What Employers Want From Library and Information Science Professionals: A Content Analysis of Two Indeed Job Advertisements

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Introduction

Job advertisements can tell you a lot about what employers actually expect from people entering the library and information science field. A job posting is not just a list of things someone has to do. It also shows what skills an employer thinks are important, what kind of person they want working there, and sometimes what the workplace may be like. For this paper, I analyzed two real job advertisements found on Indeed. The first is for a Lead Digital Services Librarian at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia. The second is for a Metadata Systems Librarian for Non-Latin Script Resources at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026; University of Virginia, 2026).

The two jobs are different, but both show how much library work has changed because of technology. The Reynolds position focuses on digital services, electronic resources, websites, databases, information literacy, and other library technology. The University of Virginia position is more specialized and focuses on metadata, non-Latin scripts, computational methods, automation, and collaboration with library information technology staff. Both jobs also expect employees to communicate, collaborate, solve problems, and continue learning.

The purpose of this paper is to examine what these two job advertisements say about the skills employers want from library and information science professionals. My research question is: **How do these two Indeed job advertisements describe the skills expected from modern library and information science professionals, and how do those expectations compare with previous research on job advertisements and employability skills?** My main argument is that technical skills are extremely important in modern librarianship, but they are not enough by themselves. Both advertisements show that employers also want communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, and the ability to work with different types of people and technology.

The Two Job Advertisements

The first advertisement is the **Lead Digital Services Librarian at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College**. The position is a full-time professional librarian job located in Richmond, Virginia, with a maximum salary of $75,000. The Indeed advertisement describes Reynolds as a large community college serving the Richmond area and says that

the library is looking for an “innovative and tech-savvy” librarian to guide digital initiatives and improve the library's online presence (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026). The advertisement is heavily focused on technology and digital services.

The Reynolds librarian is expected to coordinate with internal and external partners to maintain access to electronic resources and support the library's online presence. The position also includes managing and troubleshooting digital resources and services, maintaining the library website, researching emerging technologies, working with databases, managing electronic resource records, and supporting online information literacy (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026). The position also includes traditional professional librarian responsibilities such as reference, instruction, collection development, liaison work, branch management, and supervision.

The qualifications show how technical this job has become. The employer wants an MLIS from an ALA-accredited program along with experience involving electronic resources and website management. The advertisement also lists web accessibility, responsive design, information architecture, content management systems, library systems, training, instructional videos, documentation, and LibGuides as relevant skills (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026). This means the person hired for this position needs to be comfortable moving between technology, library services, instruction, and management.

The second advertisement is the **Metadata Systems Librarian for Non-Latin Script Resources at the University of Virginia**. This is also a full-time professional position,

located in Charlottesville, Virginia, with an advertised salary range of $75,000 to $95,000 depending on the librarian level and experience (University of Virginia, 2026). The job is part of the Metadata and Discovery Services department and is much more specialized than the Reynolds position.

The UVA advertisement focuses on developing and improving computational and semi-automated approaches for creating and enhancing bibliographic metadata for non-Latin script resources. The librarian works with Arabic, Indic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other non-Latin scripts. The position also involves working closely with Library Information Technology professionals to design and support algorithmic workflows for transliteration, translation, normalization, and metadata processing (University of Virginia, 2026).

The job also requires knowledge of traditional library metadata standards. The advertisement mentions MARC21, RDA, authority control, OCLC Connexion, linked data, BIBFRAME, RDF, and scripting tools such as Python. The employee is also expected to communicate technical concepts to nontechnical stakeholders and participate in collaborative problem-solving (University of Virginia, 2026). This is important because it shows that even a highly technical position still requires strong interpersonal skills.

Methodology

I used content analysis to examine the two job advertisements. Content analysis is useful for this assignment because it allows the researcher to look at written material in a systematic way and identify patterns in the language being used. Lipovac and Bagić Babac

(2021) used content analysis to examine approximately 16,000 online job advertisements and identify the skills employers were requesting across different professions. Their study also used algorithmic methods to collect, organize, and process large amounts of job-advertisement information.

My analysis is much smaller because I am examining only two advertisements. I read both job postings and organized their content into categories. The categories I looked for included technical skills, education, professional experience, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, adaptability, user service, and workplace culture. I also looked at the verbs used to describe job duties because the wording of an advertisement can show what an employer expects an employee to actually do.

