

**Achieving Racial and Ethnic Diversity among
Academic and Research Librarians:
The Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of
Librarians of Color**

A White Paper

by the

ACRL Board of Directors Diversity Task Force

a subgroup of the

ACRL Board of Directors

Produced by

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The ACRL Board Diversity Task Force was established by Camila Alire on October 11, 2005. Appointed members of the Task Force are

Dorothy Ann Washington, Chair
Janis M. Bandelin
Karen A. Williams

The charge for the Diversity Task Force was as follows:

- Review literature for this issue.
- Commission a white paper on this topic.
- Develop outline of what a useful white paper should cover.
- Identify author(s) (\$1K honorarium for project).
- Talk to author(s) about content, process, and timeline.
- Provide an update to the full Board at the 2006 Midwinter Meeting.

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Executive Summary

At the 2006 ALA Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, the ACRL Board of Directors outlined the focus of a white paper using the 2002 ACRL White Paper, *Recruitment, Retention & Restructuring: Human Resources in Academic Libraries* as a guide. The proposed white paper would focus primarily on “workforce diversity, with an emphasis on the recruitment, retention, and advancement of groups traditionally underrepresented in the academic library workforce.” The Board also specified that the white paper should:

discuss efforts to promote, develop, and foster workforces that are representative of a diverse population, and
address the development of a climate in the workplace that supports and encourages advancement.

Racial controversy in the United States provides a backdrop for the issue of recruitment by race and ethnicity within the profession of librarianship. Additionally, the research literature reveals a historical shortage of librarians. The current environment for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of people of color in academic librarianship remains virtually unchanged since the appearance of the 2002 White Paper. The published professional and research literature provides some insight into the barriers to recruitment and reasons why librarianship is a chosen career path.

For decades, advocates for increased racial and ethnic representation in the profession of librarianship have relied primarily on U.S. Census data and subsequent statistical data as justification for the goal to increase ethnic diversity in the library workforce. A more realistic agenda for recruitment and retention for race and ethnicity is needed by the profession at large, and ACRL in particular. Accompanied by specific goals with justification, preferably empirically based and/or logically determined, a revised agenda should address not only the library profession but the communities being served as well. This is not to say that demographics are not key, however, the agenda should be grounded in strategic goals. In 1996, Camila A. Alire wrote: “[All of this is further translated into] a need for more minority library professionals who can identify with people in the minority communities; who can assist in the necessary outreach efforts to serve those minority residents; and who can serve as role models for minority children using the library.” John W. Berry’s 2002 “Presidential Message” echoed this when he reminded us that in order for the profession to serve the increasingly diverse communities, we must build a workforce that reflects that diversity. The goal for recruitment should be broadened beyond the emphasis on increasing numbers to match the demographics of the U.S. population, to focus strategically on increasing diversity in order to serve the diverse communities libraries serve. Careful and appropriate consideration and acknowledgement should be given for the successes and gains realized thus far in the profession, but within the context of specific strategic aims.

The following recommendations are a result of a review of the literature that builds on the 2002 White Paper, with a particular focus on empirically supported solutions from the broader recruitment and retention literatures and the literature on advancement, where available.

Recommended Goals for Recruitment

The primary recommendation for recruitment is to *develop a comprehensive, collaborative (among all stakeholders) recruitment and public awareness campaign for recruitment purposes.* A

A look back at the strategies for recruitment put forth in the 2002 White Paper finds there has been some action, but a comprehensive review of the progress to date has not yet been undertaken. Other recommendations and findings in this paper can be aligned with many of those from the 2002 White Paper to begin the framework for a strategic research agenda. It is also recommended that ACRL take the next step in comprehensively assessing those outcomes.

Recommended Goals for Retention

The literature on retention of minorities in academic librarianship is weak and close to nonexistent. The 2002 White Paper also acknowledges the lack of research on retention in librarianship. Retention strategies do exist in the literature, but there is little longitudinal research to confirm the success of such strategies.

available leadership pools of minority candidates, developing statistical and data reports that can

Under Johnson, federal regulation with Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity also protected fair hiring. Librarianship during the 1960s and much of the 1970s was influenced by the activism of the Civil Rights era. This was an era concerned with achieving equity and justice, thus creating the foundation of diversity recruitment in academic librarianship.

Concerns of gender and social class are also

the 1961 Library of Congress PL-480 Program, libraries built collections that often needed natives from specific countries to catalog and cl

Trejo and Lodwick (1978) surveyed the need for Spanish-speaking librarians and the most effective way to recruit Spanish-speaking students to library school.

