevant to the theory that emerges from the data or, more seriously, that the literature that was read before data collection and analysis could bias the researcher into attempting to prove or disprove an existing theory. This study takes this blended approach to the literature review. An initial literature review was undertaken to assess the literature related to the research problem and identify a research gap. After a gap was identified, the literature was examined with the aim of acquiring an understanding of different theoretical frameworks that could be used to explore the topic and develop questions to build an interview guide. The literature was explored at a broad level during this initial phase to avoid focusing too narrowly on a single approach to the topic of professional identity. An attempt was made to examine a broad range of literature at the start of the project that focused on the larger concepts incorporated in the research question, namely the idea of professional identity and concepts of professions or professionalism. This research is outlined below.

A theme in this literature has been the impact of negative perceptions of group identities. Researchers have found that individuals adopt several strategies

to reduce the negative responses associated with these stereotypes, including "[attempting] to restore positive regard by downplaying the salience of the devalued group membership (e.g., avoid stereotypical behavior) or attempting to educate and advocate on behalf of their social identity group in work contexts" (Dutton, Morgan Roberts, and Bednar 2010, 271). In addition to studying the impact of stereotypes on identities, some research has focused on whether interactions with others have reinforced or diminished one's perception of his or herself as a member of an identity group. Stryker and Burke (2000, 289) write that "if the identity confirmation process is successful, the salience of the identity will be reinforced; if the process is unsuccessful, the salience of the identity is likely to diminish, perhaps considerably."

There are several sociology and psychology-based theories that explore why individuals express given identities. Identity has been described by some scholars as the way in which individuals develop connections with particular groups and with society at large (Timma 2007). Social identity theory argues that "identity can be described along a continuum from personal identity to social identity. Personal identity refers to self-conceptions in terms of unique and individualistic characteristics. . . . Social identity, in contrast, derives from category memberships" (de Moura et al. 2009, 541). The relationships between actors are of central importance to social identity theory because their identity roles provide symbolic information that guide the relationships between actors. An individual's adherence to social roles is tied to the maintenance of social order (Deaux and Martin 2003). This theory argues that identities cannot be examined in isolation from society because "it is only in relation to others and to the material world in which we live, that humans come to realise their separateness from all that surrounds them" (Coates 1995, 832).

Geoffrey Leonardelli and Soo Min Toh (2015) have explored self-categorization theory with a view to predicting individuals' group categorization decisions. Their analysis included the causes or conditions that lead to self-categorization, which they identify as the need for optimal distinctiveness and the need for security. Optimal distinctiveness theory argues that individuals balance the need to differentiate themselves from others in their in-groups with their need for affiliation and inclusion in these groups. The need for security or security seeking leads individuals to align with groups that can provide them with respect, cooperation, reciprocity, or other material or psychological needs (76–77). Miranda Bennett (2011, 46) explores the idea that practitioners in the LIS field may juggle multiple professional identities, arguing that liaison librarians negotiate between "two significant professional identities: librarian and subject specialist." How LIS graduates in non-traditional roles manage multiple identities and whether there are overlapping identities for LIS graduates in different types of non-traditional roles has not been explored.

Librarian stereotypes may shed a light onto why, when, and where LIS practitioners choose to use the title or label of "librarian." Stereotypes may have an impact on a group's status or ability to obtain rewards such as higher salaries or greater autonomy within a society. Stereotypes and stereotyping has received

significant academic attention and has tended to focus on attributes such as race, sex, religion, or ethnicity, but there is a large body of work that has examined stereotypes of occupations or professions (Cole, Fields, and Giles 2003; Gorman 2005; Kauppinen, Haavio-Mannila, and Kandolin 1989; Lemkau 1984; Rooth 2008; Singletary et al. 2009). Many authors have written about negative stereotypes of librarianship and the impacts that these stereotypes may have on recruiting new entrants into the profession (Clemons 2011; Davis 2007; Isaacson 2000; Fallahay Loesch 2010; Peresie and Alexander 2005; Potter 2010). The negative stereotype of the librarian is generally described as "the bespectacled, middle-aged matron with her premature graying hair coiffed in an austere bun with her finger pushed to her lips shushing young patrons talking or giggling in a library" (Fallahay Loesch 2010, 31).

A central theme in the literature on perceptions of librarianship is that few people outside of the profession understand what librarians do and what value they bring to both library and non-library settings. Herbert White (1986, 94) writes that "nobody else knows exactly what librarianship is, and why it requires graduate-level education … They simply do not relate a need for high-quality librarians to the value of libraries, or, at least, they don't know what it takes to become a good professional librarian." Ned Potter (2010) has suggested that librarians are defined by the library building and that librarians may need to consider breaking this association to demonstrate their full range of potential as professionals. Several writers have suggested that LIS professionals have not been particularly successful in promoting themselves and their profession. Brian Cameron and Cecile Farnum (2007) looked for librarian profiles and credentials on university websites to see if academic librarians are using this medium as a location for promoting their professional status and experience and found that although librarians promote their libraries on their institutional websites, they seldom promote themselves.

