A Report on the 2012-13 Composition and Rhetoric Category of the MLA Job Information List

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Introduction

As part of rhetmap.org's experiment mapping the Composition and Rhetoric (C/R) category[1] of the Modern Language Association (MLA) Job Information List (JIL), we present the following summary of the 2012–13 job market season[2]. Rhetmap.org scraped the MLA JIL C/R data once a week from September 2012 to July 2013. By the first week of July, 2013 there were approximately 282 listings[3] posted. Of those listings, 205 were posted by December 31, 2012 or in the first four months of the 2012–13 job market. In the next four sections we have broken down the C/R into four categories: geography, type of institution (two-/four- year), rank of position advertised, and job titles. The full data is also publically available here, and we welcome additional breakdowns of the JIL. We hope that the breakdown below is useful for

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[1] This breakdown only includes listings posted to the C/R category. While many Professional Writing, Technical Communication, and media positions were cross-posted to the C/R, this report is not inclusive of listings posted exclusively to other categories of the JIL. In the 2013–14 rhetmap.org map, other categories of the JIL will be aggregated.

[2] This report is based on work partly conducted in ENGL 8035: Research Methods in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Cincinnati; however, we hope that the report is useful to future job seekers and graduate school faculty.

[3] As each listing contains one or more job advertisements, we differentiate here between number of listings posted and total number of positions advertised.

understanding the Composition and Rhetoric job market, especially as the 2013–14 job market begins.

Listings by Geographic Location

The figure and table below shows the findings for coding the C/R JIL for geographical area. The coding scheme was developed by consulting the U.S. Census' four regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) and nine divisions (New England, Mid-Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific), which it uses to analyze and present its data.

Listings by Geography
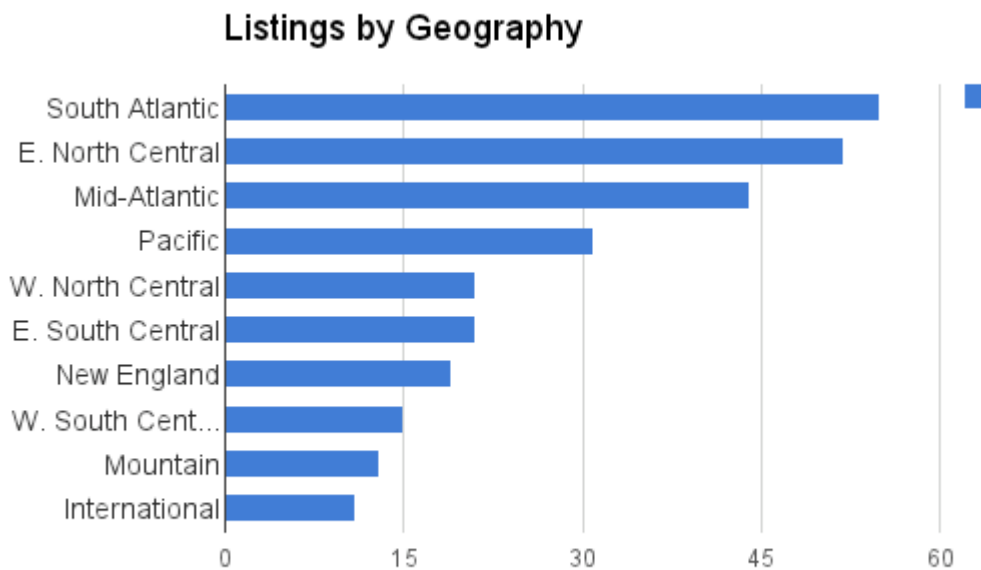
After developing a similar coding scheme for domestic (U.S.) job listings, international job listings were coded using four broad geographical areas: the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and North American. Other global areas (e.g., South America) remain unrepresented in this coding scheme because there was no data present for these areas.