In 1989 ACRL established a Task Force on Recruitment of Underrepresented Minorities, which

The Current Environment

Recruitment to the profession, retention of qualified diverse professionals, and a need to create opportunities for and support the advancement of those professionals are not concerns that are new or unique to librarianship (Bowie and Hancock 2000; Thornton 2001; Neely 2005; Buerhaus, et al. 2006). A 2001 survey of 4,000 human resource professionals revealed that recruitment and retention were the two major issues facing their organizations (KnowledgePoint 2001).

Although the current environment for recruitment, retention, and advancement of people of color in academic librarianship remains virtually unchanged since the appearance of the 2002 ACRL White Paper, methods and strategies for addressing the issue seem to be evolving. Additionally, the reasons for the issues remaining relevant seem to be changing as well. In *Recruitment, Retention and Restructuring*, the authors write:

The increasing demand for library professionals coupled with the changing nature of librarianship is beginning to impact the recruiting environment, which is likely to change dramatically and become increasingly competitive. Shortages of MLIS degree holders, increasing retirements, and low salaries make the supply/demand gap even greater for academic libraries.

The 2002 White Paper also cites low domestic unemployment rates, increased competition from competing industries, and a negative image as other primary factors contributing to the problem of recruitment to the profession of librarianship.

The published literature as well as the professional librarianship conference circuit reveals a wealth of evidence indicating the continued need to create and foster an environment that supports and encourages recruitment and retention for race and ethnicity, as well as provide sustainable equitable opportunities for advancement and success in the workplace and the profession. However, an analysis of the published literature reveals that the long-standing goal the profession as a whole continues to aspire to, realistically, may not be attainable.

In 1990, Burrows, Jennings, and Welch compiled and produced ARL SPEC Kit #167, "Minority Recruitment and Retention in ARL Libraries," shortly after the release of *Workforce 2000* (Johnston and Packer 1987). This survey was conducted "to determine the practices of ARL libraries in the areas of cultural diversity, recruitment, and affirmative action." Not surprisingly, the findings are similar, and in some cases, a verbatim template of the solutions to the issue of minority recruitment we are addressing today, more than 15 years later. The authors concluded with the now familiar, "Until the representation of minorities in academic and research library community (sic) begins to approximate that of the general population, libraries must recognize their successful recruitment efforts as a contribution to the profession at large" Since this SPEC Kit was released, the published professional and research literature has offered very little that is unique to diversifying the profession through recruitment.

A lack of reliable and accurate statistics for all areas of the library profession is problematic, particularly when the focus of diversity recruitment is on increasing the numbers. A more

concerted and systematic appro

responding to the survey were in agreement on the following major barriers to minority recruitment:

- lack of qualified applicants in pools
- lack of knowledge of recruiter about where to find qualified minority applicants
- constraints in university screening and recruitment procedures
- union contracts
- mandatory use of personnel rosters

In “Recruiting the underrepresented to academic libraries,” the final report of the ACRL Task Force on Recruitment of Underrepresented Minorities, Beaudin, Fisher, Knowles, and Morita (1990) reported that barriers to recruiting minorities to academic librarianship included a lack of institutional commitment to change and accountability, personal and institutional racism, and barriers to advancement and retention. In 2005, Neely concluded that too few minority faculty in LIS education, a lack of diversity in the LIS curriculum, limited financial support for minority students, and an overall lack of a concerted effort to recruit for diversity were key barriers to recruitment at the graduate school level. An informal survey via an electronic list and other published research supports these conclusions (Knowles 2005).

Barriers to being recruited tell a different story. In *Stop Talking, Start Doing! Attracting People of Color to the Library Profession* (ALA 1999), Reese and Hawkins recount the experience of a young, African American woman who had recently graduated with an MLS degree. She had been unsuccessful in landing a job in the profession and expressed her frustration at a panel session on minority recruitment during the Third National Conference of African American Librarians in 1997 when a “panelist elaborated on the many employment opportunities for people of color within the profession.” Reese and Hawkins write:

This experience helps illustrate that African American library professionals who possess the credentials needed to assume positions [of leadership] within the profession are often denied the opportunity by library board trustees, college deans, and human resource managers. Many African American library professionals are interviewed . . . by individuals who lack the professional skills needed to interview a candidate who is a member of an ethnic minority. Without a doubt, the applicant is treated differently, in many cases, as someone who is

contributing factor to choosing librarianship as a career. Ard et al. (2006) found that although approximately 50% worked in libraries before entering library school, only 31% of those reported their previous experience working in libraries had a strong impact on their decision to

past, opportunities to advance, degree would complement education, marketable skills, knew librarian satisfied with their career, enable me to help my ethnic/racial community, enjoyed working in libraries, desired a career change, someone suggested I would be successful, and good income.

