

Report on the 2003–04 *Job Information List*

A total of 2,349 advertisements from more than 1,300 departments appeared in the *MLA Job Information List (JIL)* this past subscription year, September 2003 to July 2004. (A small number of announcements come from non-academic sources, so an approximate number is given; the exact count of advertisers is 1,341.) Advertisements in the *JIL*'s English edition announced 1,541 positions, 139 (8%) fewer than a year ago. In the foreign language edition advertisements announced 1,285 positions, 82 (6%) fewer positions than a year ago. (Positions announced in both the English and foreign language *JIL* are counted twice, once for each edition.) Of the 1,341 advertisers that ran announcements in the *JIL* last year, 1,273 are located in the United States, 43 in Canada, and 25 outside the United States and Canada. Since 2000–01, when the *JIL* published 2,815 ads, the number of ads posted in the *JIL* has declined by 466 (16.6%). Over the same four-year period (2000–01 to 2003–04) the number of positions advertised in the *JIL* has declined by 287 (15.7%) in the English edition and 197 (13.3%) in the foreign language edition.

Figure 1, showing the trend lines from 1975–76 through 2003–04 for the numbers of positions announced in the *JIL*'s English and foreign language editions, makes apparent how closely the ups and downs in the numbers of positions reflect cycles of recession and recovery in the broader economy of the United States. In the English list, the number of positions announced annually has fluctuated in a range between 1,100 and 2,100; the foreign language list has fluctuated in a range between 1,000 and 1,900. The English list reached a high of 2,075 positions in 1988–89 and a low of 1,152 positions in 1992–93. The foreign language list reached a high of 1,873 positions in 1988–89 and a low of 1,047 in 1993–94. Figure 1 allows one to gauge the decline in numbers of academic job openings announced in both editions of the *JIL* since the recent peak in 2000–01 in comparison with that of a decade ago. The figure also makes apparent how since 1997–98 the number of positions advertised in the foreign language edition has lagged behind the number in the English edition.

Although job seekers now chiefly access the *JIL* as an online database updated weekly, we continue to track numbers of listings and positions according to the five seasonal print issues, October, December, February, April, and the Summer Supplement. Tables 1 and 2 detail the numbers of positions announced in each of the seasonal issues across the twenty-nine years 1975–76 to 2003–04. (Since 1999, some advertisements have appeared only in the online database and not in print; positions announced in these no-print ads are included in the counts recorded in tables 1 and 2.) As tables 1 and 2 show, through the 1980s the October lists claimed an increasing share of each year's total number of jobs advertised, and through the 1990s half to as much as three-fifths or more of all jobs advertised in the *JIL* were being announced in October. Since 2001–02, however, the pattern has again altered, with more positions being announced later and the percentage of positions announced in the October lists declining by fifteen to twenty percentage points, from approximately 60% of the English total to 42% and from approximately 55% of the foreign language total to 35%. The tables show as well how the Summer Supplement has emerged as an increasingly important seasonal segment, this year claiming 10% of the full-year totals in both the English and the foreign language editions. The changes may reflect departments' increasing familiarity with the *JIL* as an online database that makes ads available within the week departments submit them, as well as delays in authorizations to hire occasioned by constrained state and institutional budgets.

Now that the list is compiled as an online database, it is possible to supplement our annual reading and analysis of ads in the October lists with a machine analysis of the full years' databases and the ways departments use the *MLA*'s index terms for rank and specialty field to classify their listings for searching. Our analysis of the October lists suggests that, in any given year, from half to three-fifths of the total number of positions announced annually are tenure-track appointments at the rank of assistant professor. Machine analysis of the way departments use the four index terms for rank—instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor—supports this rough generalization, with the important caveat that the *JIL* system includes no separate index term for tenure status. Information about the tenure status of positions is thus not computable by machine analysis but can only be gleaned by reading the ads.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize how departments have used the four terms for rank in ads they submitted to the *JIL*, across the four years 2000–01 to 2003–04. The results are ordered from greatest to least use, using 2003–04 as the reference year, and indicate the number of listings indexed for one and only one rank term as well as all the combinations departments have used (assistant and associate, instructor and assistant, and so forth). The results show that assistant professor is far and away the rank that *JIL* ads call for most often and with notable consistency from year to year. On average across the four years, just under two-thirds (65%) of the listings submitted to the *JIL*'s English edition have called for the rank of assistant professor (and only assistant professor); just under three-fifths (59%) of the listings submitted to the foreign language edition called for the rank of assistant professor (and only assistant professor). The *JIL* allows departments to use any combination of the four available rank terms to index any listing they submit, and row headings with more than one rank term indicate listings where departments