Region	Number of Job Listings Coded
New England (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut)	19
Mid-Atlantic (New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey)	44

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East North Central (Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio)	52
West North Central (Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa)	21
South Atlantic (Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida)	55
East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama)	21
West South Central (Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana)	15
Mountain (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico)	13
Pacific (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii)	31
International: Middle East (Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar)	3
International: Asia (China, Hong Kong, Singapore)	6
International: Europe (France)	1
International: North America (Canada)	1

Domestically, the greatest number of jobs are advertised in the South Atlantic (55 listings), East North Central division of the Midwest (52 listings), the Mid-Atlantic (44 listings), and the Pacific (31 listings). In contrast, other areas of the country saw approximately 20 or fewer listings posted. Though some of these trends may be attributable to coding bias (the South Atlantic division, for instance, comprises nine states and several populous cities), we still believe that

the data indicates that there is a higher concentration of composition and rhetoric positions in these areas of the country.

Internationally, the highest concentration of job listings is located in Asia (particularly in China), with the second-highest concentration in the Middle East. We are interested to see if data in the coming year will start to mark this as a pattern, or if 2012–13 is an exception.

Type of Institution

The figure and table below illustrates the dominance of four-year college and university listings in the 2012–13 C/R JIL, as compared to two-year and community college listings. Institutions were coded as four-year colleges and universities when they offered bachelor's degrees and/or postgraduate degrees. Institutions that were coded as two-year colleges included both two-year community/technical schools, as well as two-year branch campuses of large (usually state-funded) institutions.
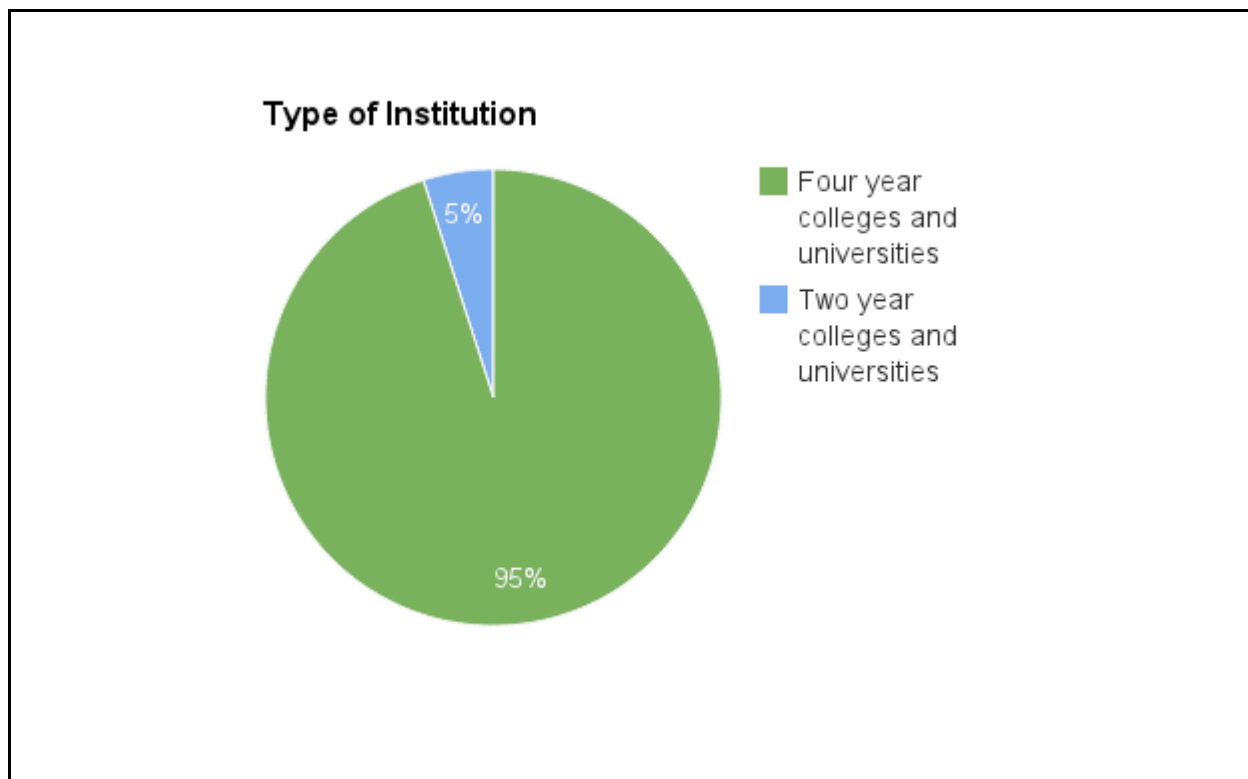