For example, the Reynolds advertisement repeatedly uses action-oriented language involving managing, coordinating, maintaining, researching, supporting, and developing (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026). The UVA advertisement uses similar action-oriented language involving developing, implementing, maintaining, collaborating, designing, supporting, and communicating (University of Virginia, 2026). This tells me that neither position is designed for someone who is expected to simply follow instructions. Both employers want employees who can actively work on problems and improve systems.

This approach also connects with Choi and Rasmussen's (2009) analysis of digital librarian job advertisements. Their research examined advertisements for digital library positions and found that technological knowledge, digital information management, metadata, and

management skills were important qualifications. Looking at the two advertisements in this paper using similar categories makes it easier to compare current job expectations with previous research.

Findings: Technical Skills

The first major finding is that technical skills are a large part of both advertisements. This is especially obvious in the Reynolds position. The employer wants someone who can work with websites, databases, electronic resources, library systems, web accessibility, content management systems, and emerging technologies. This is much broader than the traditional image of a librarian primarily working with physical books.

The UVA position takes the technical side even further. The employee is expected to work with metadata systems, algorithms, computational approaches, automation, multilingual resources, and scripting tools. Python is specifically mentioned as an example of a scripting tool that may be used to process and analyze metadata (University of Virginia, 2026). The employee also has to understand standards such as MARC21 and RDA while being able to work with newer approaches such as linked data and BIBFRAME.

This supports the findings of Choi and Rasmussen (2009), who found that digital librarian positions increasingly required technological skills and experience with digital information and metadata. Their research showed that the digital librarian was becoming an important emerging position in academic libraries. The Reynolds and UVA advertisements show that

this trend has continued. Technology is not a separate part of library work anymore. It is built into many professional library positions.

Yang et al. (2016) also found that the library job market was increasingly influenced by technological change and that problem-solving and customer service were becoming more important. The two advertisements in this paper show the same general trend. Employers want technical employees, but they also want those employees to use technology to solve problems and improve services.

Findings: Soft Skills

Technical skills were not the only important category I found. Both advertisements also show a lot of soft skills, even when the advertisements do not directly call them “soft skills.”

The Reynolds position requires the librarian to coordinate with internal and external partners, provide training, support information literacy, and work with library users. That means the employee needs communication skills and the ability to work with other people. The person cannot just know how the technology works. They also need to explain it and help other people use it.

The UVA advertisement makes the same point in a different way. It specifically says the employee should be able to communicate technical concepts to nontechnical stakeholders and participate in collaborative problem-solving (University of Virginia, 2026). This is important because metadata systems and automation can become complicated

very quickly. An employee who understands the technology but cannot communicate with coworkers would have a much harder time being successful in this position.

Lipovac and Bagić Babac (2021) found that communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and other employability skills were important across the job advertisements they studied. My two advertisements support that finding. Even though both positions require specialized technical knowledge, the employers still expect the employees to work with people.

Welsh (2021) also examined soft skills in library job advertisements and found that these skills are an important part of what libraries ask for when hiring professionals. This is important for my analysis because it shows that the soft skills appearing in these two advertisements are not random. They are part of a larger pattern in library hiring.

Job Duties and the Language Employers Use

Another thing I noticed was how much the advertisements focus on duties and qualifications. The Reynolds advertisement uses a lot of action words that make the job sound busy and task-oriented. The employee is expected to manage, coordinate, maintain, research, support, and develop different services and resources (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026).

The UVA advertisement has the same basic structure but uses more specialized technical vocabulary. Words such as metadata, computational, semi-automated, bibliographic,

algorithmic, transliteration, normalization, and scripting make it obvious that the employer wants a person with a specialized background.

The verbs are also important. Both advertisements use verbs that make the employee sound like an active problem-solver. They are not simply told to “know” technology. They are expected to develop systems, implement solutions, maintain workflows, collaborate with other professionals, and improve services. That suggests that employers want initiative instead of just basic knowledge.

Yang et al. (2023) found that library job requirements have changed over time, including increased attention to experience, service, and continuous learning. That idea fits these two advertisements. Both jobs require professional education, but they also expect people to keep learning as technology changes.

Branding and Workplace Culture

The advertisements also communicate something about the organizations themselves. However, I noticed that both spend much more time explaining what the employee will do than explaining why the person should want to work there.