called for more than one rank and the combinations they used. (We strongly encourage departments to create separate listings for each position that they wish to advertise, but some listings announce multiple positions at different ranks and in different fields.) If listings that call for assistant professor among other ranks are included with those that call only for the rank of assistant professor, 80% of listings in the English edition and 73% of listings in the foreign language edition included the rank of assistant professor as at least one of the index terms used.

Analysis of departments' use of the index terms for field specialty is more complex than that for rank. Twenty terms are available for listings submitted to the English edition, twenty-five for the foreign language edition, and all forty-five for interdisciplinary ads that appear in both the English and foreign language lists. Of the array of available index terms, up to ten may be used for any single listing. As a result, across the database the number of unique index-term combinations is so large—more than 500, representing almost a quarter of all listings—that direct analysis of the way departments index their listings yields little of use. More fruitful, however, is counting the number of times each of the forty-five index terms was used. Because many ads call for more than one index term, the total number of index-term calls is far greater than the total number of ads. The percentage of listings that called for any single index term can be calculated, however.

Tables 5 and 6 present results of an analysis of index-term calls in the English and foreign language editions across the four years 2000–01 to 2003–04. The first column under each year shows the number of times a given field index term was used; the second column expresses that number as a percentage of the total number of index-term calls; the third column shows the percentage of listings that number of index calls represents, using the total number of listings for that year (rather than the total number of index-term calls) as the base. In the *JIL*'s English edition the three index terms *British literature*, *American literature*, and *composition and rhetoric* are most frequently used, by a considerable margin, claiming roughly 30% of all ads each of the four years. In the foreign language edition, Spanish was called for in nearly half of all ads in 2000–01 and 2001–02 and in more than 45% in 2002–03 and 2003–04. French was called for in 15% to 20% of foreign language listings across all four years, German in 11% to 13%. Four additional index terms specifying fields were used in more than 10% of foreign language listings—*comparative literature*, *linguistics and ESL*, *Latin America*, and *generalist* (I exclude here as insufficiently specific the terms *after 1800* and *other*). In table 5 field terms from the foreign languages generally indicate listings that appeared in the foreign language as well as the English edition. In table 6 field terms from English generally indicate listings that appeared in the English as well as the foreign language edition.

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Figure 1
Total Number of Positions Advertised Annually in the English and Foreign Language Editions of the *MLA Job Information List*, 1975–76 to 2003–04

