

The Evolving Responsibilities, Roles and Competencies of East Asian Studies Librarians

A Content Analysis of Job Postings from 2008-2019

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ABSTRACT

This study examines job postings for East Asian studies librarians to investigate changes and identify trends in the profession. A collection of 62 job postings from academic libraries in the U.S. and Canada in 2008-2019 was analyzed to identify characteristics and changes in the job responsibilities and qualifications. The findings demonstrate that major responsibilities for East Asian studies librarians have expanded to include collection development, reference & research assistance, instruction, liaison work and outreach. Relation building and collaboration are emerging roles for East Asian studies librarians. The study also reveals that skills and abilities have been progressively required more than knowledge and experience for East Asian studies librarian positions. In addition, top frequently required abilities and skills are generic and behavioral. The results of this research are of practical relevance to subject specialists in other subject areas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What job responsibilities have been assigned to East Asian studies librarians from 2008-2019?
- What knowledge, experience, skills and abilities have academic libraries been seeking from East Asian studies librarians over the decade?
- What would be the trends for East Asian studies librarian roles in the new digital age?

METHODOLOGY

Definition

East Asian studies librarian is defined as a subject specialist librarian who has East Asian studies as a subject responsibility.

“Subject specialist” and “East Asian studies” are the two key factors that set the scope of this study.

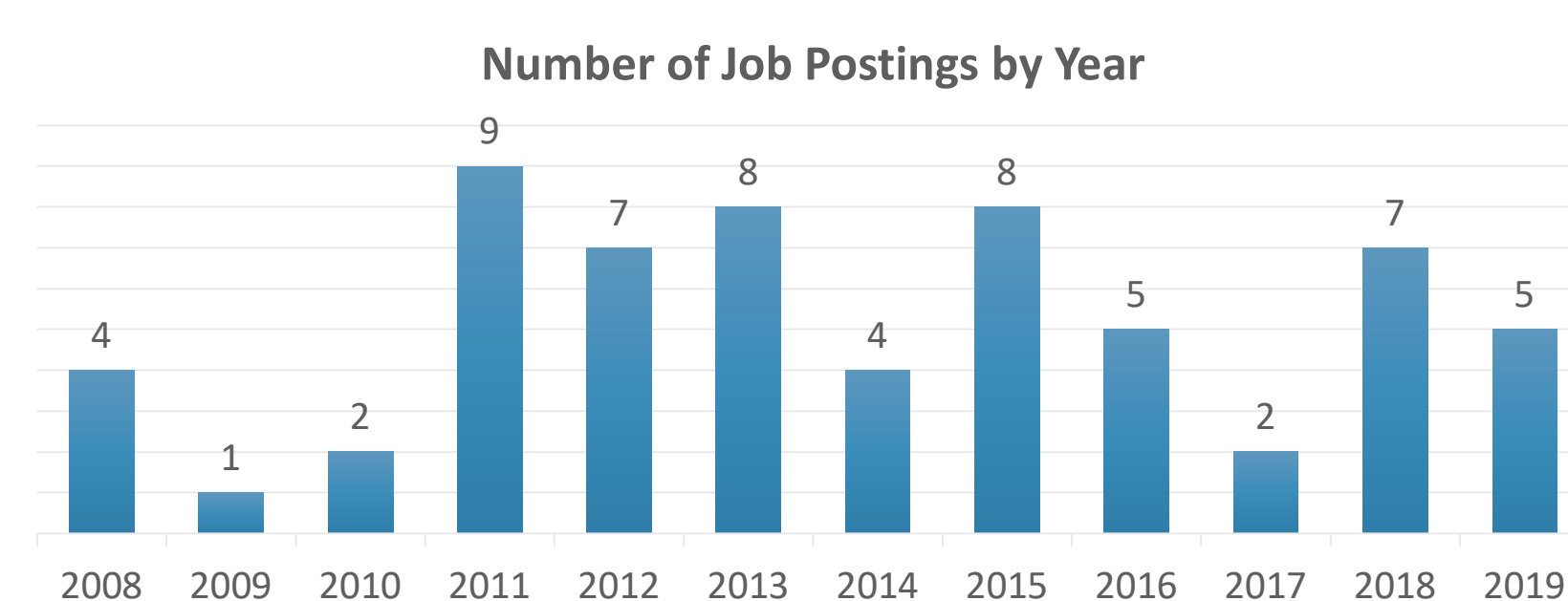
Data Collection

The job postings were primarily acquired from two sources:

