Motivations for Choosing Librarianship as a Second Career among Students at the University of British Columbia and the University of Hong Kong

1. Introduction

The pathway to a career in the library and information science (LIS) field is rarely straightforward and unidirectional, but is often multi-faceted, with interesting detours and circuitous and even scenic routes along the way. Even in our popular media and culture, for example, one seldom sees or hears a young person remark that he/she would one day aspire to become a professional librarian. With that said, where do our LIS professionals come from and at what point in their lives did they choose their intended profession in LIS? According to Heim and Hoen (1992) and Lo *et al.*, (2015), since the median age of library and information science students is mid-30s, it is clear that librarianship represents a second or even a third career for a significant number of professional librarians. As pointed out by Zemon (2002), "initial career choice is usually driven by youth dreams, personal interest, personal talents, market availability, geographic preferences, and likelihood that the career will support one's lifestyle…. Lateral and interim career choices are usually made for personal reasons (having to move, for instance) or because the current position has an unpleasant atmosphere, declining prospects, an incompatible boss... These are generally future-oriented choices tempered and driven by accumulated experience." Meanwhile, career changes might be influenced by various factors such as the desire for personal development, economic downturn and computerization (Smart & Peterson, 1997).

In the past, it was customary for people to have a single career throughout their entire working lives. In comparison, an increasing number of people are now opting for second and even third careers by the time they retire (Lambert & Newman, 2012), especially with the existence of so many job opportunities nowadays, career changes and transitioning have become very common amongst many established professions. This is simply the trend as people seek to adapt to their social and economic circumstances in an age that is driven by globalization, information and technology. Undoubtedly, prior work experiences affect their approach and choices towards their second careers. Meanwhile, Fisher, Hallam and Partridge (2006) noted that in the context of a rapidly changing profession, student motivations for entering the LIS profession have not been investigated widely or in depth.

1.1 Aims of the Study

There has been an increasing number of students pursuing LIS as a second career from many other non-LIS-related professions over the years (Lambert & Newman, 2012; Lo *et al.*, 2015; Noh, 2010). Many of these newcomers have made significant contributions to the LIS profession, as they transfer their years of professional experiences, expertise, knowledge and skills from their former careers into the field (Lambert & Newman, 2012). The purpose of this paper is to understand the perceptions and perspectives of LIS students, and the various factors that influenced these midlife graduate students to consider switching from their current occupations to LIS as a second career.

The central questions explored in this study are focused on the common themes emerging from the career paths, and stories amongst the participants who intended to enter the LIS profession, in order to reveal the factors that influenced their decisions in entering the LIS profession. That is:

1. What factors motivate these MLIS students to leave their current professions, and consider LIS as a second career?

2. How do the MLIS students reach decisions on career transition in their lives, both professionally and personally?

3. What major factors influence their decisions? Do LIS working conditions and environment influence such decisions?

This research aims at discovering common themes in the participants' experiences and perceptions, and focuses on explaining their choices and identifying important influences, thereby drawing reasonable conclusions about them. To achieve this, the following three factors were postulated, based on the *Self-determination Theory* on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), and these three expectations the basis of the current study.

Expectation (E1):   **Intrinsic factors** - the choice of LIS is a second career influenced by self-expressed values, such as: being interested in the nature of LIS work, being close to knowledge, the opportunity for intellectual development, and serve other

people.

Expectation (E2):   **Extrinsic factors** – the choice of LIS is directly and indirectly by different external environment factors, such as: working conditions of current professions; nature of LIS work, and the library as the future workplace.

Expectation (E3):   **Professional factors** – the choice of LIS is influenced by employment stability, stable earnings, room for professional development, option for feasible career change; and ability or aptitude (for example, ability to transfer current job work to future LIS work).

1.2 Value & Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the understanding of the different motivational factors of current MLIS students of varying backgrounds choosing LIS as a second career. The findings of this research are therefore expected to be of value to educators, current students, as well as professionals already practicing in the field of LIS. According to Lo *et al.* (2015), the findings of such studies may provide new insights into the effectiveness of current approaches to LIS professional education and recruitment. Furthermore, they provide future research directions regarding the motivations, education, careers and emerging job markets of LIS, and other related disciplines under the new twenty-first century globalized knowledge economy. In short, this study provides a 'snap-shot' in time of the career inspirations, needs, preferences and aspirations of a variety of current MLIS students.

2. Literature Review

Since the relevant topic is rarely studied in East Asia, we hope that this study could bring new insights to the field. In this section, we first review the literature related to motivations and career development, and then discuss the study of their impacts on the LIS culture.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in examining career decision-making amongst university students and graduates. It is anticipated that findings of such studies would be very useful for a variety of educational institutions, as it would assist them to facilitate their students to explore various career opportunities, and thereby helping them making more rational and better-informed career choices

after graduation (Hodkinson 1998).