Type of Institution	Number of Institutions
Four-year colleges and universities	268
Two-year colleges	14

The data shows that rhetoric and composition positions listed at two-year institutions comprised only 5% of the job listings posted during the 2012–13 job market season. Because the scope of our project was limited to rhetmap.org's aggregation of data from the C/R category of the JIL, it's unclear to us whether these results reflect an imbalance between four-year and two-year institutions on the market for 2012–13, or whether they indicate that positions at two-year institutions are being advertised primarily outside the C/R category—or even outside the JIL itself.

Academic Rank

The figure and table below illustrates the results when coding for academic rank in the positions advertised in the 2012-2013 C/R JIL.[4]

While coding for academic rank, each listing was coded for as many ranks as possible, which means that some listings were coded more than once (for example, if a listing appeared as "Assistant or Associate Professor, Writing Center Director," we list assistant, associate, and writing center director positions were each counted once).
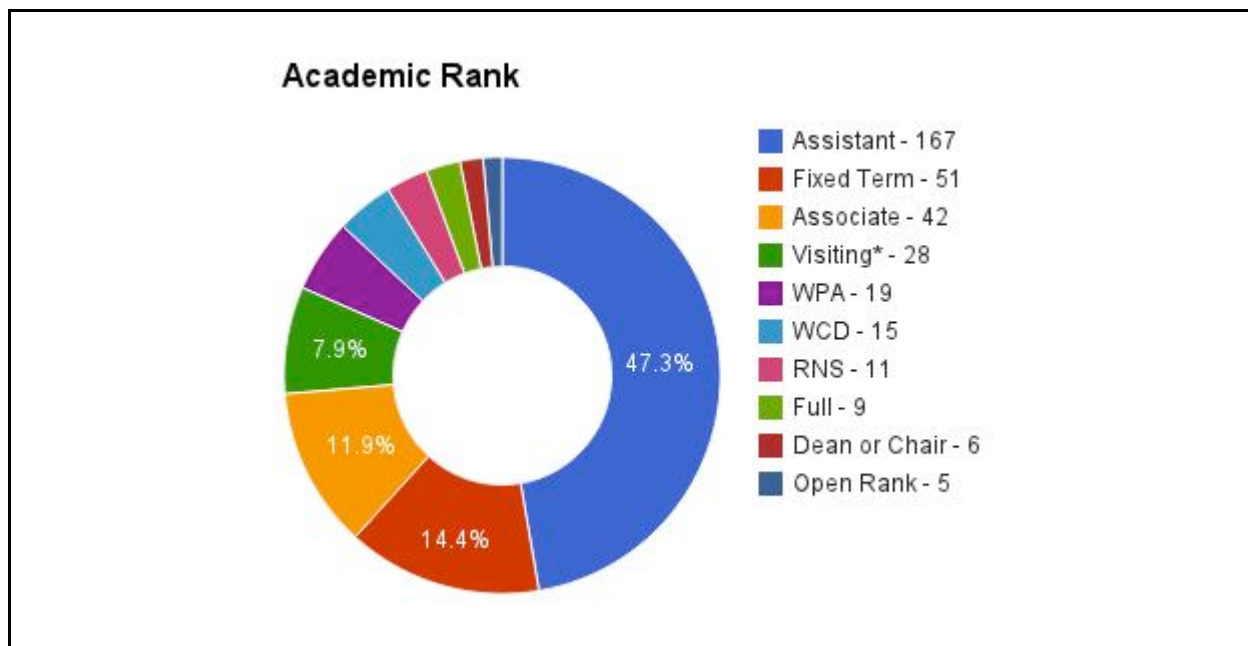
Academic rank	Number of Positions Coded

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[4] As each listing on the JIL contains one or more job position advertisements, and also because entries have been double-coded (more on that to follow), note that the results for the Academic Rank category will look different than those for Institution Type and Geography.

