

# **Personalizing Professionalism: The Professional Identity Experiences of LIS Graduates in Non-Library Roles**

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(final draft post-refereeing)

## **Abstract**

This grounded theory project asked “how to library and information science (LIS) graduates in non-library roles experience professional identity?” This is an important question for current LIS practitioners and students because job opportunities are increasingly available in non-library work settings. There is limited research available on the professional identity experiences of LIS graduates in general and even less available on the professional experiences of LIS graduates in non-library roles. The study produced the theory of personalizing professionalism which found that individuals possess two identities which interact with each other throughout one’s career. The first is an internal appraisal of self which represents an individual’s assessment of who they “really” are as a professional. The second is an externally expressed identity, which represents who that individual presents him or herself to be. Interactions with others impact individuals’ internal appraisal of self and externally expressed identity and represent an area of potential conflict. This study contributes to the research literature on professional identity and identity formation and expression. For the LIS community, understanding how these professionals experience professional identity can help practitioners, educators, and professional associations to take advantage of a wide range of employment options.

## **Introduction**

The job market for graduates of Library and Information Science (LIS) programs is changing. “Traditional” roles in libraries and archives are reported to be disappearing while LIS programs point to a new range of opportunities for their graduates in a wide variety of roles and industry sectors. What does this transition to new types of work – including roles in different work settings and different job titles – mean for LIS graduates? What are the implications for their professional identities? What are the implications for the future of the LIS community as LIS graduates transition into roles that could once have been considered alternative, non-traditional, uncommon or unusual but may become the norm?

This research project explores these topics by asking the question of “How do library and information science (LIS) graduates in non-library roles experience professional identity?” Professional identity is the identity that an individual builds around their work or professional life. In essence it is the response to the question “Who am I as a professional?”

The professional identities of LIS graduates working outside of libraries in alternative, non-library roles have not been examined before. There is little work exploring the experiences of this population in general, leaving a large research gap. Filling this gap will benefit the LIS community by providing it with information that could assist LIS graduates attempting to transition to these types of roles, LIS educators and program administrators building courses to prepare their graduates for the employment market, and LIS professional associations attempting to connect with and meet the professional needs of the LIS community.

## **Literature Review**

Because this article reports on a grounded theory study the literature review section will be presented differently than is the case with other types of qualitative research. Theoretical sensitivity is a central methodological value in grounded theory research and as a result literature is read throughout the research process as themes become apparent through the data. This section will begin with a description of some of the literature that was explored both at the start of this project as a basis for developing the interview guide as well as literature which was read once data collection had begun and themes in participants' responses were discovered. This section therefore will read as both a literature review and discussion of themes prior to the description of the theory itself which will be outline in the next section of this article.

This study is interested in the professional identity of LIS graduates in non-traditional, unusual or uncommon roles. A professional identity is a particular type of identity that is focused on an individual's sense of self in relation to their occupation, work or professional life, i.e. it is how one thinks of oneself as a professional (Walter, 2008). This concept has been assigned numerous titles. Literature examined in this study, for example, referred to the concept as vocational identity (e.g. Vernick Perdue, Reardon & Peterson, 2007), work personality (e.g. Strauser, O'Sullivan & Wong, 2010), work or work-based identity (e.g. Roodt & De Braine, 2011), and work or work-based self-concept (e.g. Roodt & De Braine, 2011).

There are a number of definitions of professional identity available in the literature. Billot (2010) describes professional identity as "the values, beliefs and practices held in common with others of that affiliation" (p. 712). Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) argue that "contemporary definitions of professional identity seem to revolve around three themes: self-labeling as a professional, integration of skills and attitudes as a professional, and a perception of context in a professional community" (p. 21). Several key commonalities exist between many of the definitions of professional identity examined. The first and most important is that professional identity is shared with a community. That one's professional identity links one with a group of others who are working in similar environments or performing similar tasks. It serves as a cohesive element that ties members of the practitioner community together. Professional identity is also viewed as highly fluid and changing over time based of personal experiences as well as external feedback. Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) argued that feedback from others in the profession is used by new professionals in developing their own professional identity (p. 22).