There has been significant research conducted on LIS education and socialization with the aim of improving LIS curricula and developing ways to ensure that students quickly and successfully transition into professional roles. Socialization is the process through which individuals are assimilated into existing communities through the transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge, including the learning of the rules, skills, values, norms, customs, and symbols that make up that community's culture (Baker and Lattuca 2010; Ibarra 1999; Rummens 2001; Serrat 2008). There have been a few studies that have taken a longer-term look at the experiences of LIS students in developing an LIS professional identity. These studies have asked the question of how LIS students come to see themselves as LIS professionals. Laura Sare, Stephen Bales, and Bruce Neville (2012) conducted a grounded theory study on new academic librarians' perceptions of the profession to determine how these perceptions evolve from the time students enter library school through their first 6–24 months as a practising professional. Broadly, they define the process of deciding upon librarianship as involving three steps: (1) experiencing/constructing the library; (2) exploring options; and (3) defining self (184). The study by Sare, Bales, and Neville serves

as a good example of both the types of professional identity literature that exist for the LIS profession as well as the shortage of information available about non-librarian roles.

Bennett (2011, 46) explores the idea that practitioners in the LIS field may juggle multiple professional identities, arguing that liaison librarians negotiate between "two significant professional identities: librarian and subject specialist." How LIS graduates in non-traditional roles manage multiple identities and whether there are overlapping identities for LIS graduates in different types of non-traditional roles has not been explored. The research that has been conducted on LIS identities has focused on LIS graduates in library roles as well. An example of this type of publication is an article by Deborah Hicks published in 2014 entitled "The Construction of Librarians' Professional Identities: A Discourse Analysis." The objective of this article was to examine professional identity from a social constructionist framework to "provide insight into the professional problems and concerns of librarianship, what it means to be a librarian, and how librarians themselves construct their understanding of librarianship" (Hicks 2014, 252).

This literature review of the identity literature inside and outside of the LIS profession provides a high-level overview of the concepts of relevance to the study as well as the gaps in the literature that this study addresses. The identity literature from the sociology and psychology fields offers insights into when and why individuals may display different identities through the use of a given professional title. This research suggests that an individual's perception of how a given job or professional title may be perceived by others due to that profession's stereotypes and power status may impact their decision regarding when and how to use that label. LIS literature has shown that professional status and stereotypes are a concern for the profession. The body of research that exists regarding LIS professional identities has focused on LIS students or LIS graduates in library roles. This literature, however, does suggest that even LIS graduates in library roles may find themselves juggling multiple professional identities either due to dual roles, as in the case of liaison librarians, or to pre-MLIS work experiences, due to the fact that many LIS students choose librarianship as a second career (Sare, Bales, and Neville 2012). All of this literature explores possible motivations for selecting a given professional label. The literature shows a lack of research on the target population for this study. It also shows a need for qualitative research that explores which motivations may influence self-labelling decisions and an opportunity to tie together research on a variety of identity-related theories.

Methodology

This study uses grounded theory to explore the professional identity experiences of LIS graduates in non-library roles. Grounded theory is an inductive research methodology that was designed to produce a new theory that is "grounded" in data (Glaser 1978, 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Key characteristics of a grounded theory study include theoretical sampling and constant comparison.

Theoretical sampling requires the researcher to continue sampling until no new data are found in any of their coding categories (Glaser 2001, 2009). This is different from most sampling procedures in which the sample size is predetermined (Suddaby 2006). Constant comparison requires that data collection and analysis take place at the same time, with the results of the analysis influencing further data collection.

Grounded theory was selected as the research method for this study for several reasons. First, a method that produces a theory through inductive processes, rather than a deductive method that tests a hypothesis, is ideal for this project because of the range of possible core concepts that may emerge in exploring the professional identities of LIS graduates in non-library roles and the lack of a testable theory that seems to fit the population and situation explored in this study. There are a plethora of theories regarding identity and many theories concerning professional identity. Given the lack of research that has been conducted on LIS graduates in non-library roles, in particular, and in individuals' identity experiences with regard to voluntary and hidden identities in the workplaces, in general, a theory about the professional identities of LIS graduates in non-library roles that is grounded in data would better reflect the experiences of this population in a more meaningful (and potentially actionable) way than running through a series of tests of existing hypotheses that were not developed with a focus on either this population (LIS graduates in non-library roles) or this scenario (graduates of a professional education program that is associated with a specific professional career path rather than a general skill set). The creation of a new theory grounded in data that aims to capture a deep view of participants' experiences serves as a foundation from which additional studies using a variety of methodologies may flow.

This lack of an existing theory that relates to either of the populations or scenarios outlined above not only supports the use of the grounded theory methodology but also discourages the use of other methods that are commonly used to explore questions related to professional identity that have been used in LIS research. Surveys are often employed within the LIS literature to examine identity-related questions, sometimes without a clear explanation of the theoretical framework or methodological considerations undertaken in the selection of this data collection approach. These survey studies have examined questions such as the extent to which participants accept certain LIS values such as freedom of information or the protection of users' privacy (American Library Association 2004; Dole and Hurych 2000; Moran and Marchionini 2012). A study that simply examines one aspect or another of professional identity may miss significant aspects of the experience of professional identity for a population. For example, there have been studies about why individuals stay or leave the library profession (Ard, Clemmons, and Morgan 2006; Burd 2003; Taylor et al. 2010). Not all of the participants selected for this study consider themselves to have left librarianship even though they are no longer working in library settings. They also have accepted non-library roles for a variety of reasons such as a lack of opportunities either to enter into, or to advance within, library workplaces;

existing social networks that guided them to opportunities outside of librarianship; a desire to develop skills and competencies; and a whole host of other reasons. The decision to work outside of a library occurred as part of planned and serendipitous career paths. Focusing on one particular question or aspect of one's professional identity or professional experiences can therefore create misleading results. Instead of targeting specific variables to test hypotheses about their significance to participant subjects, grounded theory instead allows the key variables and concepts to be exposed by participants, which is particularly important when the target population has not been extensively studied.