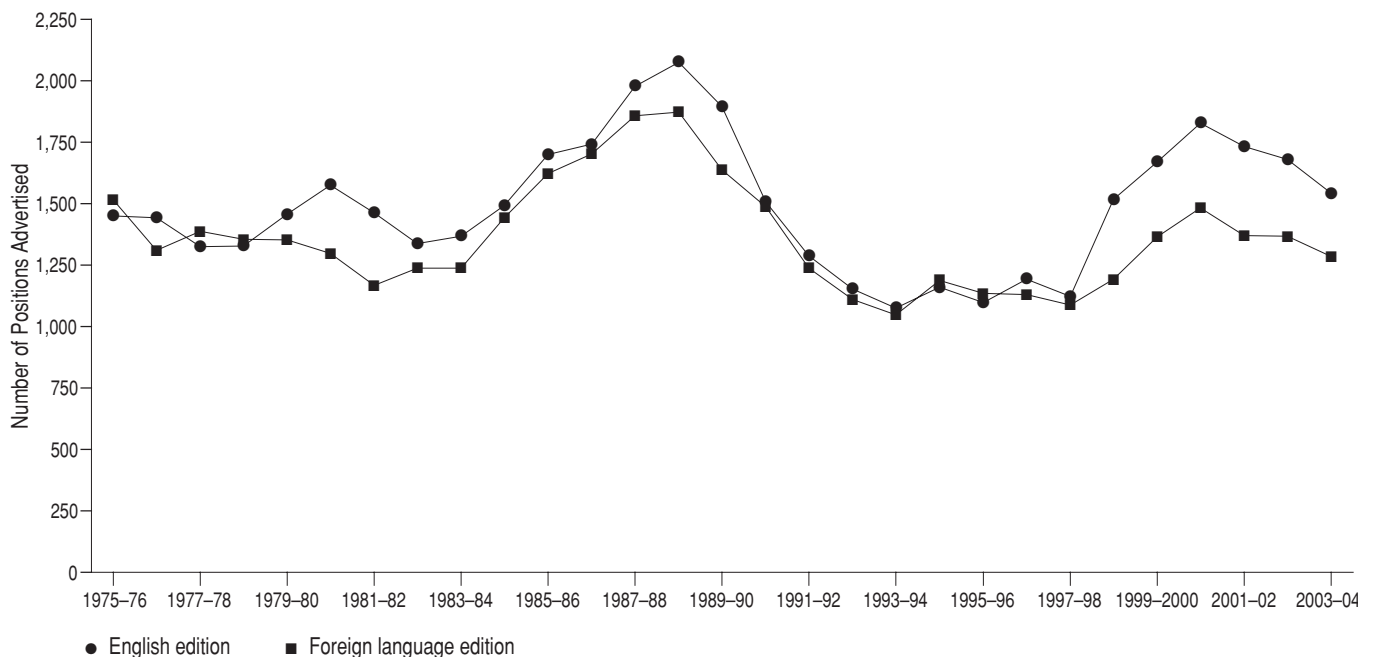


Table 1
Number of Positions Listed in the English Edition of the MLA Job
Information List, 1975-76 to 2003-04

Year	Issue of the <i>JIL</i>				Supplement		
	October	December	February	April	Total	June	
1975-76	434	421	316	233	1,404	46	1,450
1976-77	440	405	319	223	1,387	54	1,441
1977-78	375	410	302	201	1,288	37	1,325
1978-79	438	327	289	228	1,282	45	1,327
1979-80	512	385	339	185	1,421	35	1,456
1980-81	523	388	355	258	1,524	51	1,575
1981-82	551	300	336	218	1,405	56	1,461
1982-83	544	338	261	153	1,296	42	1,338
1983-84	523	320	296	186	1,325	43	1,368
1984-85	567	374	320	196	1,457	35	1,492
1985-86	784	326	373	180	1,663	37	1,700
1986-87	892	276	325	209	1,702	39	1,741
1987-88	937	404	369	239	1,949	29	1,978
1988-89	1,053	354	382	236	2,025	50	2,075
1989-90	976	501	280	110	1,867	28	1,895
1990-91	926	284	192	78	1,480	27	1,507
1991-92	735	275	190	71	1,271	17	1,288
1992-93	620	247	192	74	1,133	19	1,152
1993-94	624	221	161	50	1,056	19	1,075
1994-95	679	249	153	61	1,142	17	1,159
1995-96	605	261	151	61	1,078	20	1,098
1996-97	700	276	135	75	1,186	7	1,193
1997-98	698	205	139	55	1,097	24	1,121
1998-99	885	230	265	112	1,492	25	1,517
1999-2000	899	220	295	163	1,577	93	1,670
2000-01	959	335	312	126	1,732	96	1,828
2001-02	983	212	330	117	1,642	90	1,732
2002-03	792	338	324	114	1,568	112	1,680
2003-04	649	303	306	123	1,381	160	1,541

Table 2
Number of Positions Listed in the Foreign Language Edition of the
MLA Job Information List, 1975-76 to 2003-04