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 & Lattuca, 2010; Rummens, 2001; Ibarra, 1999).

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. Sare, Bales, and Neville (2012) conducted a Grounded Theory study on new academic librarians' perceptions of the profession in order to determine how these perceptions evolve from the time students enter library school through their first 6-24 months as a practicing professional. Broadly, they defined the process of deciding upon librarianship as involving three steps: (1) Experiencing/constructing the library, (2) Exploring options, and (3) Defining self (p. 184). Like several other studies of LIS students' decisions to enter LIS programs, Sare, Bales and Neville (2012) found that the majority of the participants saw librarianship as a potential opportunity or a second career rather than a "lifelong dream" (p. 186-188). Several authors have argued that the fact that librarianship is often a second or later career for individuals is a detriment for the profession and that LIS degrees should be promoted as a "first choice" career (Clemons, 2011).

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. Susan E. Thomas and Anne E. Leonard, for example, published a paper in 2014 on “Interdisciplinary Librarians: Self-Reported non-LIS Scholarship and Creative Work” which explored this topic. The article suggested that the profession of librarianship remains strongly tied to the library-as-space and the activities associated with work within that institution:

Applied library science is work that takes place in the library: for example, cataloging, reference work, library instruction, and collection development and management. Such work is clearly librarian work. A narrow definition of library scholarship limits academic librarians’ scholarly activity to explicitly library science topics. Examples include bibliometrics, information literacy pedagogy, and evidence-based management research. Such work is published and indexed in LIS periodicals for a librarian audience. An expanded definition of library scholarship includes scholarship and creative and professional activity outside of library and information science, for the library serves the entire college or university. Here librarians may be publishing in non-LIS journals or other periodicals, producing culture rather than documenting it, collaborating with other departments in grant writing or teaching of non-LIS topics, and performing professional work. Part of expanding the definition of library scholarship and work is about meeting the needs of the institution rather than just the library system. (Thomas & Leonard, 2014, p. 548)

They reported that even locating work by librarians that was published in non-LIS publications or presented in other disciplinary venues was a challenge:

Because there is no systematic way to determine academic librarians’ publications outside of library science, the authors chose to focus on library literature that specified and interpreted the types of scholarship and creative work produced by academic librarians. Several articles are notable as they at least briefly discuss the issue of librarians publishing in non-LIS publications. It is unclear whether or not there is a trend in regards to such publishing.” (Thomas & Leonard, 2014, p. 549)

This suggests that additional work may be needed to present additional ways of thinking about librarianship or presenting ideas from librarianship to other disciplines and vice versa may still be needed. Presenting current LIS students with different models about how and where to work and publish may help to attract a broader range of individuals into the profession who could introduce new ideas to librarianship which could contribute to innovations to both LIS practice and research.

There is some evidence from the articles available on the LIS profession that an expansion of practice and research outside of the traditional arena of library-based librarianship is seen as a threat to librarians’ professional identities. Elaine R. Martin wrote an editorial for the *Journal of eScience Librarianship* entitled “Re-thinking our professional identity in light of new responsibilities” in which she discussed postings and debates among practicing librarians about the impact of embedded librarianship on librarian identity:

Recent discussion in blog posts and webinars suggest concerns that embedded librarians, as they steadily move outside the library and into research teams, may be neither “fish nor fowl.” Is the embedded librarian’s professional identity allied with the library or with the team? What are the potential effects of such role modifications? Will the embedded

librarian somehow achieve more autonomy over their time and work if they are identified more closely with their research team than with their home library? Do you need a library to be a librarian? Where is the professional home for the embedded librarian? (Martin, 2013, p. 1)

The lack of research into the professional identities of LIS graduates working in non-traditional roles may contribute to this concern among practitioners who have never seen their identities expressed in contexts outside of the library. This study, particularly the data shared in “Chapter 4: The Participants”, may serve as evidence for some members of the LIS community that one can still be a librarian or retain the values of librarianship while working outside of a library.