Assistant[5]	167
Associate	42
Full[6]	9
Open Rank[7]	5
Rank not specified[8]	11
Fixed-Term Lectureships (Including faculty, instructor, lecturer, non-tenure track assistant or instructor, teaching instructor, tenure track faculty.)	51
Writing Program Administration[9]	19
Writing Center Director	15
Dean or Chair	6
Visiting Positions (Including visiting, visiting assistant, multiple year contract, fellow, post-doc)	28

As the above table shows, the large majority of job positions listed were for assistant (167) and associate (42) professors. Notably, most of the associate positions advertised were open-rank searches: open assistant/associate searches were advertised in 31 of the total job listings. The next largest designation was for fixed term lectureship positions (51), 10 of which were listed at Kean University in Wenzhou, China.

Looking at administrative positions, a significant number of those listings were for assistant-level hires. Of the 19 writing program administration (WPA) positions advertised, 12 were designated an open-rank assistant/associate position and 10 were listed as assistant positions. This means that at least half of the WPA job searches in 2012–13 were seeking to hire junior WPAs. This contrasts somewhat with writing center director positions, where only 6 out of the 15 total positions were searching for an assistant professor.

Overall, we find it encouraging that tenure-track lines make up the largest demographic when comparing the ranks of positions advertised. Although 31 of the assistant positions we coded

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[5] Entries coded for both assistant and associate: 31.

[6] Entries coded for both associate and full: 9.

[7] These positions were listed (verbatim) as "open rank," which is why they have been differentiated from an open rank search listed as, for example, "Assistant/Associate."
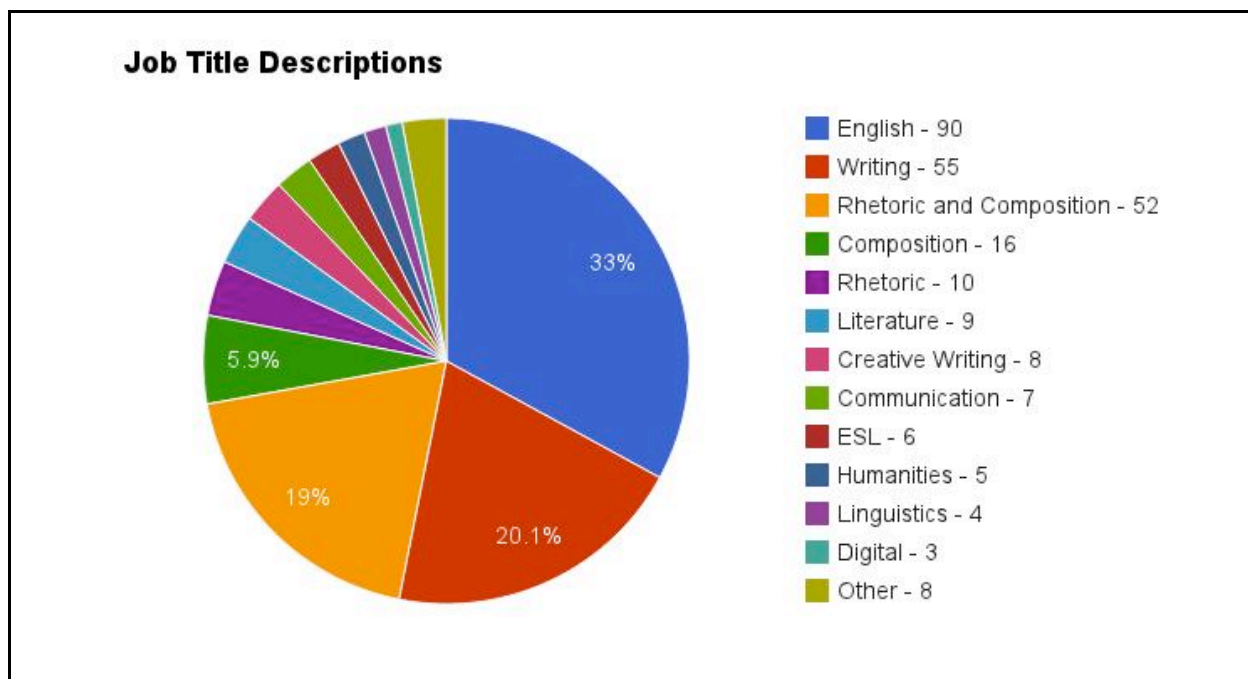
[8] Entries coded as "rank not specified" were tenure-track listings without a specified rank positions (RNS): 5, director (without designation): 1, professor (RNS): 3, and writing specialists: 2.

