

2B—THE CHANGING NATURE OF LIS EDUCATION #2

Addressing the Elephant in the Room: An Examination of Soft Skills in Academic Librarianship

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Soft skills take up significant space in our internal understanding of library work, but are largely ignored in training and education, and are undiscussed in the workplace. As academic librarians embrace a critical perspective considering how issues of privilege and social justice influence library practices and services, that work is also fueled by soft skills such as critical thinking, empathy, and communication sensitivity. This research study examines interview data from 24 academic librarians' self-reported soft skills and how they employ those skills in the workplace. Initial findings indicate participants felt strongly that soft skills were essential to succeeding at work, but struggled to name discrete skills. Participants believed that soft skills were valued by their organizations, but in only a few cases could they point to direct evidence of that belief. This suggests a disconnect between explicit and tacit job expectations which should be addressed in library workplaces.