This study demonstrated that some LIS graduates choose to pursue careers outside of library settings because they see in these roles as opportunities to help and influence the library community. Two participants, one working at an open-source software company and another who owns her own business, both describe the ability to help libraries as a factor that impacted their decisions to join and start their respective businesses: “I love what I’m doing now. It’s nice to be able to help all those libraries, save them money or whichever position I’m doing for them. I really like working with a broad variety of people” (Participant 3). LIS graduates who work in “alternative” careers are therefore not necessarily people who dislike libraries or have rejected librarianship, but who are reimagining ways to be a librarian.

The first socialization topic discussed in LIS literature is students’ motivations for entering LIS programs (Ho et al, 2016; Walker & Calvert, 2014; Hazeri, Martin & Sarrafzadeah, 2009; Scherdin & Beaubin, 1995). The participants in this study expressed reasons for choosing to attend library school that fit with the findings of other researchers who have asked this question. The vast majority of participants in this study decided to enter library school after the completion of at least one post-secondary degree (only one participant in the study decided to become a librarian in childhood). Their main reason for wanting to pursue a degree in library and information science was the desire to pursue a more fulfilling career.

A second topic of interest for this study was the issue of career paths and career planning. In particular the question of whether participants had pursued LIS degrees with the intention of pursuing a particular type of job or whether they were open to any job opportunities that were presented. Participants in this study followed both paths to non-library careers. For some, the decision to work outside of a library setting was deliberate:

It was really the idea of what better way to be able to learn all markets and how technologies affecting them than to go work for a vendor. So I really thought for a short term plan is I’d go work on the vendor side of things and then on a personal note just kind of decided which kind of library system fit my personality best, which library type really fit my personality best. (Participant 18)

For other participants, the decision to enter non-library roles was not planned but occurred as a result of opportunities that arose over the course of their career. A quote from the interviewer is provided below:

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. (Participant 15)

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 a number of authors (Mirza & Seale, 2011; Clemons, 2011; Taylor, Perry, Barton & Spence, 2010; Fallahay Loesch, 2010; Potter, 2009; Davis, 2007; Peresie & Alexander, 2005; Van Fleet & Wallace, 2002; Chusmir, 1990; Gallen, 1984). 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 impact their decisions about how to introduce themselves to others. Perceptions of profession were included in the theory developed in this study because of the impact that these perceptions, including stereotypes, have on how people present themselves to others.

Some of the topics raised in the literature on professions and professionalism, such as the power or status of a profession (Krejsler, 2005) and to a certain extent the question of what constitutes the specialized body of knowledge of the profession (Alsbury, 2010; Krejsler, 2005; Adams, 2010; Bates, 2012; Gerhold, 1974; McGrath Morris, 2008) as articulated through participants' ideas concerning the core curriculum of LIS programs, were raised by a few of the participants in this study. Several participants expressed concern about not being accepted as librarians by librarians working in library settings. This reject (of fear of reject) was based on current work role even though the participants (with the exception of Participant 4 who was in the process of completing her MLIS degree) had already met the entry criteria required to join the profession and should therefore be able to use the professional title. A few of the participants did remark on attitudes the library workers with MLIS degrees toward library workers without master's level certifications. Overall, however, this literature did not feature very strongly in the theory developed in this project because it did not reflect the main concerns expressed by participants.

## **Methodology**

This article presents a theory of professionalism which was developed in a grounded theory study concerning the professional identity experiences of library and information science (LIS) graduates in non-library roles. Grounded theory is an inductive research methodology that was designed to produce a new theory which is "grounded" in data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser 1978; Glaser 1998). 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 were found in any of their coding categories (Glaser 2001; Glaser 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.

The participants in this study were 20 professionals with Master's degrees in library and information science working outside of libraries. 19 of the 20 participants received their degrees from ALA-accredited library schools in North America and all of the participants work 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. They were employed in a variety of industry sectors including government, oil and gas, information and communication technology, and retail. The majority of the participants had some library work experience in either public, special, or academic library settings. Their experience levels ranged from new professionals to those with 30 years of post-MLIS experience.