Year	Issue of the <i>JIL</i>				Supplement		
	October	December	February	April	Total	June	
1975-76	373	484	362	256	1,475	40	1,515
1976-77	323	425	293	221	1,262	48	1,310
1977-78	381	379	311	265	1,336	51	1,387
1978-79	385	390	327	188	1,290	64	1,354
1979-80	412	380	299	203	1,294	58	1,352
1980-81	420	319	281	244	1,264	33	1,297
1981-82	377	306	284	171	1,138	28	1,166
1982-83	463	299	263	163	1,188	49	1,237
1983-84	444	314	261	172	1,191	47	1,238
1984-85	499	313	358	235	1,405	37	1,442
1985-86	695	328	331	223	1,577	45	1,622
1986-87	723	313	355	273	1,664	39	1,703
1987-88	800	387	388	233	1,808	49	1,857
1988-89	863	375	372	214	1,824	49	1,873
1989-90	782	429	259	139	1,609	28	1,637
1990-91	756	384	208	105	1,453	35	1,488
1991-92	606	344	186	78	1,214	24	1,238
1992-93	510	305	173	102	1,090	19	1,109
1993-94	508	298	140	93	1,039	8	1,047
1994-95	638	286	182	68	1,174	14	1,188
1995-96	538	319	175	90	1,122	12	1,134
1996-97	593	275	160	90	1,118	11	1,129
1997-98	606	204	165	73	1,048	40	1,088
1998-99	590	207	263	92	1,152	40	1,192
1999-2000	672	199	256	134	1,261	104	1,365
2000-01	666	274	279	151	1,370	112	1,482
2001-02	675	186	268	116	1,245	124	1,369
2002-03	535	305	291	98	1,229	138	1,367
2003-04	447	240	292	165	1,144	141	1,285

Table 3
Number of Listings Advertising Positions at Various Ranks, English Edition of the *MLA Job Information List*, 2000–01 to 2003–04

Rank	2000-01		2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings
Assistant professor	1,025	63.2	1,007	65.5	963	67.1	865	63.5
Lecturer	149	9.2	123	8.0	113	7.9	103	7.6
Assistant professor / associate professor	123	7.6	105	6.8	96	6.7	122	9.0
Assistant professor / associate professor / full professor	64	3.9	79	5.1	52	3.6	44	3.2
Associate professor / full professor	62	3.8	65	4.2	50	3.5	40	2.9
Full professor	46	2.8	39	2.5	42	2.9	55	4.0
Instructor / assistant professor	44	2.7	30	2.0	36	2.5	40	2.9
Associate professor / full professor	17	1.0	22	1.4	17	1.2	30	2.2
Instructor / assistant professor / associate professor	2	0.1	7	0.5	6	0.4	2	0.1
Instructor / assistant professor / associate professor / full professor	14	0.9	3	0.2	1	0.1	4	0.3
Instructor / assistant professor / full professor	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Instructor / associate professor / full professor	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Instructor / associate professor	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Assistant professor / full professor	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.1
(Blank)	74	4.6	57	3.7	60	4.2	54	4.0
Total	1,622	100.0	1,538	100.0	1,436	100.0	1,362	100.0

Table 4
Number of Listings Advertising Positions at Various Ranks, Foreign Language Edition of the *MLA Job Information List*, 2000–01 to 2003–04

Rank	2000-01		2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings	No. of Listings	Percentage of Listings
Assistant professor	791	57.4	739	59.0	765	60.9	667	56.7
Instructor	201	14.6	183	14.6	171	13.6	192	16.3
Assistant professor / associate professor	65	4.7	62	4.9	76	6.1	65	5.5
Instructor / assistant professor	93	6.7	47	3.8	54	4.3	75	6.4
Associate professor / full professor	49	3.6	45	3.6	50	4.0	48	4.1
Assistant professor / associate professor / full professor	42	3.0	31	2.5	34	2.7	30	2.6
Full professor	33	2.4	71	5.7	27	2.1	26	2.2
Associate professor	20	1.5	11	0.9	8	0.6	11	0.9
Instructor / assistant professor / associate professor	4	0.3	5	0.4	7	0.6	2	0.2
Instructor / assistant professor / associate professor / full professor	13	0.9	3	0.2	2	0.2	4	0.3
Assistant professor / full professor	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.1
Instructor / associate professor	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
(Blank)	68	4.9	56	4.5	61	4.9	54	4.6
Total	1,379	100.0	1,253	100.0	1,256	100.0	1,176	100.0

Table 5
Advertisers' Usage of Index Terms, English Edition of the *MLA Job Information List*, 2000-01 to 2003-04