2.1 Personalities and motivations for choosing LIS as a career

According to the *Self-Determination Theory* (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b), intrinsic motivation refers to initiating an activity for its own sake, because it is interesting and satisfying in itself, as opposed to doing an activity to obtain an external goal (extrinsic motivation) - which on the other hand refers to engaging in an activity that could lead to a separable outcome. In other words, when intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. As Ryan and Deci put it, "extrinsic motivation is argued to vary considerably in its relative autonomy, and thus can either reflect external control or true self-regulation" (2000b, p. 54). Meanwhile, the *Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments* developed by Holland (1959; 1996; 1997) suggests that people with similar personality traits tend to work together in a job, and create a work environment that fits their personality type. In this theory, there are six different categories of occupational personalities and environments, namely, (1) realistic, (2) investigative, (3) artistic, (4) social, (5) enterprising, and (6) conventional. Meanwhile, Hallam and Partridge (2005) found that love of books, love of research, and employment opportunities were the highest motivating factors. Moniarou-Papaconstantinou, Tsatsaroni, Katsis and Koulaidis (2010) also reported that love of books and reading still remain an important factor for people choosing to work in the LIS profession, together with other factors such as the working environment inside a library, and enjoyment of helping others via providing information services.

Regarding librarians' motivations in choosing a career in LIS, Houdyshell, Robles, and Hua (1999) finds that the most influential factors included opportunity to serve others, intellectual challenges and the nature of the LIS work itself. Previous library experiences were another core motivating factor for some of the respondents in choosing LIS. Interestingly, in that study only a small percentage of the respondents mentioned salary as a significant motivating factor in their choice of LIS. To the contrary, the research results indicated that librarians were dissatisfied with their professional status, salary and the repetitive duties. Still, most of the librarians stated that they would choose this profession again. When asked who influenced them to enter the LIS profession, the most-frequent replies were "public" and "academic librarians" they knew, and also their immediate family members.

Simon and Taylor (2011) use focus groups to investigate students' perceptions towards the LIS

profession and their motivations for choosing or arriving at a career in this field. Their findings indicate that motivations for attaining a qualification are a complex mix of both personal and professional aspirations. Personal aspirations were identified as finding balance between work and life/family after major life changes, as well as love of books and sense of self-worth. Meanwhile, previous library-related work experience, the value of a MLIS degree and its professional status, and career progress were identified as the professional aspirations amongst the student respondents. At the same time, many participants described their route into LIS work as 'accidental', and so the "decision made at this point may indicate that the 'accident' has transformed into a viable career path" (Simon & Taylor, 2011, p. 813). According to another study conducted by Alansari (2011) on academic, public and special librarianship, it was found almost half of the respondents reported that they just 'drifted into the profession', while other respondents chose the LIS profession because of their interest in books and reading and generally considered LIS work to be interesting and attractive.

Ard *et al.* (2006) conducted a survey of MLIS students at the University of Alabama to explore their motivations in choosing a career in LIS. They focused on students' views of the job market, and their preferred areas of LIS work after graduation. The study concluded that, for these students, the opportunity to get a job that they considered interesting was far more important than financial compensations or professional and social prestige. Other reasons for choosing LIS career included poor job market in their originally-preferred professions, need for a change, previous working experience in a library, personal interests and providing services to others. About five years later, Taylor, Perry, Barton, and Spencer (2010) conducted a follow-up study on MLIS students at the same university (University of Alabama) using the same questionnaire. In addition to confirming the findings from the Ard *et al.* (2006) study, the Taylor *et al.* (2010) results indicated a further diversity amongst the MLIS students' educational and career backgrounds, and highlighted that the 'love' for library work was also the major motivating factor amongst the students in choosing LIS. In fact, a large number of the respondents had previously worked in libraries before starting their MLIS degrees.

2.2 Second-career librarians and career movements amongst LIS professionals

Noh (2010) examined the career movement patterns amongst librarians, with a questionnaire survey on different public, academic, special and school libraries to explore various factors that influenced their career movements. Out of the total 2,179 copies of the questionnaires distributed, 614 were collected.

The findings revealed that the career with the highest retention rate was public libraries, followed by university libraries, agencies, special libraries, and school libraries. On the other hand, library automation system developers demonstrated the highest rates of career movement. Meanwhile, public libraries had the highest rate of returning to the career, and also had the highest rate of being chosen as the final career, when they were also the initial one. This was followed by university libraries, agencies, special libraries, and school libraries, and so on.

The former careers of second-career librarians may have an impact on the attitudes towards the library reference service they provide. According to a study carried out by Whitten and Nozero in Nevada in 1997, a total number of 26 second-career academic librarians were surveyed about the impact of their first careers on their perceptions towards their work in reference services. Survey results indicated that about 81% of total respondents were second-career librarians. Out of these second-career librarians, 43% came from a teaching background, and another 29% came from a business environment. Respondents of both groups indicated that their former positions influenced their awareness of and belief in customer service.

Furthermore, academic librarians with some reference responsibilities made up 90% of the second-career librarians. Deeming and Chelin (2001) investigated why people change career to become second-career librarians. They found that while some career changers "drifted" into LIS, others made an active choice influenced by a number of factors including previous career, the influence of others, for example, the nature of LIS work, different stages of life and other family circumstances. Findings of this study pointed to tensions in the LIS field, as participants who entered the LIS from other professions were mostly happy with their change and generally enjoyed the LIS profession; but at the same time they were aware of the low social status and poor image that came with being a professional librarian. de la Pena McCook (2009) also reported that school teachers often felt entering the LIS profession would enable them not only to work in traditional library environments, but also to find jobs in other non-traditional library settings such as systems librarianship, information technology (IT) specialists, webmasters, and so on.