Two types of sampling were utilized 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 utilized 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 (see for example Schreiner & Pope, 2011; Stronski, 2004; Sinotte, 2004; Scherdin & Beaubien, 1995) 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 & Waldorf, 1981, p. 145). The snowball process was initiated through personal contacts of the researcher and research supervisors. Additionally, interviewees were asked to recommend future participants.

The data collection technique employed in this project is semi-structured interviews. 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 weren't interrupted during this narrative. The second section of the interview consisted follow-up questions in response to comments that participants made during the first second. 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 themselves.

### **Theory of Personalizing Professionalism**

The objective of this study was to produce a theory which would capture the professional identity experiences of LIS graduates in non-library roles. The theory produced was labelled the theory of Personalizing Professionalism. According to this theory, individuals possess two identities which interact with each other throughout one's career. The first is an internal appraisal of self which represents an individual's assessment of who they "really" are as a professional. The second is an externally expressed identity, which represents who that individual presents him or herself to be. The internal appraisal of self is developed as a result of several processes and concepts including socialization into the profession, interactions with others, perceptions of the profession, and an understanding of one's motivations and interests. The externally expressed identity represents the ways in which individuals present themselves to others in order to achieve professional or personal goals. These expressions include the labels that are used when introducing oneself to others and the strategies that one develops to find one's path within the profession such as identifying success strategies. Interactions with others impact individuals' internal appraisal of self and externally expressed identity and represent an area of potential conflict when others' views of how a professional identity should be expressed do not match the identity that one has developed for oneself or is displaying to others. There are multiple strategies that can be undertaken to respond to a perceived conflict between these two identities which can be grouped into three categories: (1) Assimilation, in which participants change themselves in order to fit into the communities with whom they wish to engage, (2) influencing or attempting to change the perceptions or beliefs of the group, and (3) withdrawal, in which individuals elect only to associate with communities of likeminded individuals and to avoid those who do not share their perceptions of the profession.

The internal appraisal of self is one's perception of who they "really" are. It may include an identity that they feel that they have already achieved or an identity that they are working toward or are becoming. One's internal identity may also be linked to a role that they occupied in the past. The internal appraisal of self will also incorporate an individual's motivations, interests, and values. It also includes one's perceptions of their skills and competencies. The communities with whom one chooses to associate can be an indicator of their internal identity.

Socialization into the librarianship profession was a major topic in the LIS body of literature. This literature raised several questions about the socialization process for LIS graduates who entered non-

library roles. These questions included participants' motivations for entering library school and the impact of mentors in their professional development. Discussions concerning participants' reasons for electing to attend library school were similar to those discussed in other studies, including the fact that most participants decided to attend library school was usually made during or after the completion of an undergraduate degree. The topic of mentorship was raised by many participants. These mentors included people inside and outside the library profession and they played a variety of functions including specific skills training, modeling of ways to be a professional, and connections with other professionals or job opportunities. Those who valued mentorship opportunities sought them out independently. Several did note that establishing a network of contacts who can provide professional guidance and support takes time and that while they have managed to build them for their current roles they would be challenged in building new ones if they made a dramatic job change such as moving from a job in the tech sector to a job in a library.

Socialization teaches a person how to be a member of a profession. Observations of how other members of the profession behave and are perceived or treated by others forms the other half of one's perception of the profession. In some respects, socialization provides individuals with an idea of how the profession should function while an individual's perceptions of the profession outline how they believe the profession is functioning. In some cases the perception of the profession will match what they have discovered in the socialization process. In others, it will reveal surprises or even frustrations. For example, individuals may believe as a result of their socialization that the profession should take a certain stance on a given subject – such as a certain role with regards to technology – but may find that that role is not being fulfilled in accordance with their expectations in practice. They will develop theories as to why this is occurring which may include ideas about the way other members of their profession behave or ways in which people outside of the profession respond to members of the profession. This perception of the profession will impact the ways in which individuals choose to interact with those inside and outside of the profession and will be a major component of the extent to which they affiliate with others within the professional group.