- Council on East Asian Libraries’ jobs blog
- Archive of Eastlib, the East Asian studies librarians’ email list

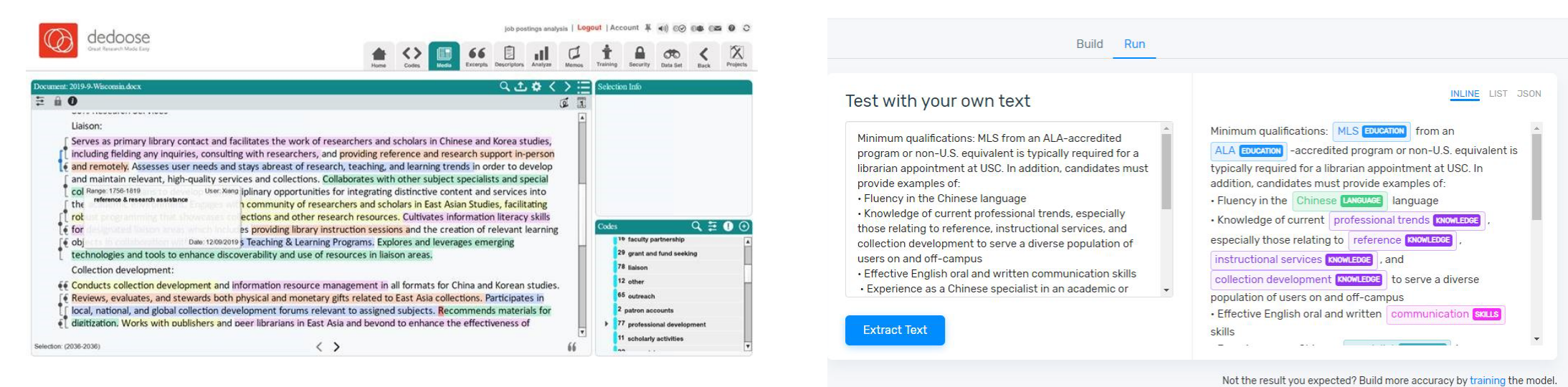
The study eliminated job postings for temporary, part-time, and re-opened positions.

A total of 62 full text of job postings were retrieved.