In summary, prior studies have shown that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors would probably have impacts on a person's choice of his/her career. Therefore, we would like to further investigate to see if

both kinds of factors would affect a person's choice in taking up LIS as a second career, in a cross-national and cross-cultural comparative context.

3. **Research Methods**

3.1 Choice of method

The choice of research methods for the current study was influenced by the aims of this research. This study is intended to be exploratory and to reveal a different, richer type of data, which a questionnaire survey cannot provide. Qualitative interviews were used for illustrating the underlying reasons for an individual's actions as well as decisions. In fact, interviews are said to be the most productive data gathering technique, especially for qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). One major advantage of using the semi-structured interview questions is that it facilitates probing and ensured that crucial information is not omitted (Neuman, 2009). Furthermore, it enables participants' attitudes and opinions to be fully expressed in their own words, and allows space for a variety of, and sometimes contradictory, points of view to be aired. In addition to allowing the participants to articulate the answers based on their own understandings of our questions, such natural and free conversational interviews also enable maximum flexibility for more open, spontaneous, and instant exchanges of ideas without any preconceived expectations on the interviewers' side. More importantly, we can use a series of follow-up questions to clarify their answers, as well as to verify immediately the participants' responses and our own understandings. According to Bryman (2001), one of the strengths of qualitative interviewing is the space it creates to allow "unexpected" responses to emerge. Therefore, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was considered appropriate for the aims and setting of this study.

3.2 Data collection

The face-to-face and Skype interviews, each of approximately 45 minutes in length, conducted over a three-week period, were the main data gathering techniques used in this research. Participation in the research was, of course, entirely voluntary. Each interview contained approximately 10 questions (see Appendix for details). The interviews were conducted in semi-structured format, and were fluid in nature. All participants were asked the same set of open-ended questions, with the aim of maintaining a level of consistency amongst the data. The idea was to possibly find common threads amongst the

participants' answers. These questions dealt with the participants' own educational backgrounds, current occupational status, professional competencies, specialized areas/skills, and mostly importantly with the different factors which motivated these students to choose LIS as a possible second career. Emails were written to the respective participants for seeking permission for conducting the interviews, explaining the purpose of the study, outlining the approximate length of the interviews, and so on. Permissions were also sought for digital voice recording of the interview sessions.   Once the recorded interviews were then transcribed, relevant information revealed by individual participants was arranged in common themes. Conclusions were then drawn about the transitions amongst the participants into the LIS field.

3.3 MLIS Programmes at the University of British Columbia and Hong Kong University

At HKU, the Master of Science in Library and Information Management [MSc(LIM)] programme is administered in the Faculty of Education and is the only program in the city to offer a library and information studies program at the postgraduate level. The program is one or two years of full-time academic study or two but no more than four consecutive academic years of part-time study, requiring students to take a total of 10 modules in their studies conducted in a face-to-face mode supplemented by online learning.   At UBC, the Master's degree in Library and Information Studies (MLIS) programme is run by the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies (SLAIS) at UBC. Students at SLAIS come from all over Canada as well as other countries around the world.

3.4 Selection and recruitment

In an earlier quantitative study, we identified quite a number of interviewees at HKU and UBC who had previous careers that would normally have higher income or high social status, or offering a more promising career path when compared against LIS profession, (e.g., lawyer, engineer, banker, etc). Since LIS careers usually have slow career movements, it would be interesting to hear how and why participants had to give up a first career that already showed a lot of promise and also forget about the efforts and time invested into their first career, including their previous education before entering the MLIS programmes. We wanted to explore the reasons why they chose to given up so much (financial rewards & social status) in order to pursue a career in LIS.

Owing to the nature of the student body at UBC, it has been possible to access the opinions from a

wider, as well as a slightly more diverse range of MLIS students, that is all interviewees were immigrants who worked previously as professionals from other countries.. On the other hand, half of the HKU intake comprises part-time students, who have rich working experiences and diverse background. With our participants, some already have two graduate or more degrees while some came from a career that has nothing to do with education or information, e.g., a circus performer. So we selected some of these 'interesting' students as interview participants. Moreover, it was not the sample size per se that mattered nor even that the distribution of gender of persons within a group that was so was critical, but rather the inclusion of particular cases, and the interviewees' unique and diverse experiences (both personal and professional) that is the central focus of our current study (Creswell, 2012).

3.5 Technical Limitations

As Walden (2006) notes, participants must be able and willing to contribute, and to be comfortable discussing the topic at hand. The inevitably self-selecting nature of participants points to one of the possible limitations of this project: it is not an entirely neutral or representative section of the student populations under investigation. We might assume that those who agreed to take part in this research were particularly motivated, eager to discuss their opinions, or interested in sharing their career development. As such, they may not necessarily represent the "typical" MLIS students, but may be at one end of a spectrum of motivation. The difficulty in obtaining respondents who fit the requisite profile resulted in a very small sample size, which was however an acceptable amount for this type of study, with minimal impacts on the results. Furthermore, there are many ways to discover the motivations of individuals to choose a career path.

