

Job Advertisement Data 2016-2017

American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature

Executive Summary

After a historic low in positions advertised through [AAR-SBL Employment Services](#) in academic year 2016, the number of positions advertised through AAR-SBL Employment Services saw a slight increase of four percent. While the market for jobs in religion still shows signs of decreasing faculty positions, specifically tenured or tenure-track positions, other position types exhibited notable increases in 2017.

The key findings from this year are below, followed by more complete data analysis. When reviewing this report, note that the data in it represent only the jobs posted with AAR and SBL. While it is a representative sample of the job market, the data does not necessarily reflect all positions in the field, in particular positions outside of North America as well as some adjunct positions, which may be locally advertised.

For previous reports, please see the following links:

- [July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016](#)
- [July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015](#)
- [January 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014](#)
- [January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2012](#)
- [January 1, 2001 through December 31, 2010](#)

Key Findings

- Positions advertised in AY17 increased 4.0% compared to AY16. This increase in postings was primarily the result of increased listings for non-faculty positions.
- The total number of faculty positions decreased by 8.6% year over year from AY16 to AY17. Within this percentage, several mixed findings can be highlighted:
 - Postings from research institutions are at an all-time low since AAR and SBL began collecting employment data in 2003.
 - The number of entry-level faculty positions increased by 11.4% year over year from AY16 to AY17.
 - The number of tenure-track faculty positions reached a six-year low.
 - The number of postings from baccalaureate institutions is at seven-year high.
- For faculty positions, the most selected category for the annual course load shifted from three to four in 2016 to five to six in 2017.

Data Analysis

The data generated from the postings on the AAR and SBL Employment Services site offer an indication that, while still at a low, the job market saw a slight improvement in academic year 2017 (AY17). The number of discrete institutions is at a three-year high of 272 ([Table 2](#)), and the number of positions increased by 4.0% year over year ([Table 1](#)). While the number of positions is still low compared to ten years ago, 2017 is the first year to see an increase in positions since 2013.

Figure 1. Number of Positions and Number of Discrete Institutions



After a year of historic lows in some categories, significant shifts occurred in 2017 in the number of positions by institution type ([Table 3](#)).¹ After reaching a record low in AY16,

¹ For more information on these classifications, see the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education at http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/classification_descriptions/basic.php.

Doctoral Universities

Includes institutions that awarded at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees during the update year (this does not include professional practice doctoral-level degrees, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, etc.). Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.

Master's Colleges and Universities

Generally includes institutions that awarded at least 50 master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees during the update year (with occasional exceptions – see Methodology). Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.

Baccalaureate Colleges

Includes institutions where baccalaureate or higher degrees represent at least 50 percent of all degrees but where fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees were awarded during the update year.

the number of postings at baccalaureate institutions is at a seven-year high in AY17 and rose 34.4% year over year when compared to AY16. Research institutions remain consistent in having the highest number of job postings amongst the four categories. At the same time, the number of postings at research institutions reached an all-time low since AAR and SBL began tracking employment data in 2003. Compared to 2016, special-focus institutions increased by 10% while master's institutions remained the same. These are significant changes in the 2017 data.

(Some institutions above the master's degree threshold are also included; see Methodology.) Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.

Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges

Includes four-year colleges (by virtue of having at least one baccalaureate degree program) that conferred more than 50 percent of degrees at the associate's level. Excludes Special Focus Institutions, Tribal Colleges, and institutions that have sufficient master's or doctoral degrees to fall into those categories.

Associate's Colleges

Institutions at which the highest level degree awarded is an associate's degree. The institutions are sorted into nine categories based on the intersection of two factors: disciplinary focus (transfer, career & technical or mixed) and dominant student type (traditional, nontraditional or mixed). Excludes Special Focus Institutions and Tribal Colleges.

Special Focus Institutions

Institutions where a high concentration of degrees is in a single field or set of related fields. Excludes Tribal Colleges.

Tribal Colleges

Colleges and universities that are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, as identified in IPEDS Institutional Characteristics.