Another factor in selecting the grounded theory methodology was its use of theoretical sampling. The population examined is highly heterogeneous, and it is not clear which demographic factors have a significant impact on the participants' experiences of professional identity. Even if certain commonalities in demographic variables could be observed, a representative sample is not being sought in this qualitative study, so no firm conclusions could be reached to firmly link these variables with actions, perceptions, or experiences in a statistically experienced way. In theoretical sampling, which is a hallmark of the grounded theory methodology, the researcher does not make any presumptions about what demographic characteristics of participants will be important. A sampling method that does not force the selection of a certain value in selecting participants was appealing given the wide range of possible demographic variables that could have an impact on the experience of professional identity.

The participants in this study were 20 professionals with master's degrees in library and information science working outside of libraries. In total, 19 of the 20 participants received their degrees from American Library Association (ALA)-accredited library schools in North America, and all of the participants worked in either the United States or Canada. Their work included roles in information management, policy analysis, taxonomy and search tool development, library software development and sales, and independent consultants or information entrepreneurs. Participants ranged in experience from current MLIS students and recent graduates through to professionals with over 25 years of experience. All of the participants had held multiple library and non-library roles and discussed their pre- and post-MLIS experience to contextualize their professional experiences.

Two types of sampling were used in this study: snowball or chain referral sampling and theoretical sampling. Snowball sampling was used to identify potential participants, while theoretical sampling was used to determine when to cease data collection. Snowball or chain referral sampling was used to build a potential list of participants for this study. This method of sampling involves soliciting recommendations for participants from other participants or potential participants. This method is used to build samples of difficult-to-reach populations, and LIS graduates in non-library careers may qualify as this type of population because they may not be involved in LIS professional associations, which are a common source of participant recruitment in LIS research (Scherdin and Beaubien 1995; Schreiner and Pope 2011; Sinotte 2004; Stronski 2004)

and because they will be scattered across industry sectors and employer types. The fact that this study is not seeking a representative sample also suggests that this method of participant identification would be appropriate (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 145). The snowball process was initiated through personal contacts of the researcher and research supervisors. In addition, interviewees were asked to recommend future participants.

Theoretical sampling involves the recruitment of participants based on the data that emerges through analysis with the objective of achieving theoretical saturation. This is a distinct characteristic of this method as "theoretical sampling violates the ideal of hypothesis testing in that the direction of new data collection is determined, not by a priori hypotheses, but by ongoing interpretation of data and emerging conceptual categories" (Suddaby 2006, 634). Since no assumptions are made at the start of the study regarding which data to collect, an attempt was made to capture as broad a range of experiences as possible in the first rounds of sampling. It was understood that covering every possible permutation would not be possible; even the act of identifying every possible permutation of types of non-library roles, the paths that participants followed to reach those roles, or participants' personal characteristics in terms of demographic or philo-sophical positions would not be possible. This is not a problem for a grounded theory study according to the methodology's procedures:

> The depth of theoretical sampling refers to the amount of data collected on a group and on a category. In studies of verification and description it is typical to collect as much data as possible on the "whole" group. Theoretical sampling, though, does not require the fullest possible coverage on the whole group except at the very beginning of research, when the main categories are emerging—and these tend to emerge very fast. (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 69)

Several steps were undertaken to enhance the variety of participants re-cruited in the first few rounds of interviewing. First, participants were taken from three referrers' professional networks. Participants recommended by these early participants through snowball sampling were not recruited until later rounds of interviews in case they were recommended because of perceived similarities in experiences or attitudes. Second, participant demographic data was examined to determine if any trends would emerge that would suggest that a typology might be possible in the future. Although creating a typology was not the objective of this study, if certain patterns emerged that suggested that a certain participant characteristic or type of work experience led to similar attitudes or behaviours on the part of participants, then this would be used to guide future sampling. For example, if it was found that participants who completed their studies in the past five years had a different perspective on the profession than participants who completed their studies 15 to 20 years ago, or if male participants described their behaviours differently than female participants, then this would have been used to recruit future participants in a targeted way to capture groups based on these observations.

In theoretical sampling, size cannot be pre-determined, nor should any pre-sumptions about the significance of any demographic characteristic be made (Lysack, Luborsky, and Dillaway 2006). Data collection continues until satura-tion occurs. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967, 61) define saturation as the point where "no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the categories." Juliet Corbin and Strauss (2008, 143) expand the definition of saturation to include "the development of categories in terms of their properties and dimensions, including variation, and if theory building, the delineating of relationships between concepts." In the case of this study, theoretical saturation was reached with 20 participants. A common set of categories was discovered after the completion of 16 interviews, but interviewing continued to make sure that the researcher was in fact observing common themes and not forcing a fit into categories. After an additional four interviews, the researcher felt confident that enough data had been captured to develop a theory to capture participants' main concerns.