The first part of the interview process used in this study involved asking participants to describe their career experiences from the time they decided to pursue a degree in library and information science to the present. This introductory question was deliberately left very open to allow participants the opportunity to frame their experiences any way they wished. Most participants simply gave a chronological account of their careers, starting with circumstances surrounding their decision to enter library school and ending with the present. A few participants, however, reflected on their careers and searched for an underlying theme that summarized and explained the choices they made throughout their careers.

These themes or interests served a vital role in their career decision making processes. The particular motivating issue or theme identified by participants differed. Several of these motivators included community development, connecting people with information, information management, knowledge management, the role of technology in information access and education, privacy and information security, marketing, and customer service. These motivators impacted a range of participant decisions including which classes or areas of specialization to take during library school, what job opportunities to pursue, what topics to research as doctoral students, and even what types of business models to use as entrepreneurs. The interviews suggested that the degree to which participants are able to connect the work they are doing to their motivations, the more satisfying they tended to find the role. The ways in which participants viewed the LIS programs' content and their decision to pursue a degree in library and information science related back to the ways in which they connected what they learned in the program with their own skills, knowledge, values and interests.

As suggested in the sections above the process of developing an internal appraisal of one's self which includes a perception of both who one is at present and who one wants to be as a professional in the future is shaped through interactions with others. These interactions are with a wide range of people including classmates, colleagues, supervisors, mentors, family members, friends, and others who one encounters in social or work settings. The types of reactions that people receive from others can result in changes to either their internal appraisal of self or their externally presented self.

Over the course of their careers people develop an increasingly personalized professional identity. Those who develop a professional identity or definition of the profession that challenges the professional norm may experience conflict with their professional community. There are multiple strategies that can be undertaken to respond to a perceived or real conflict between individuals and their professional community: (1) Assimilation, in which participants change themselves in order to fit into the communities with whom they wish to engage, (2) influencing or attempting to change the perceptions or beliefs of the group, and (3) withdrawal, in which individuals elect only to associate with communities of likeminded individuals and to avoid those who do not share their perceptions of the profession.

The externally expressed identity is the identity that one presents to others. It can be presented in a variety of ways. The first is through the labels that one uses to introduce oneself. Another way is through the skills and competencies that they emphasize and the ways in which they choose to communicate them.

Individuals choose how to label themselves and identify themselves to others. In this study the question of when and why participants use the title "librarian" was explored. Four options are described: always identifying as a librarian, sometimes identifying as a librarian, never identifying as a librarian, and identifying as a non-practicing or non-active 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 that they are doing outside of library setting is compatible with their definition of what it means to be 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. Participants 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. Several participants in this study 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-practicing 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 practicing librarianship, they do not feel comfortable using the title of librarian.

The literature on identity suggested that people have multiple identities that may be activated in different situations. Participants did not suggest that they took on different identities in different situations. Instead, they made decisions about how to express their identity when communicating with others. For some, the decision of how to identify oneself was based on an evaluation of what form of identification would be most likely to help participants achieve their goals in a given situation. For others, the decision was based on their assessment of whether or not they would be accepted as a member of a particular group by other group members. Participants did describe situations in which there was a mismatch between the way that they identified themselves to others and the identity that they most



strongly felt internally. Some tolerated these inconsistencies while others were willing to risk rejection in order to identify themselves according to the title that felt most personally accurate.

Finding one's path involved participants' reflections and actions aiming at identifying what they want to do and what type of professional they want to be, and the steps they undertook to realize their goals. An important developmental process for participants was identifying the key skills that they needed to be successful in the working world. Success was defined in terms of being able to compete for positions and being able to perform tasks in a given work role. The types of roles held by participants in this study differed dramatically and have included positions in government, education, publishing, information technology, retail, aerospace, and oil and gas sectors. In spite of the variety of job titles and work tasks performed by participants, the majority pointed to a single key skill from their LIS education that has made the greatest contribution to their professional lives: reference service training. Another trait that was shared by most of the participants was flexibility. This included a willingness to try out different types of tasks and work roles as well as an ability to think abstractly about their skills. The ability to appreciate the value of their own skills and to sell those skills to others was a key characteristic of many participants in this study. Realizing that their LIS education gave them skills that could be applied in settings beyond libraries served as an important first step in this process (although some participants entered library school expecting the degree to be transferable). Once a participant has realized that they can apply for a range of information-related jobs, they need the confidence to believe that they can win the competition and do the job. As one participant stated, "...it's really easy to underestimate what you know because we always tend to over-estimate what other people know" (Participant 9). The next step is to find a way to communicate their skills to others.