Index Term	2000-01			2001-02			2002-03			2003-04		
	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,622 Ads	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,538 Ads	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,436 Ads	Index Term Calls		Pct. of 1,362 Ads
	No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.	
Composition and rhetoric	499	11.5	30.8	493	11.7	32.1	417	11.2	29.0	400	10.7	29.4
British literature	499	11.5	30.8	454	10.8	29.5	411	11.0	28.6	381	10.2	28.0
American literature	438	10.1	27.0	365	8.7	23.7	344	9.2	24.0	332	8.9	24.4
Other	270	6.2	16.6	307	7.3	20.0	340	9.1	23.7	329	8.8	24.2
Comparative literature	223	5.1	13.7	229	5.4	14.9	258	6.9	18.0	234	6.3	17.2
Creative writing	230	5.3	14.2	250	5.9	16.3	205	5.5	14.3	206	5.5	15.1
After 1800	211	4.8	13.0	232	5.5	15.1	160	4.3	11.1	192	5.2	14.1
Literature in English other than British or American	221	5.1	13.6	199	4.7	12.9	181	4.9	12.6	174	4.7	12.8
Generalist	249	5.7	15.4	211	5.0	13.7	164	4.4	11.4	170	4.6	12.5
Other minority literatures	230	5.3	14.2	182	4.3	11.8	176	4.7	12.3	159	4.3	11.7
African American literature	204	4.7	12.6	160	3.8	10.4	157	4.2	10.9	149	4.0	10.9
1500-1800	154	3.5	9.5	176	4.2	11.4	142	3.8	9.9	140	3.8	10.3
Linguistics and ESL	179	4.1	11.0	176	4.2	11.4	155	4.2	10.8	134	3.6	9.8
Technical and business writing	187	4.3	11.5	154	3.7	10.0	142	3.8	9.9	116	3.1	8.5
Technology and digital media	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	105	2.8	7.7
English education	128	2.9	7.9	134	3.2	8.7	109	2.9	7.6	101	2.7	7.4
Old and Middle English; medieval	86	2.0	5.3	84	2.0	5.5	61	1.6	4.2	84	2.3	6.2
Other administrative Department chair	93	2.1	5.7	92	2.2	6.0	68	1.8	4.7	79	2.1	5.8
53	1.2	3.3	54	1.3	3.5	36	1.0	2.5	56	1.5	4.1	
Other administrative positions	35	0.8	2.2	25	0.6	1.6	13	0.3	0.9	28	0.8	2.1
Other languages	19	0.4	1.2	19	0.5	1.2	13	0.3	0.9	27	0.7	2.0
Latin America	16	0.4	1.0	21	0.5	1.4	25	0.7	1.7	18	0.5	1.3
Spanish	29	0.7	1.8	35	0.8	2.3	29	0.8	2.0	18	0.5	1.3
Nonacademic	29	0.7	1.8	24	0.6	1.6	17	0.5	1.2	14	0.4	1.0
French	16	0.4	1.0	18	0.4	1.2	17	0.5	1.2	13	0.3	1.0
Francophone studies	5	0.1	0.3	6	0.1	0.4	10	0.3	0.7	9	0.2	0.7
German and Scandinavian	11	0.3	0.7	18	0.4	1.2	11	0.3	0.8	9	0.2	0.7
Chinese	5	0.1	0.3	14	0.3	0.9	13	0.3	0.9	7	0.2	0.5
Japanese	6	0.1	0.4	6	0.1	0.4	8	0.2	0.6	7	0.2	0.5
Italian	7	0.2	0.4	2	0.0	0.1	6	0.2	0.4	6	0.2	0.4
Classical	5	0.1	0.3	12	0.3	0.8	9	0.2	0.6	5	0.1	0.4
Portuguese	6	0.1	0.4	8	0.2	0.5	4	0.1	0.3	5	0.1	0.4
Before 1600	4	0.1	0.2	5	0.1	0.3	6	0.2	0.4	4	0.1	0.3
Russian and Slavic	2	0.0	0.1	19	0.5	1.2	4	0.1	0.3	4	0.1	0.3
1600-1800	3	0.1	0.2	5	0.1	0.3	7	0.2	0.5	3	0.1	0.2
Arabic	2	0.0	0.1	10	0.2	0.7	5	0.1	0.3	3	0.1	0.2
Hebrew	3	0.1	0.2	9	0.2	0.6	5	0.1	0.3	2	0.1	0.1
Total	4,357	100.0		4,208	100.0		3,728	100.0		3,723	100.0	

Table 6
Advertisers' Usage of Index Terms, Foreign Language Edition of the *MLA Job Information List*, 2000-01 to 2003-04