The data collection technique employed in this project was semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted both face to face and by distance using web-conferencing software (collaborate web-conferencing platform). The semi-structured interviews included three sections. The first section of the interview asked participants to describe their career experiences from their decision to attend library school to the present. Participants were not interrupted during this narrative. The second section of the interview consisted of follow-up ques-tions in response to comments that participants made during the first section. The final section of the interview included questions developed in the interview guide to address topics such as educational experiences, communities, and how they identify or label themselves when communicating with others inside and outside of the profession. The interviews took between 30 and 90 minutes to complete.

Study data were analysed with a view to maintaining theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, and constant comparison. This process of comparing batches of interviews was completed four times over the course of this study: (1) during the pilot study phase using the first two interviews; (2) after the first six inter-views were completed; (3) after 16 interviews were completed; and (4) after 20 interviews were completed. To ensure that pre-conceptions or pet theories from an earlier batch did not lead to the forcing of code groups, categories were completely reanalysed and regrouped each time. The first step in the analysis process in this study was line-by-line analysis of the transcript from each interview that was conducted. Observations and notes included two main elements: contextualizing comments and keywords from the response text. The context comments focused on what the participant wanted to communicate in their answer to the question. This included notes on what questions were being asked, what aspect of the question the interviewee had addressed, and impres-sions of the overall intention of the response (the main idea the participant was communicating). The keywords include individual words and phrases taken from the participant's response. The purpose of capturing keywords was to ensure

that any codes that are developed from the interview reflect the participant's own language. The second step in the analysis process was to look at all of the keywords from each interview together to determine if there were any repeated keywords or response themes. The contextual notes helped with this sorting process because they allowed the researcher to see if the same keywords were being used to describe the same or different phenomena. The third stage of the analysis process was to develop a memo describing the phenomena observed and captured in the keyword groups taken from the interview. The fourth stage of the analysis process was to look at all of the grouped keywords from the interview and use them to develop a list of preliminary code categories. These code categories were created using gerunds. This level of coding was designed to find a fairly small set of activities that describe the experiences of the interview participant. The fifth stage of the analysis process involved the start of the constant comparison process. In this stage, the grouped keywords were explored to see if there were any common themes or topics that were discussed by different interview participants. Comparing incidents helped to eliminate pet theories or ideas about simple causal explanations. The sixth stage of the analysis process was to create memos for each of the concept or experience categories found in the interviews. The process of creating these memos allowed for a deeper examination of the concepts that arose in the interviews and for investigations into similarities that arose across interviews. While the individual interview memos focused on the key themes that were found in each interview, these constant comparison memos looked for trends across interviews. The seventh stage of the analysis process was to perform constant comparison between the gerund code categories found for each interview and to develop a list of categories that removes duplicates and describes phenomena covered in multiple interviews. At several points in the process of developing a theory, initial categories were reanalysed in relation to categories that were identified as potentially important to the identification of the participants' main concern, followed by the development of a theory that conceptually explained how participants resolved this concern. These categories were potential core categories. The final stage in the data analysis process was to examine all of the memos created through the coding process. The researcher conducted the interviews, prepared transcripts, and conducted the analysis for this study. Analysis was conducted manually using the procedure outlined above without the use of coding software.

The theory that was developed from this study addresses the professional identity experience and incorporates many elements of that experience. This article focuses on one of those elements: the act of self-labelling. This information was obtained explicitly through the question: "do you identify yourself as a librarian?" but was expanded through prompts and follow-up questions and through elements of participants' career narratives and analysed using the method described above. Since this article presents only one element of the analysis that was used to develop a grounded theory, then it may be considered a qualitative study conducted with grounded theory principles and practices rather than a fully grounded theory study.

Table 1: Participant self-labelling groups

Group 1: Always identify as a librarian	Group 2: Sometimes identify as a librarian	Group 3: Never identify as a librarian	Group 4: Identify as a non-practising or non-active librarian
4 participants Types of roles: library vendor, information consultant, business analyst, records/ information manager	7 participants Types of roles: information manager, library vendor, marketer, information consultant	7 participants Types of roles: taxonomist, intelligence analyst, marketer, information consultant, communications strategist, non-profit program officer, records manager	3 participants Types of roles: policy analyst, researcher, library vendor

Results

The question of how LIS graduates working outside of libraries identify themselves provided an interesting case through which to explore this question because these individuals were able to choose from at least two professional identities: the identity of librarian for which their professional education would have socialized them or an identity associated with their substantive position or the role in the workplace that they occupy. Participants exhibited four response patterns when describing how they identified themselves to others in work and social situations: (1) always identifying as a librarian; (2) sometimes identifying as a librarian; (3) never identifying as a librarian; and (4) identifying as a "non-practising" or "non-active" librarian. It must be noted that this is a qualitative study that did not aim to obtain a representative sample of the LIS community. As a result, the breakdown of participants into the categories descried below does not necessarily reflect the distribution of the total population. The distribution of this study's participants is depicted in Table 1.