However, this study was based solely on qualitative interviews with individual student participants, as the research population comprised only a very small group of MLIS students enrolled at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Hong Kong (HKU). In other words, the student participants were chosen for pragmatic reasons (convenience sampling), because of the researchers' affiliation with HKU and UBC (though they are well representatives of the MLIS programs in the East Asia and North America context, respectively). Yet, both universities are Universitas 21 members and both are renowned universities offering LIS programmes in their respective regions.

Another limitation lies in the choice of the research method, that is although qualitative interviews

allowed the researchers to explore the underlying incentives for individual participants to pursue a specific opportunity, it did not provide further insights into this process on a large scale. In terms of gender ratio, five participants were males, and only one of them was female. In other words, participants were selected based on their unique and distinctive backgrounds (both personal and professional), rather than gender distribution. As a result, no attempt has been made at a gender analysis in this study.

3.6 Respondent Profile

Demographic background - according to Lo *et al.* (2015), in both Canada and Hong Kong, since it requires a graduate degree, LIS is not a profession that an individual can 'fall into' while working on a bachelor's degree by take a single class or discovering a new major. It is possible for people to accidentally discover LIS as a career while embarking on other non-LIS-related professions. In order to learn about the initial influences and motivations that influenced this decision-making process, current MLIS students were interviewed rather than the practicing LIS professionals. The six participants (three from HKU and three from UBC) were in the age range from early 30s to mid-40s. This indicates that the majority of participants are middle-aged worker, and according to the literature, they are at a crucial stage of their careers where they need to experience a sense of achievement and security in their jobs (McCormick & Barnett, 2006). Our research in this paper seeks to understand the impact of a variety of different intrinsic, extrinsic and professional factors associated with the career decision-making process. For this reason, data from different cultural, social, educational and professional contexts is obtained to enhance the validity of the study.

4. Research Results and Analysis

This section presents and analyses the data gathered from semi-structured face-to-face and Skype interviews. The main research question concerned students' perceptions towards the profession that they had embarked upon by enrolling on a graduate degree programme in LIS. One of the valuable aspects of the semi-structured interview is that it allows space for a variety of viewpoints to be aired. Themes emerged from the data include: current employment and demography; Personal/professional factors influencing participants to leave their careers; Positive attitudes influencing participants to enter LIS; Skills and knowledge transferable to future LIS work; and Library as an ideal workplace and its atmosphere.

4.1 Current employment and demography

It was also essential to explore the different social, as well as professional backgrounds amongst the participants. In order to gain a better understanding of the way people make career decisions in different cultural and social contexts, participants were asked, "What did you study for your bachelor's degree? What was the highest degree obtained before undertaking the MLIS programme? What is your current employment status?"

<Table 1 about insert here>

Table 1 summarizes their background. The data collected show that the six participants come from diverse education and professional backgrounds, ranging from the banking and finance industry to circus entertainment. They were also in different stages of their careers. The interview results also indicated that the student population at UBC is very diverse (in terms of ethnic background), having highly educated immigrants from different countries is common. As reported by Lo *et al.* (2015), ethnical/racial identity is just a few of the characteristics used to identify difference in the population in Vancouver, Canada. Interview results also indicated that LIS as a multidisciplinary profession that has the ability to absorb graduates or established professionals from a variety of fields.

4.2 Personal/professional factors influencing participants to leave their careers

Participants were asked to further identify what they perceived to be important for their career decision-making, and to describe how these factors influenced the way they made career decisions. The questions focused on the changes experienced, participants' feelings about their decision to change and their impression of the LIS profession. Table 2 summarizes the personal professional factors influencing participants to leave their careers and enter LIS.

        <Table 2 about insert here>

When asked "Why did you choose to leave your current profession?" almost all of the participants considered to leave their previous profession after they were burnt out or disappointed by their previous job. Some respondents immediately tied their desire to find a more stable job that could offer a less stressful, and yet more stable working environment.

The majority of the reasons include irregular or long working hours, get tired of the job, and intellectual

reasons. Other reasons include unsatisfactory working conditions, unstable employment, not able cope well with the employment conditions, and so on. In addition, the difficulty of balancing work and family has been found in three (HKU students) out of all six participants. One even opined that being a lawyer is the wish of his parents and not his interest.

4.3 Positive attitudes influencing participants to enter LIS

Table 3 summarizes the positive attitudes influencing participants to enter LIS. For these participants, job stability and work-life balance were thought to be the most important criteria when considering LIS as a second career. Most of them had positive experience with librarianship or felt LIS positive. Though most of the participants expected LIS-related jobs to have good remuneration and benefit, one opined that this is not a reason for his consideration.

<Table 3 about insert here>

4.4 Skills and knowledge transferable to future LIS work

Since the participants have already spent many years working in other professions, the participants were asked what kind of practical job skills they thought would be transferable to future LIS work – as a way to find out to what extent they understood the nature of library work. Table 4 summarizes the participants' anticipated contribution of their previous professional knowledge. Many of them expected that their previous domain knowledge (such as law, science, and engineering) could contribute to being a subject specialist, while professional experience (such as promotion and editorship) would benefit LIS jobs. Plus, they generally considered information research skills and professional attitudes important. Four of the six participants also believe their multi-lingual (and translation) skills are useful to LIS jobs.