Figure 2. Position Types, AY03-17



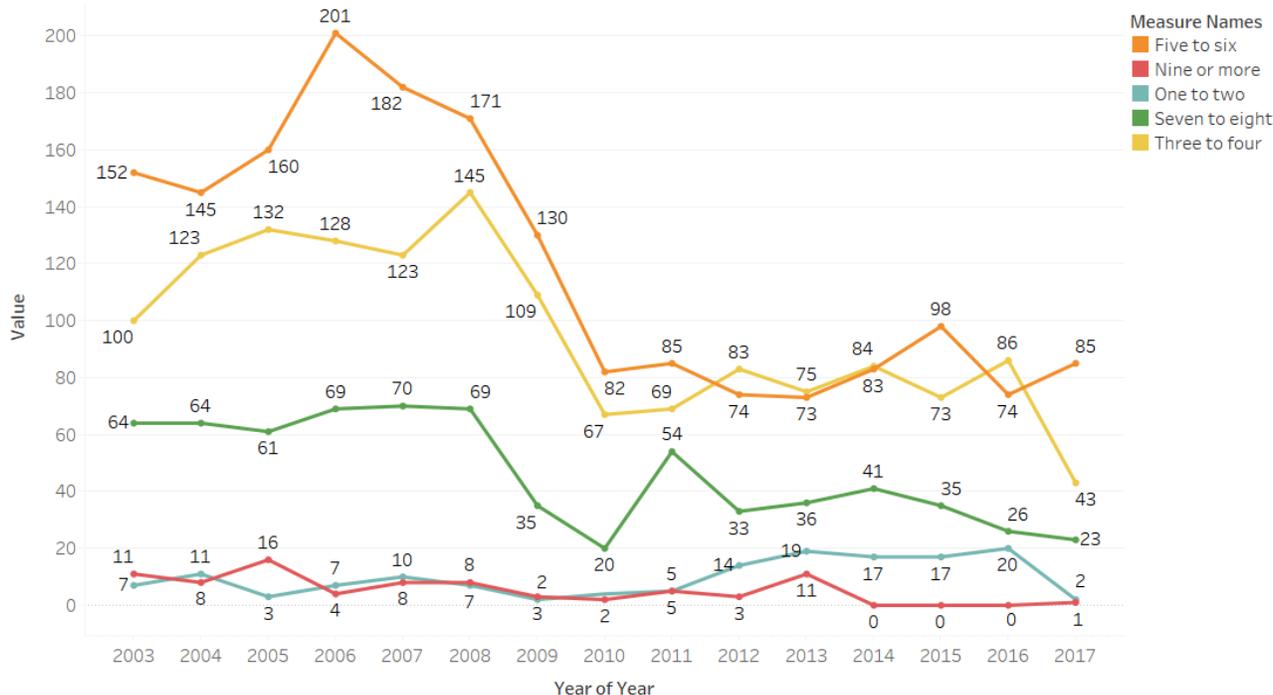
As Figure 2 shows, 2017 also displayed a shift in position types (Table 4). Though the number of faculty positions continued to decline in AY17, the non-faculty positions listed through AAR and SBL increased. Compared with 2016, positions in administration saw an increase of 27%, fellowship or postdoc positions increased by 30%, and positions outside of higher education (e.g., K-12, nonprofit, publishing) increased by 300% and are at a record high. Even though the non-faculty positions represent less than half of the total postings in Employment Services, this increase is part of a clear, three-year trend.

After a steady three-year decline, entry-level faculty positions increased by 11.4% over 2016 (Table 5). Mid-level positions increased 45% year over year and hit a five-year high in AY17. Upper-level positions hit the lowest number (eleven postings) on record since 2003.

Along with the overall number of faculty positions, the number of tenured or tenure-track positions continued to decline in 2017. While this number is at a five-year low, the percentage of tenured or tenure track faculty jobs in 2017 is 63.4%, the highest percentage since 2013.²

² However, as noted above, this report only includes jobs posted to the AAR-SBL Employment Service, and it is unknown how many adjunct or contingent positions are posted outside of that service.

Figure 3. Annual Course Load (Faculty)



As shown above in Figure 3, annual course load shifted from 2016 to 2017. The highest concentration in 2017 is five-to-six annual courses, which represents over half of faculty positions that listed the annual course load in 2017. In 2016, the course load of three to four was the most common followed closely by five to six. Note, however, that only half of the faculty listing reported annual course load (Tables 7, 8).

Remaining consistent with previous years' data, a completed PhD and teaching experience remain the qualifications most desired/required by employers for faculty positions (Table 9).³ Published journal articles and published book(s) and/or monograph(s) increased in AY17 and remain the third and fourth most desired/required qualifications for a candidate, respectively. While a PhD and teaching experience are desired/required consistently across the different position levels, published book(s) and/or monograph(s) and published journals are less desired/required in entry-level positions compared with mid-level and upper-level positions (Table 10). Online course experience is preferred more in entry-level (13.8%) and mid-level (20.9%) positions compared with upper-level positions (6.5%).