Group 1: always identifying as a librarian

Those who choose to identify as a librarian do so because they strongly affiliate with the role of librarian and believe that the work they are doing outside of the library setting is compatible with their definition of what it means to be a librarian. The participants interviewed for this study who will strongly identify as librarians tended to be those who spent a significant amount of their careers working in libraries before moving into non-library roles. These individuals acknowledge the value of their library work experience in allowing them to move into non-library positions:

> "What do you do?" "I'm a librarian." Because that is what I do. For people it is a very odd way to be a librarian—but that's how I identify myself. (Participant 2)

> If your audience is people who don't know a lot of librarians there will be an image issue and it's still there and that being one reason why I continue to call myself a librarian—'cause I'm not the typical image of a librarian and so that will break someone's stereotypes for them. (Participant 3)

> What I do is I typically state to them the objective of the information management department or more specifically the team that I'm in. If I'm reaching out to them I'll introduce myself in the context of my department or if they reach out to me I will contextualize myself saying that I work on this particular team and this is what we're trying to accomplish, so you know in some cases that's been "we're trying to develop a retention schedule for this company" or "we are trying to set new processes for how we manage digital objects in SAP." So I'll introduce myself on that basis, linking back to the goals of the team and then often what I find is that I end up telling the client that I'm trained as a librarian so that—that's a statement I often give to users to give them a little bit more context about who this "PARTICIPANT NAME" is and what does she want from the person. And I've found that people are—can be quite receptive to that statement. I'm always saying "I'm also a librarian," because they—there seems to be understanding that a librarian is some-body who helps to organize and find information and get information that people need to those people in an easy way. So that's how I typically position myself in those exchanges. (Participant 7)

> And I still to this day, I still tell people that I'm a librarian. I still tell them that that's where I came from. (Participant 14)

These responses show how librarianship has become a key component in these participants professional identity. They may be working in non-library roles, but they are able to trace the influence of librarianship socialization in their professional development and link the skills, knowledge, and practices of the profession to their current professional work.

Group 2: sometimes identifying as a librarian

Those participants who choose to sometimes identify themselves as librarians and sometimes to identify themselves in some other way, such as by their actual job titles or by explaining the roles that they play in their organizations, do so based on their evaluation of which job title will best advance their position with their audience. Even though they do not always introduce themselves as librarians to others, the people in this group internally identify as librarians as well as other types of professionals (having a dual or multi-professional identity). The group who indicated that they identify using different titles depending on context, in-cluding the title of librarian, tended to be highly active in the LIS professional community through involvement in professional associations and LIS education programs:

> If I'm with an audience where being ... being identified as a librarian will help advance my message versus being an audience where the perception of librarian is you deal in books and you work in a room full of books. If I get a sense that's that person's perception of it ... no I will not identify myself as a librarian ... If I'm with somebody for whom libraries and librarians are a passé thing—depending on the environment I may try and advocate for libraries and librarians—more often than not I will not associate myself there until later once it's been more firmly entrenched and in place that I have this person's trust. (Participant 1)

I often introduce myself as a Librarian, so I think that it sort of like a bit of an icebreaker in a way. It helps people, sort of, converse with you and they ask you a little bit about library school and other things and that's interesting … I think I bring up that I'm a librarian when I'm trying to make a bit more of a personal connection with people. (Participant 5)

Librarian is a loaded word. It has huge value in the law firm context, in the academic context where it's got respect. If I'm working in the systems space, saying I'm—I have a degree in taxonomies and ontologies and information architecture—I'd rather say that then librarian, because I'm not digging myself out of a hole. Why would I put myself in a hole for some dogma reason that I want them to understand it and they're not going to? So I try not to engage in a special kind of stupid. So you craft what you're going—how you're going to describe yourself in a way the person you're talking to. So when a public library CEO says "I'm CEO of Aurora Public Library," she is crafting herself at the status with the person she's talking to rather than saying "I'm a librarian" and digging herself out of the hole with the step and fetch it book-based image of librarianship versus the power image of being the CEO of a large library system with hundreds of employees. It's—you just, you know, librarians need to understand the difference between librarian as profession, library science as a degree, your job title that implies your status, and the competencies that need to play out in certain interpersonal or team-based relationships. And those librarians who use "Librarian" as their only term are going to the cheesy restaurant and getting the three crayon—and only using a three crayon box to colour the placemat instead of having a 64 crayon box in their toolkit … like I call myself a librarian and I'm proud of my library degree, but I'm always amazed at the number of librarians who take one dainty foot out of the library and say "I'm not a librarian anymore." When an engineer becomes president of a big oil company they don't say I'm not an engineer anymore. When a doctor becomes head of a hospital, he doesn't say I'm not a doctor anymore. Why is it when librarians move into a role that's appropriate for a librarian to have that they say I'm not a librarian anymore? (Participant 8)

I generally make sure that people understand that it's a professional degree and that I bring a particular profession to bear. You know, that I'm formally trained in some particular way to think about the world. And because I'm in Silicon Valley and because most of the people that I deal with are a cross section of people who have been working on the web and web-enabled type stuff that they're fairly aware of information architecture, wire-framing, website design, all that stuff. And they know that a lot of those people have come out of the information profession, you know, where information management. They're familiar with that combination of the computer school and the library school at Berkeley and we chat about that kind of stuff. I get some leg up because of that. It has helped me in my career in the, you know, Corporate America because of the sheer weight of a Master's. And most people—most people are not interested at all in what I did as an actual librarian. Because I do have—occasionally I will talk about I did actually work in a library, and I'll say that and people will lose interest actually fairly quickly. (Participant 14)