Of interest to professional associations, 100% of the population indicated they were members of ALA, and 55% of those reported they were members of an ALA division. Although ACRL was the division with the highest number of respondents at nearly 30%, it is difficult to determine if other scholars would have selected ACRL as the division of choice since ALA divisions cross library types (public, school, academic) and specialties (young adult, reference, administration and management, technical services).

Linwood Webster's 2002 master's thesis surveyed 79 African Americans attending graduate and professional fairs at historically black colleges and universities and found that although the majority (97.5%) intended to attend graduate school, 73% were not interested in a career in information technology and 78.5% were unaware that the library and information science field existed. Consequently, 77.2% reported they were not interested in pursuing a master's degree in library and information science. Additionally, Webster found that the top six areas of interest that influenced the graduate degree program selection for this population were financial aid, location of school, salary and job availability, cost of program, general reputation of program, and teaching reputation of faculty.

Recruitment Strategies

Eight hundred thousand by 2020. That is the projected number of registered nurses (RN) that will be needed to fill the anticipated available RN positions by the year 2020. A combination of events led up to the nursing profession shortage including an aging workforce and the initial entry to nursing profession at a later age (50 and over). However, the nursing profession appears to have found the solution to increase recruitment. In 2002, Johnson & Johnson, with the help of health care leaders and nursing organizations, launched its "Campaign for Nursing's Future." The aim make the profession of nursing more attractive. The 30 million dollar campaign (amount spent so far) consists of a well-designed Web site, discovernursing.com, and a range of print and TV advertisements. The title of a 2003 article announcing the beginning of Johnson & Johnson's Australian campaign, is, "Image change boosts U.S. nurse recruitment." Buerhaus et al. (2006) report that the focus of the campaign has been on:

- recruiting more people into the profession
- helping resolve the current nursing shortage
- increasing the capacity of nursing education programs
- averting an even more severe shortage of nurses projected to develop in the next decade

A 2003 national survey of nursing students and a 2005 national survey of chief nursing officers

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This model should be adopted and replicated by the American Library Association, its divisions, affiliates, etc. Although the librarian shortage (in numbers) is not expected to be anywhere near equal to the anticipated shortage of nurses—the latest projections anticipate that 66,711 librarians, more than 60% of the current population (estimated to be approximately 106,228 according to the U.S. 2000 Census) will reach retirement age (65) by 2015. The impact on the profession of librarianship, in relative terms, could be devastating with a projected 8-year recovery period (Davis 2004). This means that LIS schools will need to graduate students at a much higher rate than currently in order to meet the need.

The professional and research literature and Web presence on library and information science recruitment and retention is not lacking in volume, recruitment strategies, or recommendations, but it does suffer from divergence. Discovernursing.com, on the other hand, offers one-stop-shopping for anyone interested in pursuing a career in nursing or finding out more about the profession. This author has found herself “seduced” at times by the television advertisements. They are powerful, professional, and effective. The nursing profession faces shortage, aging, and image problems similar to the library profession, however, the positive wide-spread impact of this campaign is expected to be realized by the nursing profession for years to come (Buerhaus et al. 2006).

Although the focus of the campaign is on nursing recruitment overall, there is also a need to improve the diversity of the nursing workforce by recruiting more men and racial and ethnic minorities to serve the increasingly diverse population served by nurses (Buerhaus et al. 2006).

Recommendations for Recruiting People of Color to the Profession

What is recommended for ALA, ACRL, ALISE, ARL, and other professional library and information science organizations is a collaborative, cohesive, holistic approach to harnessing the available information and resources on recruitment and retention and opportunities for advancement. A profession-wide concerted effort will eliminate duplication and channel all efforts through one resource. The resource should be designed with the target markets in mind, and marketed widely. It should be clear and simply organized. For example, discovernursing.com organizes information according to a menu bar that appears on each page of the Web site, with buttons for: Who, What, Why, and How.

Key information is placed on the home page, making it easy to learn about a career in nursing and search for programs and financial support, shortage statistics, nursing benefits, and salaries.

Although there are several library-related recruitment Web sites cited in the literature, none of these has achieved the profession-wide status of discovernursing.com or impacted recruitment efforts. Below is a list of resources that contains already-formulated strategies that could be used to develop a comprehensive recruitment tool.

Alire, C. A. 1996. Recruitment and retention of librarians of color. In *Creating the future: essays on librarianship in an age of great change*, edited by S. G. Reed, 126-143. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co.