This theory described the interactions between two identities in the professional experience: the internal appraisal of self and the externally expressed identity. The internal appraisal of self captures who an individual perceives themselves to be as a professional and what they would like to achieve in the future (or who they would like to become). The internal appraisal of self is developed through socialization into the profession, the development of perceptions of the profession and other professionals, and an understanding of one's motivations and interests. The externally expressed identity is how one chooses to present oneself to others in order to achieve their professional goals. It is expressed through one's self-labelling practices and the strategies that they develop to find one's path through the profession. Interactions with others are an essential part of both the internal appraisal of self and the externally expressed identity as they shape both. Individuals will develop personalized success goals in order to reduce conflict that occurs between their two identities.

## **Conclusion**

This research project addressed the research question of how library and information science (LIS) graduates working outside of libraries experienced professional identity utilizing the Glaserian Grounded Theory methodology. The objective of this study was to produce a theory which would capture the professional identity experiences of LIS graduates in non-library roles. The theory produced was labelled the theory of Personalizing Professionalism. This research project asked a very broad question: "How do library and information science (LIS) graduates in non-library roles experience professional identity?" The decision to ask this very high level question was taken deliberately in an attempt to discover what aspects of professional identity constituted participants' main concern, rather than narrowing in on certain aspects of professional identity such as professional values or self-labelling which, although they would certainly have yielded interesting data, may not have provided a full idea of participants' experiences. Asking a broad question resulted in the production of a broad answer – a theory that captures many aspects of experience. This theory, which was created through an examination of qualitative data, provides some important insights into the experiences and motivations of participants in the development and expression of their professional identity. These insights, rather than serving as the

final word on the experience of this population, open the door to further questions and avenues of inquiry that could be of interest to researchers and practitioners both inside and outside of the library and information science domain.

Even in its present form, both as a new theory of professional identity experiences and taken only as a qualitative account of the experiences of participants this research project has implications for practitioner and academic communities both inside and outside of the Library and Information Science (LIS) discipline. This study sought to understand the experiences of LIS graduates working outside of library settings. Any insights on this experience are of potential use to the LIS practitioner community. For LIS educators and program administrators, this study could have implications in terms of program recruitment and content because of the increased emphasis that LIS programs are placing on the transferability of the degree or the ability for graduates to obtain jobs beyond the library world. Those interested in the recruitment of students into LIS programs could also look at the larger themes that emerged in the theory of Personalizing Professionalism and build these into their program marketing materials. Linking librarianship with some of the underlying motivations and interests of potential students may be a powerful way of attracting applicants. For example, potential students may care deeply about issues such as social justice and community development, but may not have seen the connection between librarianship and these values because their own experiences with libraries as children and young adults may have focused on the library's collection rather than the library's role or values. Library educators, researchers and associations may be interested in the identity implications of this study. Many participants described potential or actual conflicts when trying to place themselves within the LIS community. Some took on evangelical roles promoting new ways to be a librarian or new opportunities for LIS graduates, but others chose to avoid potential rejection by "real librarians" working in libraries and limited their engagement with this community. If voices that could be bringing new ideas to librarianship feel that they are being excluded because of the prevailing definition of what it means to be a librarian or a LIS professional, then there could be negative consequences for the profession in terms of loss of innovations and ideas. Another group that might be interested in the implications of this study are managers and human resources specialists both inside and outside of the library world. The theory of Personalizing Professionalism discusses the reasons behind and actions undertaken to achieve personalized career goals. This theory may inspire these individuals to rethink aspects of work such as compensation packages and learning opportunities in ways that could promote employee retention.

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