But certainly professionally I think it's very—not only weighed in a positive way—but I want people to know that I care about libraries. It's—you know I'm in a sales institution. I don't really identify myself as a sales person, you know. Librarian—

there's a sales skill to it certainly, but that's just more of a role—and my job is to help communicate how these things can help them. So I'm quicker—much more quickly will identify myself as a librarian than a sales person. The reaction varies (LAUGHS). I try not to overplay it as well. (Participant 18)

I'll say records management and I do say librarian quite a bit, because now that I'm hiring more librarians, you know, I kind of want to promote this idea that librarian-ship is actually multi-dimensional, it's not necessarily just checking out books or circulating records. And so I think that, yeah—I think I do kind of use it pretty liberally. (Participant 19)

As these quotes illustrate, these participants consider the perceptions of the library profession held by their audiences. Deciding not to present oneself as a librarian when speaking to someone who does not value librarianship does not indicate that the participants hold librarianship, or the role of librarians, to be of less value or to be a less important identity for themselves. Participants in this group identified that the title of librarian can both be a help and a hindrance depend-ing on the audience and the message that one is attempting to communicate. In terms of influence, the participants suggested that using the title of librarian may increase likability because of the positive image of librarians as helpers, but may detract from authority because of the lower power status of the profession relative to some other professions in the workforce.

Group 3: never identifying as a librarian

There were several participants who indicated that they never identify as a librarian to others. There were two key reasons why participants in this study elected not to identify themselves as librarians. The first was because they never felt an affiliation with librarianship, and the second was that they did not feel that they would be accepted as "librarians" by the librarian community. Those who chose not to use the title of librarian found that they never internally affiliated with the role or title. They did not enter library school with the intention of gaining a "traditional library job" and either had no, or little, experience working in library settings, going in some cases directly from library school to a non-library career path. These participants went to library school because they were interested in the transferrable skills that the degree would provide and its ability to open up a range of career possibilities, not because of a particular interest in libraries:

I don't refer to myself—well I kind of say in casual conversation, I like—I love libraries or I went to library school, but I don't actually call myself a librarian. Although I recently started working part time at a physical library and that's been a huge learning curve. It's like all of a sudden, I have a library degree but I know less about working in a physical library than I do about working in tech, you know. (Participant 6)

I don't tell them I'm a librarian because that would confuse them. So I don't. I say I'm a research analyst and that confuses them even more, I think. So I just tell them that I help talent acq[uisition] people—actually some people don't even know what talent acquisition is, so then it gets really hard. (Participant 11)

No, everyone labels me as a librarian, which is very funny, but I don't necessarily—I don't label myself as a librarian. Even when I am with librarians or if I'm doing something in a librarian capacity, since I do some marketing work for, like, library vendors currently. I still feel uncomfortable—well, yeah—I guess I feel uncomfortable saying "I'm a librarian," because I'm a little worried that real librarians—REAL—I'm saying in air quotes—real librarians are going to be like "You're not a real librarian because you don't work in a library" and even when I was working as a library vendor I kind of was worried that if I said "I'm a librarian" they'd be like "No, you're a vendor" even though I have an MLIS and everything. (Participant 12)

Because I can't really say that I've ever been a librarian from that perspective ... But there was a time, you know, during the course of the program that I thought that some sort of special library or an academic library might be interesting, but it was never—I think at the time that I graduated I was more concerned about finding a job than finding a particular job. (Participant 13)

The second reason identified for not identifying as a librarian was the perceived response from the library community. Some participants who chose not to use the title of librarian elected not to do so because of how they thought other LIS graduates would respond to the statement since they did not have experience working in libraries:

I've never really identified myself as a librarian because I felt like I didn't really have the right to do that without having ever worked at a library. But I do tell people that I have the library training and the library science knowledge and experience, but I don't really call myself a librarian, because I don't feel like when I stand next to people who are working in a library environment—I feel like they have more credibility with that kind of title than I do. (Participant 16)

These was a perception among participants that librarianship as a field was divided between a perception of librarianship as a profession tied to a particular space or work environment versus librarianship as a profession tied with a set of knowledge and processes that could be separated from the physical library space (library as space versus librarianship as activity). Some participants explicitly expressed this divide in the profession to contextualize their self-labelling choices (as illustrated with the quote below), while others hinted at these competing definitions in their choice of self-labels (as in the case of the quote above from Participate 16):

I do still say that I work in a non-traditional setting because my roles have had very, very little connection to the concept of library as place. I think that's still quite a pervasive concept in librarianship—and still a relevant and important one—particularly for academic and public, because I see that the library space in those settings provides quite a critical hub for public communities or for academic communities. But I do find—in corporate, for example ... I don't find it as salient or as relevant or as pervasive, because I see that organizations simply don't have that need in order to function. They don't need library as place. They may need librarianship or information management as activities, but they're able to be disconnected from physical libraries without much impact to their bottom line. And so, that's where I draw the distinction in a way between traditional librarianship and that's where it's connected to a library space or place. And non-traditional where it still might be quite connected to librarianship as an activity, but really not at all connected to a physical space. (Participant 7)