Index Term	2000-01			2001-02			2002-03			2003-04		
	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,379 Ads	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,253 Ads	Index-Term Calls		Pct. of 1,256 Ads	Index Term Calls		Pct. of 1,176 Ads
	No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.	
Spanish	667	21.1	48.4	623	20.1	49.7	575	19.0	45.8	537	19.4	45.7
Other	157	5.0	11.4	203	6.5	16.2	236	7.8	18.8	242	8.7	20.6
Comparative literature	189	6.0	13.7	191	6.2	15.2	248	8.2	19.7	216	7.8	18.4
French	259	8.2	18.8	222	7.2	17.7	224	7.4	17.8	192	6.9	16.3
Linguistics and ESL	227	7.2	16.5	206	6.6	16.4	201	6.6	16.0	158	5.7	13.4
Generalist	274	8.7	19.9	258	8.3	20.6	228	7.5	18.2	154	5.6	13.1
Latin America	185	5.9	13.4	166	5.3	13.2	169	5.6	13.5	147	5.3	12.5
German and Scandinavian	157	5.0	11.4	159	5.1	12.7	121	4.0	9.6	138	5.0	11.7
After 1800	145	4.6	10.5	153	4.9	12.2	149	4.9	11.9	110	4.0	9.4
Italian	100	3.2	7.3	73	2.4	5.8	84	2.8	6.7	76	2.7	6.5
Technology and digital media	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	69	2.5	5.9
Department chair	46	1.5	3.3	45	1.4	3.6	50	1.7	4.0	61	2.2	5.2
Other languages	46	1.5	3.3	55	1.8	4.4	45	1.5	3.6	55	2.0	4.7
Other administrative positions	54	1.7	3.9	47	1.5	3.8	33	1.1	2.6	52	1.9	4.4
Francophone studies	52	1.6	3.8	49	1.6	3.9	57	1.9	4.5	47	1.7	4.0
Other minority literatures	40	1.3	2.9	43	1.4	3.4	58	1.9	4.6	44	1.6	3.7
Russian and Slavic	46	1.5	3.3	59	1.9	4.7	52	1.7	4.1	44	1.6	3.7
Literature in English other than British or American	27	0.9	2.0	41	1.3	3.3	45	1.5	3.6	39	1.4	3.3
Portuguese	28	0.9	2.0	40	1.3	3.2	32	1.1	2.5	36	1.3	3.1
1600-1800	71	2.2	5.1	64	2.1	5.1	56	1.8	4.5	34	1.2	2.9
Before 1600	47	1.5	3.4	47	1.5	3.8	38	1.3	3.0	34	1.2	2.9
American literature	36	1.1	2.6	44	1.4	3.5	39	1.3	3.1	31	1.1	2.6
Arabic	17	0.5	1.2	21	0.7	1.7	24	0.8	1.9	30	1.1	2.6
Chinese	40	1.3	2.9	54	1.7	4.3	59	1.9	4.7	30	1.1	2.6
Japanese	41	1.3	3.0	49	1.6	3.9	38	1.3	3.0	30	1.1	2.6
Other administrative	30	1.0	2.2	26	0.8	2.1	14	0.5	1.1	30	1.1	2.6
African American literature	33	1.0	2.4	14	0.5	1.1	30	1.0	2.4	21	0.8	1.8
British literature	28	0.9	2.0	35	1.1	2.8	25	0.8	2.0	21	0.8	1.8
Nonacademic	31	1.0	2.2	26	0.8	2.1	19	0.6	1.5	15	0.5	1.3
1500-1800	4	0.1	0.3	7	0.2	0.6	9	0.3	0.7	13	0.5	1.1
Composition and rhetoric	18	0.6	1.3	12	0.4	1.0	10	0.3	0.8	12	0.4	1.0
Creative writing	8	0.3	0.6	16	0.5	1.3	10	0.3	0.8	12	0.4	1.0
Hebrew	14	0.4	1.0	18	0.6	1.4	14	0.5	1.1	12	0.4	1.0
Classical	18	0.6	1.3	19	0.6	1.5	25	0.8	2.0	11	0.4	0.9
English education	14	0.4	1.0	12	0.4	1.0	4	0.1	0.3	7	0.3	0.6
Old and Middle English; medieval	3	0.1	0.2	6	0.2	0.5	4	0.1	0.3	6	0.2	0.5
Technical and business writing	4	0.1	0.3	1	0.0	0.1	3	0.1	0.2	1	0.0	0.1
Total	3,156	100.0		3,104	100.0		3,028	100.0		2,767	100.0	