<Table 4 about insert here>

4.5 Library as an ideal workplace and its atmosphere

When discussing the library, the majority of participants referred to characteristics of the environment of the atmosphere of the library as a future workplace. Several of the students spoke of the library being a 'safe haven-like' place, a comfortable spot, somewhere to learn, and spend time to enjoy. For some, it was considered a 'refuge' or even a 'sanctuary'. HKU male student AK discussed the problem of

dealing with a hostile working environment at a bank, by retreating to the sanctuary of the library. The library was more than just a place of solace.

HKU-1: "When I go to the local public libraries, I am always amazed to see how slowly people [the library staff] work. How come can they work at such a slow pace?! Because for my current job …, I am always expected to work faster and faster. On the other hand, working environment inside a library always seems so slow and peaceful… I think the quality of work will suffer when you are demanding to be handled and submitted in a rush. I would prefer a more stable live. I would like to work for an institute (preferably a library), where I can be sure WHEN I could leave work everyday."

<Table 5 about insert here>

Table 5 summarizes participants' anticipation on libraries as ideal workplace. Meanwhile, other participants also discussed the quiet and comfort library environment, and how they saw it as part of their future.

UBC-1: "I like quite environments, but that is not a top factor for me when I chose to be a librarian. It certainly helps and I will enjoy it when I have it, but my big priority was to find a good job in an area closely related to my previous career as …. Although my previous work is only tangentially related to library work, it gives some general literary knowledge."

HKU-2: "I like the library setting, because it allows me to be close to knowledge, and the working environment is comparatively more stable. In fact, this kind of quiet and resourceful (knowledge-filled) environment is one of the core reasons. In addition, I want to learn new stuff, and also don't want previous knowledge to become rusty. Library provides stable employment, those health, dental and retirement benefits are not that important to me. I just like to be close to books."

HKU-3: "I went to the library almost every other week as a child to borrow things to read, mostly fiction and history books. I think it is a combination of everything, I don't particularly enjoy enforcing the quiet rule except when it is very noisy in the library. I enjoy seeing the library as a place for students to gain access to things they want to learn about more."

Participants discussed the quiet and comfort library environment, and how they saw it as part of their future. It was evident that the interviewees used their own perceptions and understanding of the nature

and conditions of library work to assist in their decision-making process. According to the participants, the library served as a 'safe haven' from their current hectic working environment, and gave them the space, tools and endless opportunities for self-learning, as well as the satisfactions that one could derive from providing services and assistance to others. The comments also demonstrated that the participants perceived that their personality, personal interests and abilities matched with the nature and environment of LIS work.

5. Discussion

All the students were planning to enter the LIS as a second career. Midlife career moves could be difficult, and this may result in a dissatisfied middle-aged deciding to change careers completely by marketing their transferable skills to an entirely new profession. The respondents had reasonable ideas of what factors were important for their desired career. According to the researcher at UBC, although entrants to the graduate MLIS degree programme are not required to have prior work experience in the LIS field, experiences from other fields are often preferred for admission. It is evident that individuals took varied routes into the LIS field, as well as across from differing degree programmes and professional backgrounds. From this position, the decision to undertake a professional qualification in LIS could be seen as a solution for a feasible career change. This is because most second-career changers do not tend to move into drastically different professions that require lengthy new graduate or training programmes. Undoubtedly, job security brings career and financial stability. Furthermore, job security works best as a motivator when employees see a connection between job retention and their own performance.

An investigation of career decision-making amongst the MLIS students suggested that they enrolled in the course, because they had a relatively positive image of the LIS profession, their previous experiences as library users, and information obtained from their own personal observations, which investigated the reasons why students choose to enroll in an MLIS degree. Most of the participants came to the decision owing a variety of intrinsic, extrinsic and professional factors. These factors are summarized as follows (see Table 6):

> *< Table 6 about insert here >*

In fact, certain motivational factors still remain consistent, and in line with previous studies. For

example, according to the findings of another study done by Moniarou-Papacojnstantinou *et al.* (2010), that work environment, enjoying working with others and being of service are cited as influential factors. Meanwhile, Bello (1996) also remarked on several professional, external and extrinsic factors, which attract persons into the LIS field. He identified professional factors as "stability and security, satisfactory earnings, improved status, acquisition of knowledge and a higher degree" (Bello, 1996). We further discuss these three types of expectations in the following subsections.

5.1 Intrinsic expectations

As stated in the data, many respondents wished to work in a library because they liked the nature of LIS work and enjoyed the atmosphere of the library as a workplace. In addition, their personal values associated with job exert an influence on students and the decisions they make. The love of knowledge, employment stability and job security were the motivational factors for entry to the LIS profession. The researchers have a general impression that balancing between family life and work was vital amongst these students at HKU, in terms of making feasible career-change options.