Group 4: identifying as a non-practising or non-active librarian

Several participants indicated that even though they do strongly affiliate with the role of librarian and are proud of their LIS education and background, they hedge their use of the title librarian to "non-practising librarian" or "non-active librarian" because they do not feel that their current work roles would fall within the field of librarianship. Because they do not believe that they are practising librarianship, they do not feel comfortable using the title of librarian. When asked if they identified as a librarian, this group of participants responded:

> Absolutely. Even though I'm, you know, not really a practising librarian. And I'll tell people I'm not a practising librarian ... I still think of myself very much as a librarian and I still think I think that way. (Participant 9)

> I mean, it's sort of like being a non-practising physician (laughs), right. "I'm trained as doctor, but in fact doing X." Because let's face it, policy work is about as nebulous a profession or occupation as there is. And it certainly—I mean I consider librarianship to actually be a higher calling. (Participant 10)

> So, you know, I didn't go sort of seeking an opportunity outside of librarianship. I still feel that this job is in librarianship because basically I'm selling a library technology product using my expertise, my experience, and my connections in order to further the mission of libraries. So my professional identity is still librarian. It's still ... working in the industry. I'm just not practising. So I can't call myself a practising librarian any more. (Participant 15)

The common theme in this set of responses was the idea that librarians needed to be actively participating in library work in a library setting to use the title. The participants all retained the identity of librarians and felt that the work that they did used the skills that they developed through their LIS studies, so they still retained a "librarian identity" even if they did not feel comfortable using the librarian title.

Discussion

The decision of how to label oneself is an important aspect of professional identity. Professional identity has several important characteristics including (1) that professional identity is shared with a community; (2) that one's professional identity links one with a group of others who are working in similar environments or performing similar tasks; and (3) that professional identity is highly fluid and changes over time based on personal experiences as well as external feedback (Billot 2010; Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss 2010; Roodt and De Braine 2011; Strauser, O'Sullivan, and Wong 2010; Vernick Perdue, Reardon, and Peterson 2007; Walter 2008). The question of how LIS graduates working outside of libraries identify themselves provides an interesting case through which to explore this question because these individuals may choose from at least two professional identities: the identity of librarian for which their professional education would have socialized them or an identity associated with their substantive position or the role in the workplace that they occupy. Choosing whether or not to use the

label of "librarian" helps to expose how the profession of librarianship is understood by both LIS graduates and other societal or professional groups. Participants exhibited four response patterns when describing how they identified themselves to others in work and social situations: (1) always identifying as a librarian; (2) sometimes identifying as a librarian; (3) never identifying as a librarian; and (4) identifying as a "non-practising" or "non-active" librarian.

Bates' (1999, 1049) observation of librarianship and information science being linked, but distinct, professional fields was supported by this study in that some individuals interviewed felt a strong affiliation with librarianship and elected to introduce themselves to others in ways that reflected this field connection. This pattern was strongest with individuals in Group 1, who always identified as a librarian. Individuals who always identified as a librarian tended to make an effort to explain to others how their current roles still constitute work for librarians. They see their non-library jobs as being different ways of performing the librarian function. Those in the group who sometimes identified themselves as a librarian decided how to introduce themselves on a situation-by-situation basis based on their analysis of which title would provide the greatest benefit in their interactions with others. They were aware of both the positive and negative stereotypes of librarianship, and their choices of self-labels took these stereotypes into consideration. When interacting with individuals who ascribed negative stereotypes of librarians, they avoided this title.

There were two trends that could be observed for individuals who never introduce themselves as librarians. For some LIS graduates, the title of librarian never seemed to fit, and librarianship as a profession was not what attracted them to their LIS program. For others in this group, the perception that other members of the library profession would not accept their use of the title "librarian" prevented their use of this label. For these individuals, there was a list of criteria that had to be met to use the title of librarian, which included completion of a master's degree in LIS and a job in a library setting (or at least experience having worked in library settings in the past). There is an interesting connection between individuals in the group who never identified as a librarian because they felt that librarians working in libraries would challenge them and those in the group who identified as "non-practising" or "non-active" librarians. In both cases, their choice of title was influenced by their perceptions of how their use of the label "librarian" would be interpreted by those working in library settings. In some cases, individuals chose not to use the title of librarian at all, and, in others, they used a variation on the title of librarian to indicate that they still considered themselves to be part of this professional group but did not consider themselves to be active, current practitioners. Individuals in the group who identified themselves as "non-active" or "non-practising" librarians tended to maintain a degree of involvement in librarianship and an interest in the profession through professional reading.

The response patterns of these three groups showed the sometimes-competing influence of their emotional and intellectual attachment to librarianship as well as their perceptions of group acceptance. As a result of their work in non-library

roles, all of these individuals could be seen as potential outsiders to the library community. There was a perception among participants that librarianship is still largely seen as a profession that is practised within the context of a library. For some, the dominant concern was avoiding conflict with library-based librarians, and the use of a non-librarian or modified librarian title was used. For others, a sense of affiliation with their profession was the dominant motivating factor, and they would either use the title of librarian or avoid the title of librarian in spite of challenges received from individuals both inside and outside of the LIS profession. This applied both to individuals who used the title of librarian because they had a strong attraction to librarianship and participants who never used the title of librarian because they had never been interested in library work but, rather, had pursued a library degree because of some other aspect of the discipline or their perception that completing the degree would lead to better career prospects.