Abdullahi, I. 1992. Recruitment and mentoring of minority students. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 33 (4): 307-310.

Beaudin, J., E. M. Fisher, E. C. Knowles and I. Morita. 1990. Recruiting the underrepresented to academic libraries. Final Report of the ACRL Task Force on Recruitment of Underrepresented Minorities. *College & Research Libraries News* (11): 1016-1022.

population. The most recently cited statistics reveal minority representation in the U.S. population at approximately 30% in 2000, with the numbers for minority representation in the profession lagging behind (Hipps 2006). The profession and ACRL must develop and implement a research agenda that supports realistic and strategic goals for addressing recruitment and retention objectives.

The creation, gathering, and maintenance of reliable and accurate data for the profession overall and for academic librarians in particular. “Although we may never have accurate total numbers of minority professionals in LIS, tracking the enrollment figures and graduation rates over time may provide us with a better picture of how many individuals of color are matriculating” (Neely 2005).

The identification, creation and/or development, implementation and replication of best practices for recruitment accompanied by sound empirical evidence with results, outcomes, and indicators for success. The profession and ACRL must develop and implement a research agenda that builds on proven methods and supports creativity and initiative in scholarship aimed at addressing critical gaps in the recruitment literature, particularly for race and ethnicity.

There is already research underway that can inform an ACRL research agenda. “The Future of Librarians in the Workforce” is a national research study funded by IMLS and headed by Dr. José-Marie Griffiths, dean of the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Announced in September 2004, this study

will identify the nature of anticipated labor shortages in the library and information science (LIS) field over the next decade; assess the number and types of library and information science jobs that will become available in the U.S. either through retirement or new job creation; determine the skills that will be required to fill such vacancies; and recommend effective approaches to recruiting and retaining workers to fill them. The study will result in better tools for workforce planning and management, better match of demand and supply, and improved recruitment and retention.

poll students in LIS programs about interests in academic libraries

Some library schools are surveying their students and publishing the results, most recently the University of Alabama SLIS (see Ard et al. 2006). Additionally, recent master's theses have focused on polling MLIS students or those with potential (see Barry-Rodriquez 1999 and Webster 2002).

The literature reviewed for this paper reveals some of the recommended strategies may not be entirely effective. For example, the 2002 paper recommends:

continue the current ALA-sponsored media campaign
get people excited about the profession

Recent studies have confirmed that potential librarians are overwhelmingly not making the decision to enter the profession during high school (see Moen 1988, Ard et al. 2006, Roy et al. 2006). Additionally, the literature on the effectiveness of recruitment programs for the high school population is sparse (see Revels and LaFleur 2003; Hankins, Saunders and Situ 2003). However, there is a growing body of research that provides strategies and recommendations for recruiting student employees who work in libraries (see Gresko 2004; Morton, Fairtile, Frick, Scott and Weimer 2003; Bothmer and LaCroix 2005) and recruiting support staff who work in libraries (see Rogers 2003; Logan and Glover 2005)

The 2002 White Paper tackled the issue of recruitment practices in the academic environment and offered the following strategies:

use new technology like video interviewing or airport interviews to shorten the search process

Other recommendations and findings in this paper can be aligned with many of those from the 2002 White Paper to begin the framework for a strategic research agenda. It is also recommended that ACRL take the next step in comprehensively assessing those outcomes.

Retention

Why recruit to the profession if your “catch” won’t remain? The 2002 White Paper states “Recruitment of top applicants and candidates may end with successful hires, however retaining qualified and motivated employees is a critical issue that will become more important for individual employers and the profession at large in the tightening labor market.” The paper also notes the lack of research on retention in librarianship. In fact, the literature on retention of minorities in academic librarianship is weak and close to nonexistent.

Sherpell (1992), in a dissertation that focused on the racial and gender composition of the professional librarian staffs in Texas in 1972, 1982, and 1992, found that “recruitment and retention of minority academic librarians remain a major problem for the profession with minorities poorly represented in the workforce.” It has been found that there are better results when it comes to retention of minority faculty, but the focus of these studies is academic disciplines and not professional academic library positions. Although many academic librarians do enjoy faculty status, research reports on reappointment and awarding of tenure to minority librarians are absent in our literature. The relationship of faculty status and tenure to the successful retention of minority academic librarians would be an interesting study. Welch and Mozenter (2005) studied the impact of faculty status and tenure on academic librarians by studying three universities. However, the study does not concern retention, but rather the integration of the academic librarian into the university governance structure and academic spheres.