Meanwhile, the desperate need for finding a better work-life balance was stated by all three HKU participants. As pointed out by Bosseau and Martin (1995), LIS could be "an accidental profession populated overwhelming by people who discovered it while detouring from some planned career." According to Zemon (2002, p. 666), "midlife career choices are a different matter. Family changes, unshiftable family obligations, burnout, restlessness, and mental fatigue all tend to drive career choices at this point. These are generally here-and-now choices."

These included how the participants perceived a match between themselves and jobs, and their perception of existing skills that could be applied to their future LIS jobs, and the extent to which family obligations influenced their career decisions. Furthermore, the library as an 'enjoyable' place was an often-mentioned influence on the career preference amongst the participants. In addition to being described as a 'safe haven-like' place, libraries were often defined as a source of tools for learning, and as comfortable, inviting/accepting locations. It is a place where the participants could envision working, because they simply enjoyed spending time in the library. In this context, the library acted as both a tool of life-long learning, as well as an escape from the pressures of society and work. In other words, the library 'protected' them, and at the same time provided a safe and comfortable space to grow

(professionally and intellectually) and learn at the same time.

The library as a source of tools for learning: according to these student respondents, libraries provide a dependable environment devoted primarily to knowledge and intellectual pursuits. As mentioned earlier, it is a place where the participants could envision working, because they enjoy spending time inside the physical library. They recognized that undertaking the MLIS programme was a feasible way to combine their love of the library with their career focus, and at the same to maintain a reasonable work-life balance. In this context, the library served as both a venue of intellectual hegemony, as well as an escape from the extremely competitive business world. In other words, it was the job nature itself, combined with the working environment inside a library that attracted these students into LIS, rather than the salary and other compensation. As highlighted by Ard *et al.* (2006, p. 241), "the profession will benefit from the inflow of intrinsically motivated people who enjoy the nature of the work, and will likely stick to the profession even if the salaries and the public image of librarians do not improve dramatically in the next few years." The motives given by career changers are many and varied, but the majority of reasons are overwhelmingly intrinsic, as most participants expressed their desire to provide services to others (Ard *et al.*, 2006). As Houdyshell *et al.* (1999) eloquently puts it, "Most people who chose to enter the profession did so primarily, because of a genuine appreciation for the pursuit of knowledge and information and for helping others to pursue the same."

Individuals are more likely to derive more satisfaction with their careers when they choose work environments that could potentially match their personalities and interests. Supportive to the *Theory of Vocational Personalities and Environments* developed by Holland (1959, 1996, 1997), the results of this study identified the impact of the relationships between personality, personal interests and the actual work environment on individuals' career aspirations, or even job satisfaction and in the longer term. For example, all student participants perceived the job characteristics inside a library played an important role in their decision to seek a career in LIS.

5.2 Extrinsic Expectations

Students perceived several other extrinsic factors as impacting on their decision. These included factors such as working conditions and environment, stable employment and other associated fringe benefits

(for example, health and retirement benefits, and so on).

As described by all three participants at HKU, the employment conditions in banking, engineering and construction industries gave them minimal amount of time to spend with family - providing them with limited control over their personal or family lives, and have therefore forced them to look for other career options. For this reason, the comparatively less competitive working environment in a library played an important role in the decisions amongst the HKU participants. Indeed Hong Kong has already been known for its high levels of employee burnout in the regions (Pownall, 2012; Ramchamdani, 2005), and job burnout remains the highest in the mid-career years. For this reason, the library as a workplace in this case was seen by the HKU participants as a safe 'haven' for having been overworked. In fact, the findings of this study are consistent with the Rhodes/Doering model (1983) with the life course perspective on career-decision making – that is intrinsic factors are linked with personal lives (family support/responsibilities), and environmental context (economic climate, geography, skill sets acquired or needed) constrain and facilitate the choice-making aspect of the job and career change process.

The most common explanation for the HKU respondents to consider a career change was closely related to various negative aspects of their current workplace, that is including unsocial working hours, unstable employment conditions, and unable to find stable employment in their original fields of studies. Apparently, for the three HKU participants, it was neither the low salary, nor the unpromising career paths that led them to consider leaving their original professions. It seems the lack of opportunity for career advancement was not the cause for the HKU participants either. Apparently, the effect on the quality of life and work-life balance were found to be important amongst the students at HKU. Results indicate that the HKU participants often found it too difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. Seemingly, burnout was as a direct result of the deprivation of work-life balance.

5.3 Professional Expectations

The results of this study indicated that motivations for attaining a qualification are a complexity of personal and professional aspirations. Since the majority of the participants were middle-aged, it indicates that they had already spent approximately about half of their working lives working in other professions. At the same time, a majority of the participants at both HKU and UBC were dissatisfied

with the status of their current professions. For these participants, it is apparent that choosing a career in LIS was a combination of both personal interests and practicality. For example, both 2 students at UBC indicated that their current careers lacked some of the opportunities for professional and intellectual growth, as well as job security that they both desired.