The Reynolds advertisement describes the college as committed to diversity and cultural competency and says that the organization invests in its faculty and staff. That gives applicants some information about the values of the organization (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 2026). However, most of the advertisement is still focused on duties and qualifications.

The UVA advertisement gives more direct information about workplace culture. It describes a culture based on mutual respect, civility, cooperation, mindfulness, accountability, and acceptance of individual differences. It also emphasizes employees working together and creating a workplace where people can thrive (University of Virginia, 2026).

To me, the Reynolds position sounds more fast-paced because the employee has so many different responsibilities. The person is dealing with digital resources, websites, databases, instruction, reference, collection development, and management. I could imagine someone in that job constantly switching between technical issues and helping library users.

The UVA job gives me a different impression. It sounds more specialized and focused. I would imagine the employee spending more time working with metadata, software, algorithms, IT staff, and quality control. It seems like a job where being patient and paying attention to details would be very important.

Comparison of the Two Advertisements

The biggest similarity between the advertisements is that both show how broad modern librarianship has become. Neither job is just about books. Both require employees to work with technology, information systems, users, and other professionals.

The biggest difference is specialization. Reynolds is looking for someone who can manage a wide variety of digital library services while also doing traditional librarian

responsibilities. UVA is looking for someone with a much more specific background in metadata, multilingual resources, automation, and computational systems.

The soft skills are also slightly different. Reynolds places more emphasis on user support, instruction, training, and general coordination. UVA places more emphasis on cross-functional collaboration, technical communication, and working with IT professionals.

Even with those differences, both jobs support the same overall idea: modern librarians need both hard and soft skills. Knowing how to manage a database or metadata system is important, but the employee also needs to communicate, collaborate, solve problems, and adapt to changes.

Gold and Grotti (2013) found that collaboration, instructional design, leadership, and subject expertise were important skills in academic library job advertisements. Those findings appear in my two advertisements as well. Reynolds involves instruction and training, while both positions require collaboration and specialized knowledge.

What These Findings Mean for Me

Looking at these advertisements also made me think about what I already bring to this type of job. One hard skill I have is my library science education. A lot of what I am learning connects to these positions, especially information organization, research, information services, and understanding how people interact with information.

I also have basic IT knowledge and training. I would not say that I am already an expert in systems such as Alma, Primo, advanced metadata automation, or Python. However, I have

enough basic technology knowledge to understand why these skills matter and to continue building them.

One of my other strengths is my art background. That might not seem directly connected to library technology, but I think it helps with attention to detail and visual communication. The Reynolds position includes website management, instructional materials, and online information. Having an eye for design could help when thinking about how information is presented to users.

The biggest areas I would need to improve are the specialized technical skills. The UVA advertisement makes that especially obvious. Someone interested in a position like that would need more experience with metadata standards, cataloging, automation, scripting, and computational approaches. Those are areas I could continue developing through school, training, and hands-on experience.

The soft skills are just as important. Both advertisements make it clear that I would need to communicate with users and coworkers, work on teams, solve problems, and continue learning. Those are skills I can develop alongside my technical knowledge.

Conclusion

After analyzing these two Indeed job advertisements, I think the biggest thing they show is that being a librarian today requires much more than knowing how to manage a traditional library collection. The Lead Digital Services Librarian position at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College focuses on digital resources, websites, databases, emerging

technologies, instruction, and user services. The Metadata Systems Librarian position at the University of Virginia goes even further into metadata, computational systems, non-Latin scripts, automation, and collaboration with IT professionals.

The findings from these advertisements also connect with previous research. Choi and Rasmussen (2009) found that digital librarian positions increasingly required technological knowledge, digital information management, and metadata skills. Gold and Grotti (2013) found that collaboration, instructional design, leadership, and subject expertise were important in academic librarian advertisements. Yang et al. (2016) found growing importance for problem-solving and customer service, while Yang et al. (2023) found that experience, service, and continuous learning have become increasingly important in librarian job advertisements. Lipovac and Bagić Babac (2021) found that communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and other employability skills were important across a much larger sample of job advertisements. Welsh (2021) also demonstrated the importance of soft skills in library-related job postings.

Overall, these two advertisements show that technical skills and soft skills work together. A librarian can know how to manage a database, create metadata, or work with a website, but they still need to communicate with people and work through problems. That is probably the biggest thing I took from analyzing these advertisements. Modern library and information science jobs are becoming more technical, but they are still people-oriented jobs. The strongest candidate is probably going to be someone who can do both.

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