The motivations expressed by individuals in these four categories can be tied to several bodies of literature in the LIS, sociology, and psychology domains. First, there is a connection with identity manifestation literature. A theme in this literature has been the impact of negative perceptions of their group identities. Research has found that individuals adopt several strategies to reduce the negative responses associated with these stereotypes, including "[attempting] to restore positive regard by downplaying the salience of the devalued group membership (e.g., avoid stereotypical behavior) or attempting to educate and advocate on behalf of their social identity group in work contexts" (Dutton, Morgan Roberts, and Bednar 2010, 271). In addition to studying the impact of stereotypes on identities, some research has focused on whether interactions with others have reinforced or diminished one's perception of themselves as a member of an identity group. Sheldon Stryker and Peter Burke (2000, 289) write that "if the identity confirmation process is successful, the salience of the identity will be reinforced; if the process is unsuccessful, the salience of the identity is likely to diminish, perhaps considerably."

The question of how the status and stereotypes of the profession of librarianship would impact the professional identity experiences of participants in this study was also raised after a review of the existing LIS literature. These issues have been explored by several authors (Allen 2011; Chusmir 1990; Clemons 2011; Davis 2007; Fallahay Loesch 2010; Mirza and Seale 2011; Taylor et al. 2010; Peresie and Alexander 2005; Potter 2010; Van Fleet and Wallace 2002). This topic proved to be a significant topic for the participants in this study as well. The quotes from several of the participants cited above mention how the status and stereotypes of librarianship have impacted their decisions about how to introduce themselves to others. Stereotypes about librarianship were mentioned as factors in both using and avoiding the title of librarian. The decision for some LIS graduates who felt an affiliation with the profession of librarianship but either chose not to use the title of librarian or to use the modified (non-active or non-practising) title raises important questions about the boundaries of the LIS profession. There is some evidence from recently published works that the question

of the boundaries of the LIS profession is still being explored and that the work of those who are pushing the traditional boundaries of the profession either through their professional practices or research endeavours requires greater exploration (Martin 2013; Thomas and Leonard 2014). The line that is drawn by several participants in this study is based on place of work (either in a library setting or outside of a library setting).

This study serves as a compliment to work done by authors such as Deborah Hicks (2014), who explores how librarians experience and construct their professional identities. This study fills two gaps in the existing literature on librarian identity. First, it explores the perspectives of LIS graduates who do not work in librarian roles. Many of these participants retained a perspective of themselves as librarians even though many of them chose not to use the title of librarian when introducing themselves in work and social situations. Second, this study explores reasons why LIS graduates choose to use particular labels in their introductions, which ties together literature on identity, stereotypes, and professional status.

Conclusion

This study explored what titles LIS graduates in non-library roles use to identify themselves to others within and outside of the library profession. This qualitative study sought to understand not just the variety of labels that could be used by LIS graduates in non-library roles but also how these labels could be used to help express their professional identities and achieve their professional goals. This understanding contributes to the literature on professional identity and self-categorization that exists within the domains of social psychology and sociology, but it also has implications for the LIS profession. Participants exhibited four response patterns when describing how they identified themselves to others in work and social situations: (1) always identifying as a librarian; (2) sometimes identifying as a librarian; (3) never identifying as a librarian; and (4) identifying as a "non-practising" or "non-active" librarian. The three motivations observed in selecting a label were strength of affiliation with that label, perception of conflict with others inside or outside of the professional group caused by use of a given label, and the impact that the use of a label could have on the achievement of one's professional goals. These results show that LIS stereotypes and perceptions of the librarianship profession are impacting how professionals choose to introduce themselves. LIS graduates in non-library roles determine how to introduce themselves based on their perceptions of how other librarians as well as non-librarians view the title of librarian.

As a qualitative grounded theory study, this project did not attempt to capture a representative sample or achieve statistically significant results. The total number of LIS graduates employed in non-library roles was not calculated, so the number of participants required to obtain a representative sample of this population could not be established. A challenge in identifying this population is its transitory nature. People change roles, so individuals may enter and leave library and non-library roles many times throughout their careers. The sample is not statistically representative of the larger group of all individuals who complete

ALA-accredited master's degrees in LIS and work in non-library roles. This means that claims of generalizability cannot be made of the results of this study. The theory developed in this study attempts to capture participant experiences at a conceptual level so that it may be transferable to other contexts.

This project raises questions about the percentages of LIS graduates whose self-labelling practices would fall into each of the categories outlined in the discussion section. As mentioned earlier, since this was a small-scale qualitative study, this information is not currently available. Providing the number of participants in this study who identified with each group may not reflect the true mix of labelling habits that would be found in the entire LIS graduate population. Follow-up research in the form of a large-scale quantitative study would be needed to address this question. Further analysis into individual characteristics that influence self-labelling practices may also provide valuable insights into this question, which has relevance beyond the LIS community.

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