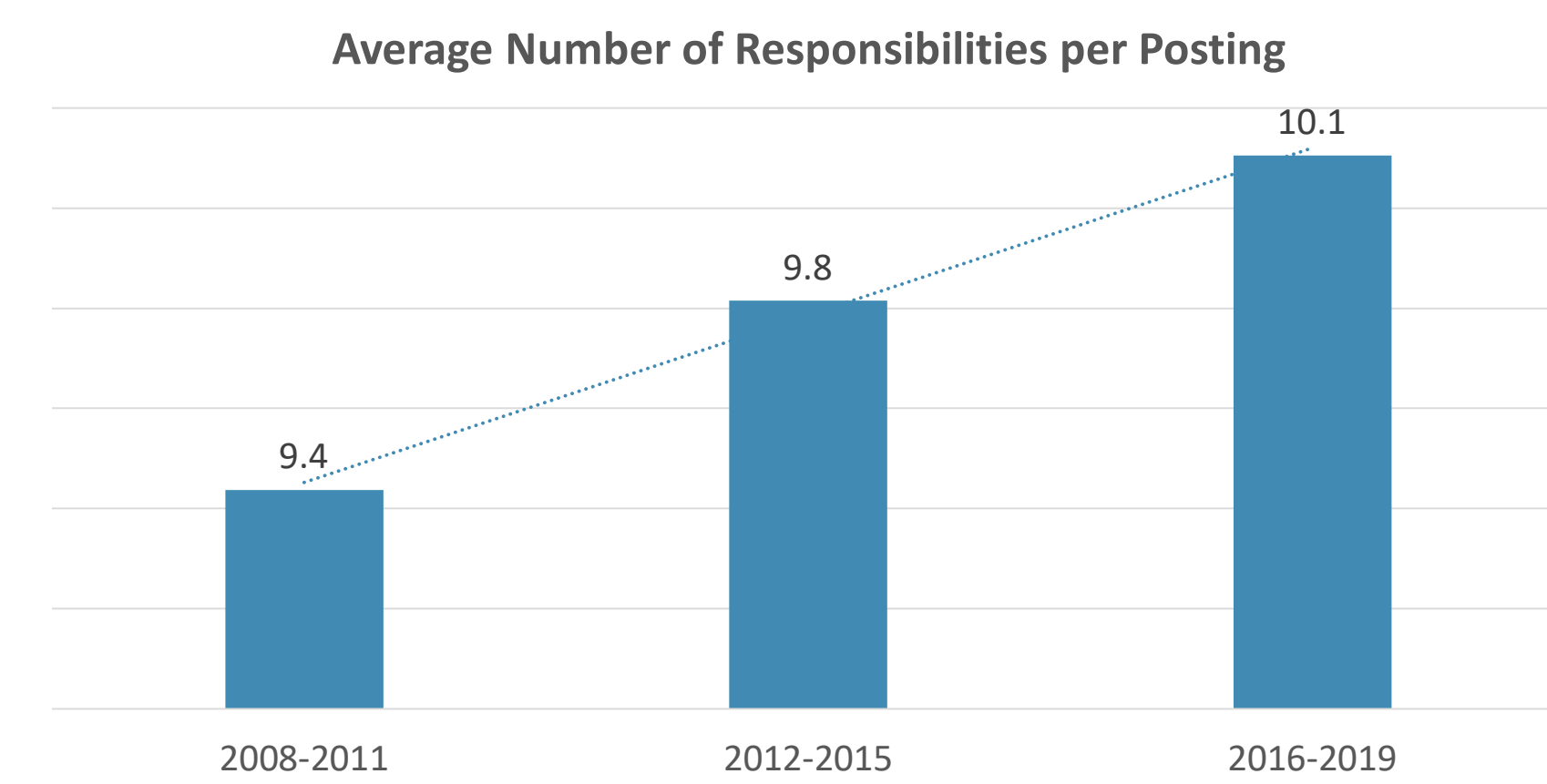
Data Analysis

- Job descriptions: Human coding
- Qualifications: Machine learning



FINDINGS: RESPONSIBILITIES