[9] Entries coded as WPA were writing program administration positions that were not related to writing across the curriculum or writing center work.

were open-rank (assistant/associate) searches—implying that such positions *may* be intended for advanced assistants—we think these numbers are encouraging for PhD candidates with an eye on the market.

Job Title Descriptions

In the figure and table below, we coded for the disciplinary terms used to describe each listing in the 2012–13 C/R JIL.[10] All 282 job titles were coded for as many disciplinary key words as possible; for example, a job listing at Middlebury College that is advertised as "Assistant Professor of Writing and Linguistics" is coded once for "writing" and once more for "linguistics." Note, however, that we did not code the body text of job advertisements, only the job titles. So, for example, a job advertisement for "Assistant Professor of English" that asks for a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition in the job advertisement is not coded below as Rhetoric and Composition. Similarly, many job advertisements asked for digital expertise in the full advertisement: the three positions below coded as "digital" reflect only the title of job listings. Sixty job listings did not identify a specific disciplinary area in the job title (these were listed only by rank, e.g., "Lecturing Fellow" or "Writing Center Director") and thus were not coded here. Additionally, the code "other" was used to account for descriptive disciplinary terms appearing only once in the job list.

Job Title Descriptions

- English - 90
- Writing - 55
- Rhetoric and Composition - 52
- Composition - 16
- Rhetoric - 10
- Literature - 9
- Creative Writing - 8
- Communication - 7
- ESL - 6
- Humanities - 5
- Linguistics - 4
- Digital - 3
- Other - 8

33%
20.1%
19%
5.9%

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[10] Just as with Academic Rank, entries have been double-coded for this category and will thus look different than those for Institution Type and Geography.

Job descriptions	Number of Positions Coded
English (Including English Education; Developmental/Reading)	90
Writing (Including Professional and Technical; Career; Academic; Science; Developmental; Business)	55
Rhetoric and Composition (Also listed as Composition and Rhetoric)	52
Composition	16
Rhetoric (Including Visual Rhetoric and Design)	10
Literature (Including African American; American; British; Multi-Ethnic American; Undergraduate; World)	9
Creative Writing (Including Fiction; Creative Non Fiction; Poetry)	8
Communication (Including Technical; Professional)	7
ESL (Including Second Language Writing; Second Language Acquisition; Multilingualism)	6
Humanities (Including Classics)	5
Linguistics	4
Digital (Including Humanities; Writing)	3
Other (Editing and Publishing/Book History; Diversity; Cultural Rhetorics; LRSP; Modern Language; Liberal Arts; Core Curriculum; Critical Inquiry)	8

In coding the disciplinary descriptions of JIL C/R job titles, we find that the majority of the positions in the C/R are categorized as English (90), followed by writing (55) and rhetoric and composition (52). We interpret this to mean that the majority of institutions listing jobs in the C/R locate the work of the field, at least partly, within English studies, in their local context. Potentially, it might also (or alternatively) indicate that a number of positions on the C/R in 2012–13 were located in smaller or more generalized English departments.

While 52 job advertisements characterize the position title as "rhetoric and composition" (together), a small number of job titles were described as only rhetoric (10) or only composition

(16). We see this data as sketching the contours of the field: that is, it suggests that most positions on the 2012–13 market were for professors whose work intersects both rhetorical theory and composition studies.

Conclusion

While we think that coding the C/R category of the JIL in terms of geography, type of institution, rank of positions, and job titles provides useful insights into the C/R market, we agree that there are other ways to code the data. Therefore, we invite additional interpretations of the JIL data in the comments thread for this report. Over the next 2013-14 job market year, rhetmap.org will continue to geocode the JIL. By this time next year, we expect to have new data to share and compare.