In this study, the participants in midlife felt unaccountably restless, dissatisfied, burnt out, unstable, or otherwise short on the job satisfaction they greatly desired. Evidently, the current paths were not the ones they wished to continue following. The findings suggest that these students perceived that the MLIS degree could provide them with qualification that would enable them to transfer some of their existing job skills, knowledge and other professional experiences to future LIS work. The results of this study indicated that LIS could be seen as a vibrant profession, and has attracted, both directly and indirectly, an interesting mix of people from various cultural, educational and professional backgrounds to enter the profession. Despite their nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, students from both HKU and UBC believed that the library's service and knowledge-based work culture, as well as its multilingual/ multicultural work environment would enable them to transfer a wide range their skills, knowledge and experiences to the future LIS operations and services.

Our findings also indicate that amongst the HKU and UBC graduates, there was potential for a rich and varied educational and occupational background within the LIS profession. This would no doubt lead to a more intellectually diverse profession. According to Lo *et al.* (2015), the former careers of second-career librarians might have an impact on the type of library work they would later pursue. The variety of the specializations and backgrounds could also reflect the rich diversity of the future LIS profession. In fact, LIS is also an interdisciplinary field, and libraries are service-oriented organizations that serve a variety of populations. In short, the great diversity amongst the UBC students would allow for a much more diverse group of LIS professionals, in terms of skills, knowledge and experience. Based on the results discussed above, we can conclude that Expectation E3 is confirmed.

Some of the respondents cited that their existing job skills and work knowledge could be useful to their future LIS work. This is not at all surprising since a librarian is much more than a facilitator to information, and diverse set of skills and experiences are needed to meet the needs of the patrons as well as the collection development in a library. Moreover, as our society is becoming increasingly information-driven due to new technologies, it is inevitable that information professionals such as librarians are required to be equipped with diverse skillsets and abilities to meet the diversity of

information needs from their users (International Telecommunication Union, 2009). Particularly for Western countries such as Canada, which become increasingly multicultural and multiethnic with dynamic immigration patterns and policies in the past ten years, the responses from midlife career-changers, correspond to an easier adaptation and transfer of their previous knowledge and a more global variety of job skills and professional knowledge from their previous and current professions to future LIS work (Braedley & Luxton, 2010).   For example, the respondents indicated that legal knowledge, multilingual abilities, research skills, information literacy, and analyzing skills could be complementary to their future work as LIS professionals.

6. Conclusion

The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of data arising from a series of interviews with students enrolled in the MLIS programmes at both HKU and UBC. Students from MLIS courses were represented over the period of academic year 2013-2014. The study examined individual participants' motivations for embarking on a path to become second-career librarians, through an investigation of their current employment status, educational backgrounds, attitudes towards, and perceptions of the LIS profession.

In the view of the objectives of the study and the data gathered, the following conclusions are drawn. All the participants selected had several years of working experiences and were settled in their respective positions in their current (non-LIS-related) professions. The results reveal that there is no such thing as a "typical aspiring librarian". Meanwhile, participants in this study described nonlinear career patterns, in which their choices reflected their values and constraints at particular points in time. Faced with unexpected events and life changes, participants provided reasons for pursuing the LIS profession that could accommodate the needs, while propelling them towards the personal and professional goals. For many MLIS students, a career in LIS was an active personal choice and interest, rather than something they stumbled upon (i.e., by chance and circumstance). As can be seen, the relationship between career interest and career decision-making is complex. Parallel to the factors as identified to the study carried out by Bello (1996), career interest appears to be influenced by different intrinsic, extrinsic and professional factors (such as work-life balance, employment stability, family commitments and self-efficacy). Finally, LIS has never been known to be a high paying occupation and people are aware of this (Lambert & Newman, 2012). Improved working conditions and environment

and employment stability were usually the commonly desired goal, it was not singled out by the majority of participants.   Finally, we found that all three Expectations E1, E2, and E3 are confirmed and supported.

Results of this study revealed that both HKU and UBC MLIS programmes attract a wide variety of students, in terms of age, geographic location, level and stage of employment, social and cultural backgrounds, as well as work and educational experiences. In spite of its limitations, this study has deepened the understanding various intrinsic, extrinsic and professional motivational factors that have caused these student participants to consider LIS as a second career. In fact, such motivational factors, which students' decision-making is based, tended to be interrelated. This qualitative study has provided a more holistic understanding of how these distinctive factors, which influenced career decision-making amongst the MLIS students at both HKU and UBC. Furthermore, this study has allowed for a broad overview of career patterns amongst a small group of 'soon-to-be' second-career librarians, while also affording a better understanding of individual personal and career stories, as well as their aspirations.

Gaining an understanding of the current MLIS students' career decision-making is important for both universities and their students, as it could provide an opportunity for the MLIS education providers to consider the implications of these findings, and use them to develop a curriculum that could better prepare students for their future LIS careers. This study may also help other MLIS students to make appropriate career decisions based on understanding the actual career decision-making process, or to assist them to recognize how the LIS profession can help them achieve their personal choices, as well as career goals.

While most of the reasons of the participants had strong practical grounds and reflect the real-world situation of their communities, their rosy views of libraries as idyllic places for contemplation and study is a bit illusory and far from the situations of libraries today. Libraries are getting more dynamic, fast-paced, uncertain, and unstable, influenced by technology evolutions, economy downturns, and changing information demands. Such misconceptions of libraries are one the most interesting discovery of this study that worth further studies. We are planning to study the gap between career expectations and realities of librarians under different library settings.