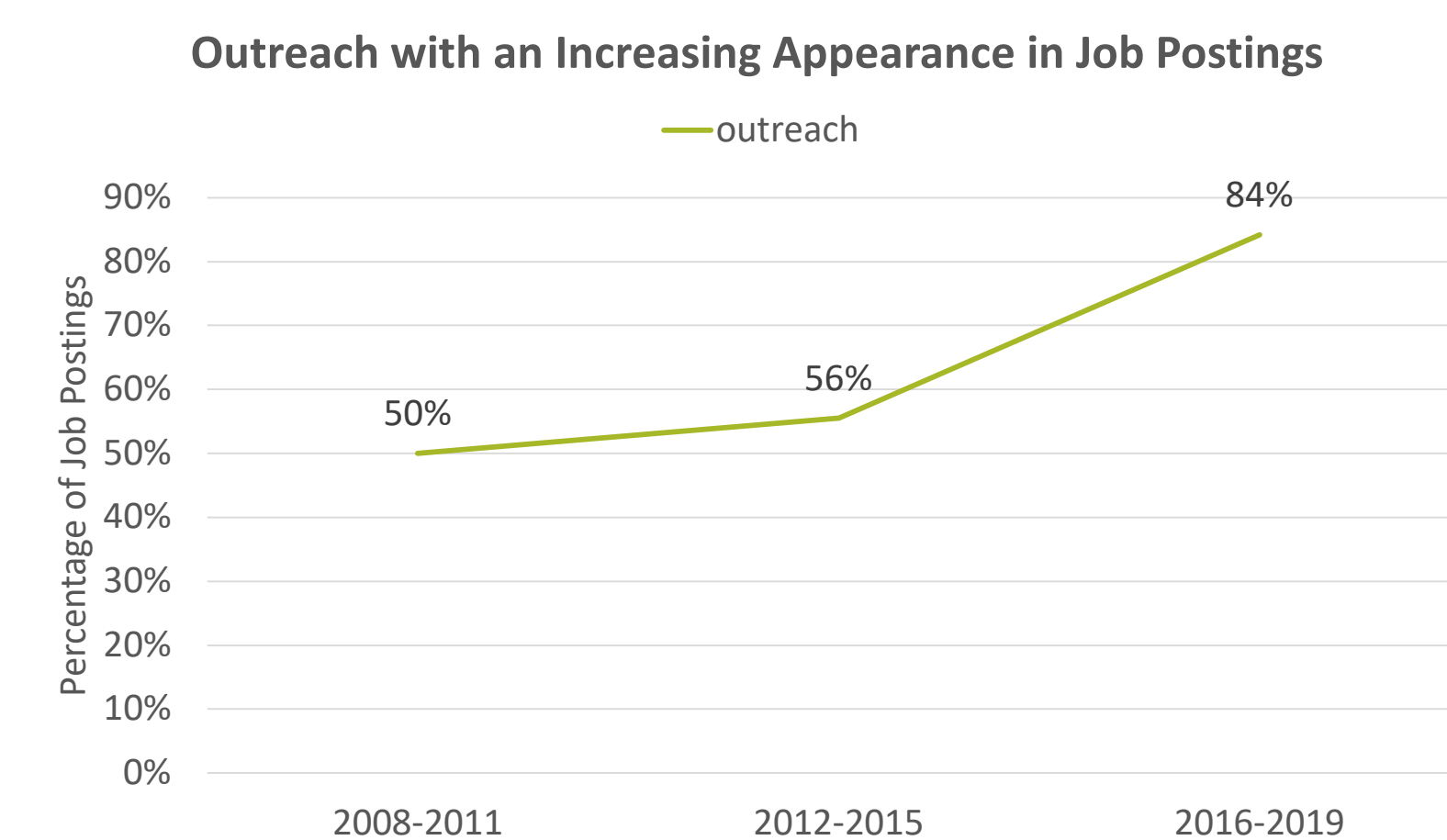
- East Asian studies librarians have been gradually taking on an increasing number of job responsibilities over the decade.