Alire (2001) describes a model retention program for junior faculty of color, although, again, faculty is not limited to library faculty of color.. The program seeks to create a supportive environment through a “Kick Off Breakfast” as well as programming by senior faculty on the “dos and don’ts of academic life. Cost and sustainability are acknowledged as limitations because it takes institutional commitment of resources to assure the successful continuation of such a program.

In 2003, the ARL Office of Leadership and Management Services produced SPEC Kit 276 on Recruitment and Retention authored by Stevens and Streatfeild. One hundred twenty-four libraries were surveyed with a 56% return rate of 69 libraries responding. Regarding retention, the survey asked which list of factors had the most positive impact on retaining librarians. For entry level librarians it was support for professional development. Other factors were:

- position responsibilities and compensation
- work environment and collegial relationships
- library reputation/parent institution reputation
- mentoring system in place
- potential for promotion

population. The 2002 White Paper states, “To lower one barrier to recruiting, libraries are more flexible about candidates’ qualifications. One respondent stated that they did not require an MLS/MLIS now for certain technical positions, but requested an ‘ALA accredited MLS/MLIS degree or equivalent combination of education

positive environment, honoring of employee values, opinion, and voice
rewards
recognition of work-life balance needs

Advancement

If advancement in the field is related to leadership, then there is no lack of literature regarding leadership, a leadership crisis, and descriptions of the institutes, programs, and fellowships developed to create library leaders. Mason and Wetherbee (2004) document and describe the leadership development programs in libraries and conclude “that leadership concepts and leadership training have diffused broadly into the library profession.” Specific literature regarding the development of a climate that supports and encourages advancement is less visible. Although higher education has a body of work on what is called the “chilly climate”(Freyd and Johnson 2003), such specific research and literature is not readily identifiable in library literature. From a review of the literature on advancement and creating an environment conducive to advancement in academic libraries, mentoring is consistently cited as an ingredient for successful leadership development.

The following list of ways in which to encourage advancement in the profession has been developed from the literature review:

- mentoring
- reinventing library work, including cross training
- providing opportunities for education and particularly supporting distance education
- improving salaries and salary structures
- providing on-site day care
- helping a spouse find employment
- networking
- challenge through research, writing, committee activities, and increased responsibilities
- group dynamics/group learning
- diversity cohorts

Although the value of these concepts are written about, little research has been conducted on their effect. Neely and Winston (1999) explore the impact of participation in leadership development programs in terms of career progression and leadership activities. The researchers conclude a difficulty in identifying a direct relationship between participation in a specific

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Appendix A

Annotated Bibliography on Recruitment, Retention and Advancement

Annotated Bibliography

Acree, E. K., S. K. Epps, Y. Gilmore and C. Henriques. “Using Professional Development as a

This article consists of an un-annotated bibliography of articles and books published from 1990-1998. The author points out that his investigation only uncovered two previous bibliographies on the same topic.

Hall, Tracie D., and Jenifer Grady. "Diversity, Recruitment, and Retention: Going from Lip Service to Foot Patrol." *Public Libraries* 45, no. 1 (2006): 39-46.

An interview with Tracie Hall and Jenifer Grady on diversity in librarianship and recruitment and retention efforts. Part of a special issue of *Public Libraries* devoted to recruitment and retention issues.

Howland, Joan S. "Beyond recruitment: retention and promotion strategies to ensure diversity and success." *Library Administration & Management* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 4-14.

Howland explores recruitment, retention and promotion strategies from the administrative perspective. She builds a case for recruitment and retention for diversity in librarianship by laying a framework that recognizes diversity as a multi-dimensional concept, the need to create an environment which supports retention, equity in promotion, professional development and career success, tenure and mentoring.

Lance, Keith Curry. "Racial and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Library Workers." *American Libraries* 36, no. 5 (May 2005): 41-43.

Suggests that librarians make more realistic goals for diversifying the profession. Looks at overall statistics for completion rates for high school and higher education among U.S. minority groups. Suggests that librarians study and assess where libraries stand regarding broad scope of the American labor force.

Neely, Teresa Y. "Minority Student Recruitment in LIS Education: New Profiles for Success." In *Unfinished Business: Race, Equity and Diversity in Library and Information Science Education*, edited by M. Wheeler, 93-117. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005.

Reviews the recruitment literature for LIS education with a focus on minority students and offers a comprehensive discussion on the barriers to recruitment in general, as well as barriers to recruiting minorities. Detailed statistical analysis with specific recruitment strategies are also presented.

Neely, Teresa Y. "Straight Answers from E.J. Josey," *American Libraries* 35, no. 11atP1atP1n L-8(ma08W)1r9s.14

efforts between Southern University and the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University has resulted in a mark