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Appendix

1. Please introduce yourself, and tell me what you studied for your bachelor's degree? Was your undergraduate degree somewhere related to Library and Information Science (LIS)?

2. What motivated you to pursue a master's degree in LIS?

3. What was the highest degree obtained before undertaking the MLIS programme? As you understand, it is common for people (especially many academic librarians in Hong Kong and Canada) to have double master's degrees.

4. What is your previous/current employment status?

5. Could you also tell me about your current family status?

6. Please describe the conditions and environment of your current or previous profession or workplace.

7. Why did you choose to leave your current profession, and consider entering the field of LIS as a second career?

8. Please describe your overall impression towards the nature of LIS work, and the library environment as your future workplace.

9. How did you develop an interest in LIS work? Why do you think becoming an LIS professional would be a feasible career change option for you?

10. What kind of working skills and professional knowledge that you currently possess, and you think could contribute to your future LIS work?

Table 1. Coding for participants' background

Theme	Coding
Diversified previous education	Bachelor degree majors: Communication Sciences, Electronic Engineering, Finance, Geography, German Literature, Law Master degree majors: Law, Literature, Publishing
Information/library related previous job	Assistant Product Distribution and Sales Support Manager at a bank, teacher librarian, publishing
Unrelated previous job	Bicycle sales associate, construction management, circus performer, electronic engineer, paralegal work
Diversified ethnical and racial identity (place lived)	Chinese (Hong Kong, mainland China, New Zealand), American (German), Uruguayan (Mexico)

Table 2 Coding for participants' problems with previous profession

Theme	Coding
Got tired of previous job	• work from Mondays to Sundays nonstop, work as long as eight hours on a Saturday, • irregular working hours, overtime, work from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm sometimes seven days straight • engineering job very demanding, project deadlines, risks of project failure • tired of construction management company • circus performer is a very physical job
Unsatisfied previous job (mainly intellectual reasons)	• not giving enough space for my intellectual growth • new (engineering) technologies could easily make old skills obsolete
Difficulties in finding a full-time job in the previous profession	• Too many lawyers, • couldn't find any full-time job • can only work part-time • rather difficult to find engineering-related jobs • don't want to do freelance work all the time
Lack of work-life balance	• Not to 'slave' myself • Don't want to leave old parents behind • spend more time on my personal and family life • a more stable life • sure when I could leave work everyday • keep my personal and professional lives separated
Not interested in previous job	• Parents' wish (lawyers make a lot of money)

Table 3 Coding for participants' positive attitude towards LIS-related jobs

Theme	Coding
Job stability	job security, comparatively more stable working hours, steady job working for a union, stable working environment, less stressful
Positive experience with librarianship	• Enjoyed the process of student librarian • just like to be close to books • borrow books from libraries often in childhood
Feel LIS positive	sense of belonging, professional image, self-esteem, creativity, always can learn more
Remuneration and benefits	good retirement and health care benefit, high salaries, stable income, retirement plans, stable income not for this factor

Table 4 Coding for participants' anticipated contribution of their previous professional knowledge

Theme	Coding
Domain / professional knowledge from previous profession	Legal knowledge for legal information industry, effectiveness of promotional programmes, staff performance analysis, benchmarking exercises, subject specialist, closely related to my previous career as an editor and translator
Information research skills	background in literature and publishing help reference services, business intelligence at a bank, data mining and data analysis, fact-finding research as an arborist, provide more holistic information to users
Multi-lingual skills	Chinese, English, French, German, Spanish (different combination not revealed to preserve anymonity)
Professional attitudes	adaptability and enthusiasm, analytical mind, problem-solving and communication skills

Table 5 Coding for participants' anticipation on libraries as ideal workplace

Theme	Coding
safe haven-like place, a comfortable spot	slow and peaceful, work at a slow pace, quiet environments, enjoy it when I have it, like being surrounded by books
somewhere to learn	allows me to be close to knowledge, gain access to things they want to learn about more, through helping patrons (external impulse) I am able to learn
spend time to enjoy	it is a combination of everything

Table 6. Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Factors versus Professional Factors

Intrinsic Motivational Factors (E1)	Extrinsic Motivational Factors (E2)	Professional Factors (E3)
Being interested in the nature of LIS work.	Free from the current competitive, stressful (for-profit) working environment.	Allows better job security, stable employment and other associated fringe benefits.
Derive enjoyment from performing LIS work, and take pleasure in helping others via providing LIS services.	Unable to find employments related to original fields of studies. Or unable to find jobs that match original career goals.	LIS work allows better opportunities for professional developments and career advancement. Comparatively speaking, offers more optimistic career path in LIS field.
Being close to knowledge, and nature of LIS work allows endless opportunities for lifelong learning and intellectual developments.	Nature of LIS work connotes stable working hours – thereby allowing better work-life balance, and family obligations to be fulfilled.	Being able to transfer existing job skills, professional knowledge, and other abilities to future LIS work.
Better work-life balance leads to satisfaction in both life and work.	Feel comfortable with, and enjoy the working environment inside a library – seeing it as a safe haven.	Nature and requirement of LIS work, facilitates feasible midlife career changes from different fields, even when current professions not directly related to LIS.