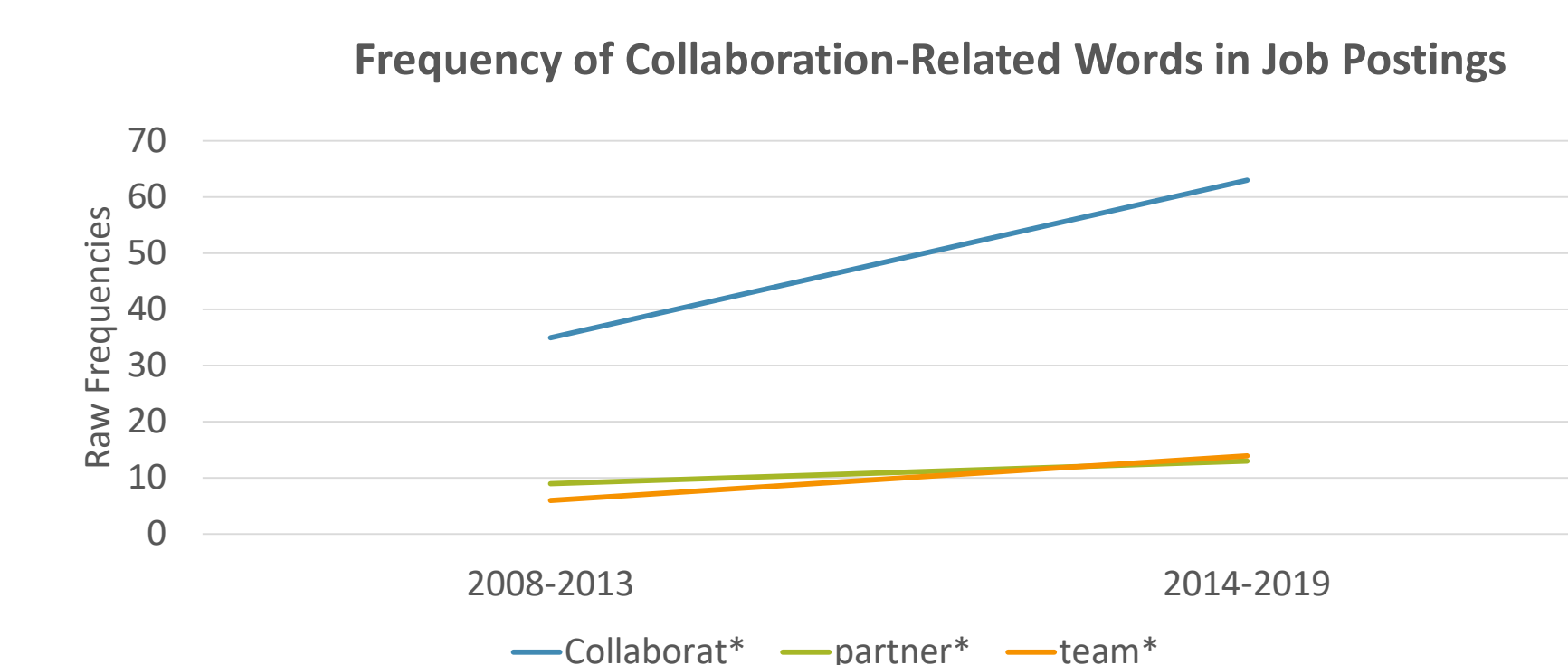
- Major job responsibilities are collection development, reference & research assistance, instruction, liaison work, and outreach.