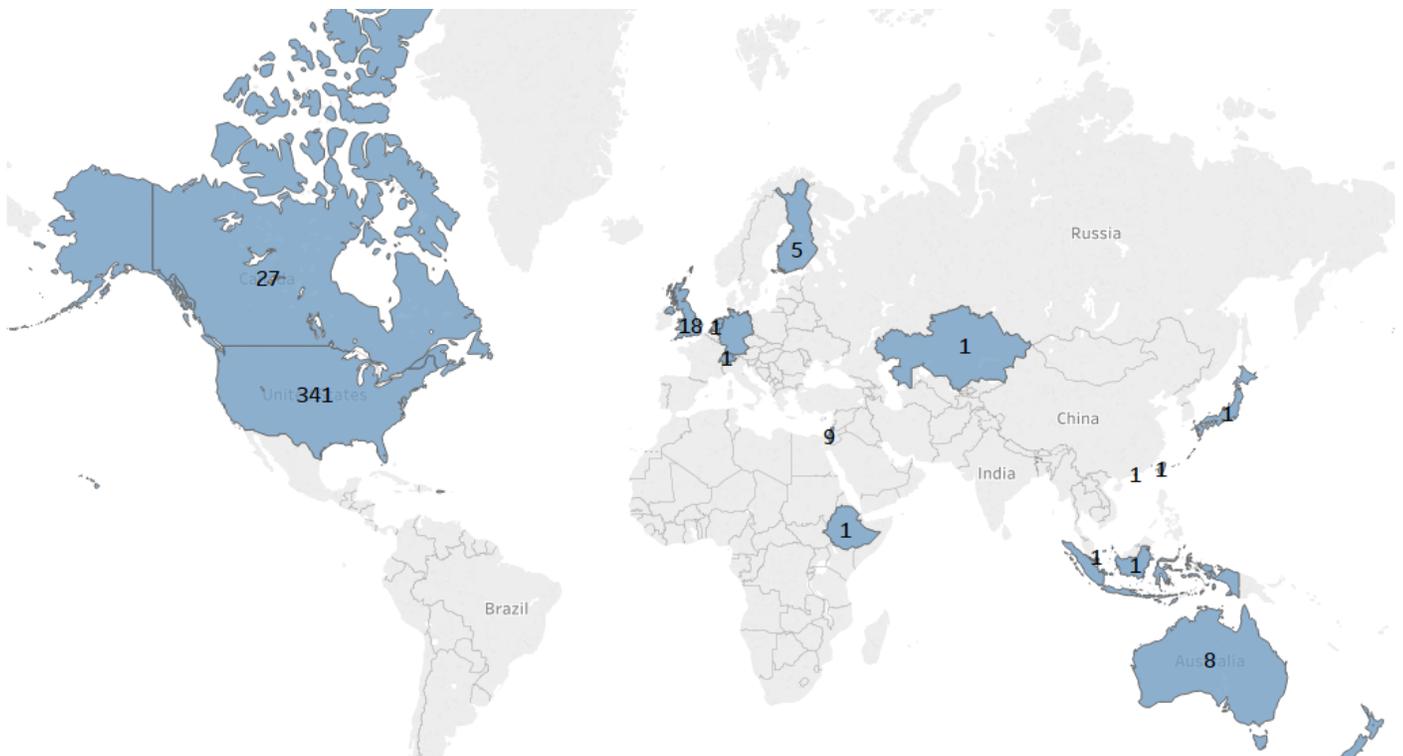
Along with differing preferences across position levels, the position's institution type significantly affects certain qualifications desired. Special focus institutions, for example, desire ordination and online course experience and require religious affiliation more

³ Employers were able to select more than one desired qualification for candidates in Tables 9, 10, 11

than the other three institution types. In addition, candidates who have published book(s) and monograph(s) are more desired at research and special focus institutions.

The fields of expertise available for employers to select, shown in [Table 12](#), have changed throughout the history of the AAR-SBL Employment Services. While some fields have remained as options for employers since 2003, it is important to note that other fields have been added, removed, or combined. Employers are able to select more than one field of expertise per position. While administrative support remained low overall in qualifications desired by employers for faculty positions, the administration and support services increased 36% year over year as a field of expertise in overall positions. Other fields increasing by 20% or more from 2016 include Early Christianity/Church History, Introduction to Religion, New Religious Movements, Christian Studies, Editorial/Journalism/Media, Septuagint, Pastoral Care, and Library. Among the fields that decreased in AY17, Ancient Near Eastern Languages, Archaeology - Greco-Roman, Social Sciences and Religion, Archaeology - Ancient Near East, East Asian Religions (general or not listed separately), Missiology, South Asian Religions (general or not listed separately), and Religions of Oceania decreased by 40% or more compared to 2016.

Figure 4. Positions by Country



Positions listed on the AAR-SBL Employment Services site expanded internationally in AY17. The number of countries rose to fifteen compared to eleven in AY16. Positions in Israel rose to nine in 2017 compared to no positions listed in 2016 and only two positions listed in 2015. Positions in Australia are also at their highest point since AAR and SBL began tracking.

As a whole, job postings on the AAR-SBL Employment Services site displayed several significant changes in comparison to prior years. While some of the changes indicated positive improvements, the number of job postings and institutions remain markedly low, and key indicators, such as the number of faculty positions posted are at an all-time low.