Job Responsibilities	Number of Postings	Percentage of Postings
developing collections	62	100%
reference & research assistance	57	92%
instruction	54	87%
collaborating with library colleagues	53	85%
liaison work	48	77%
professional development	42	68%
managing collections	41	66%
outreach	39	63%
developing guides	34	55%
managing budget	32	52%
committee, taskforce	26	42%
cataloging	25	40%
grant writing	23	37%
collection analysis	18	29%
supervising	17	27%
information needs assessment	16	26%
donor relations, gift and exchange	16	26%
collection planning and policy	15	24%
vendor relations	15	24%

- Outreach has become more integrated in the job description since 2012, which comprises 39 postings (63%) and was especially emphasized in 84% of job advertisements from 2016 to 2019.



- Relation building and collaboration are emerging roles for East Asian studies librarians.



FINDINGS: QUALIFICATIONS

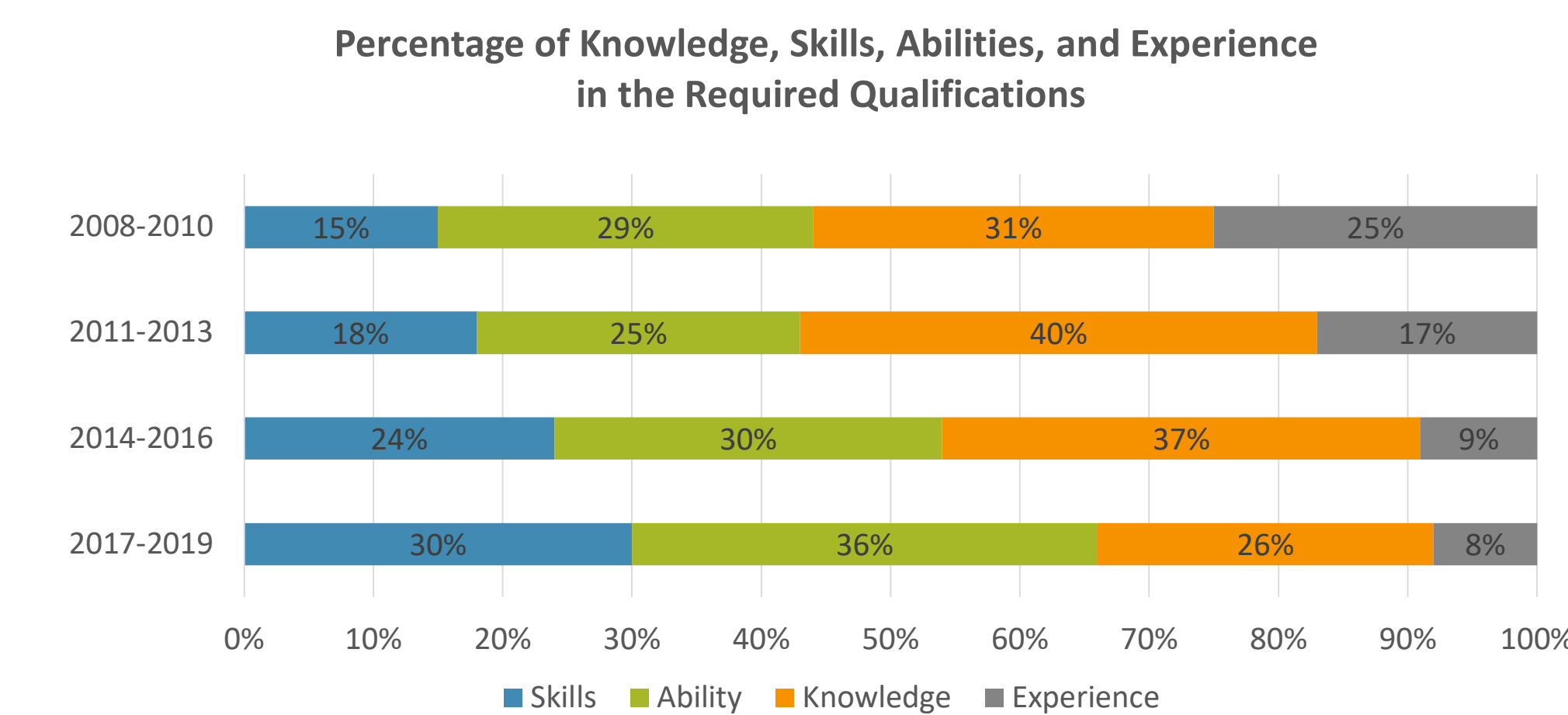
- Advanced degrees in East Asian studies are being treated equally important with MLS degrees in library sciences.

95% of the job postings require MLS degrees in library science

82% of the job postings list advanced degrees (MA or Ph.D.) in East Asian studies as the required equivalent/alternative of MLS degrees

61% of the job postings prefer advanced degrees (MA or Ph.D.) in East Asian studies

- Skills and abilities have been progressively occupying a larger proportion in the required qualifications section than knowledge and experience over the years.



- Top frequently required abilities and skills for East Asian studies librarians are generic and behavioral.

Type	Number of Postings	Percentage of postings
ability to work collaboratively	40	64.52%
communication skill	39	62.90%
interpersonal skill	33	53.23%
ability to work independently	18	29.03%
ability to work in a diverse environment	15	24.19%
ability to work effectively	15	24.19%
analytical skill	13	20.97%
problem-solving skill	12	19.35%
organizational skill	11	17.74%
flexibility	11	17.74%

- Professional experiences appear more frequently in the preferred qualifications than the required qualifications.

42% of the job postings do **NOT** require professional experiences

8% of the job postings do **NOT** include professional experiences anywhere in the qualifications

DISCUSSION

Evolving Responsibilities, Roles and Competencies

- From passive information curator to active information service provider
 - ✓ Increasing interaction with library users
 - ✓ Greater and deeper engagement with general public
- From static and specialized silos to a changing and networked environment
 - ✓ Emerging focus on collaboration with constituents in and out of the library
 - ✓ Progressive requirements on behavioral skills

Indistinct Core Competencies

- Three required sets of competencies
 - ✓ Knowledge in information sciences - MLS degree
 - ✓ Subject knowledge - advanced degree in East Asian studies
 - ✓ Generic and behavioral skills
- Ideal candidates VS Expected pool of applicants
 - ✓ Compromise of knowledge in information sciences and professional experiences
- Lack of professional standards for appropriate qualifications for East Asian studies librarians

SUGGESTIONS

- CEAL
 - ✓ Create guidelines and statements to define knowledge and competencies to be possessed by East Asian librarians in the new digital age
 - ✓ Develop training opportunities for East Asian librarians to improve and advance professionalism in East Asian librarianship.
- ALA
 - ✓ Update the Core Competences of Librarianship to include more proper generic and behavioral skills
- MLS programs
 - ✓ Develop and enhance curriculum relevant to area studies librarianship

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