

# Unify to Diversify: Collaborating for Diversity Recruitment

*Jade Albuero*

## Introduction

In recent years, much has been written and said about the graying of the library profession and the concern that there are not enough new information professionals to replace those who have already retired, as well as those who are set to retire within the next decade. At the same time, there have been plenty of discussions about the lack of diversity within our ranks and the need for our workforce to be more reflective of the public that we serve. We are, thus, faced with the imperative to attract and train new librarians, especially those from minority groups.

The Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance (CIRLA) Fellows Program is an innovative way to address both these problems. It is a comprehensive training program designed to recruit diverse individuals into research library careers through a combination of practical experience, mentoring, and professional development.

## Demographics and Diversity

Compared to other occupations, the number of librarian jobs does not change much; according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, job growth is expected to be slower than average (0 to 8 percent) over the 2004–14

period.<sup>1</sup> However, due to the anticipated retirement of numerous librarians, there is actually an excellent forecast with regards to job prospects. Based on figures from the 2000 Census, the American Library Association (ALA) reports that 12 percent of today's librarians will turn 65 years old in the period 2005–2009 and another 45 percent will reach retirement age in the period 2010–2019.<sup>2</sup>

Since this crisis has been looming for over a decade, library associations, library schools, and libraries have been offering incentives and instituting programs to attract more individuals into the profession. These have included scholarships, internships and residencies, flexible school schedules, distance education, and page programs. Laura Bush helped the cause with her support in 2003 for the initial \$10 million Institute for Museum and Library Studies (IMLS) Recruiting and Educating Librarians for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century fund<sup>3</sup> and for the additional \$65 million in subsequent years.<sup>4</sup> Though the data also shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of library and information science (LIS) graduates since about 1990, this will do little to counteract the number of retirements, especially in the period 2015–2019.<sup>5</sup>

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*Jade Albuero is Reference and Collection Processing Librarian/CIRLA Fellow, Library of Congress, email: jalbuero@hotmail.com.*

**Table 1: Credentialed Librarians and General Population by Race/Ethnicity**

	Census Estimates for Librarians, 2000 <sup>8</sup>	Census Data for General Population, 2000 <sup>9</sup>
White	89%	69%
Black/African American	5%	12%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	4%
Hispanic/Latino	2%	13%
Native American/Alaskan	<1%	<1%
Two or more	1%	2%

If there is a shortage of librarians, there is an even greater dearth of minority librarians. According to the latest census and corroborated by the responses submitted as of September 2006 to an ALA Member demographic survey, the overwhelming majority (89 percent) of librarians is White. The remainder consists of 5 percent Black/African American, 3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 percent Latino, less than 1 percent Native American, and 1 percent mixed heritage.<sup>6</sup> Compare this with the general population where non-Hispanic Whites only make up 69 percent.<sup>7</sup> The disparity in racial and ethnic makeup is especially conspicuous in the figures for Black/African and Hispanic/Latino groups (see table 1).

The disproportion is only going to get worse as these minority groups as a whole are quickly becoming the emerging majority. Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 150 percent increase<sup>10</sup> in individuals belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups, and minorities accounted for over 75 percent of the total increase in

population (see table 2). On the other hand, within that same period, minority LIS graduates only increased by 4 percent.<sup>11</sup> This presents a problem because librarianship is user-centered and, when our ranks do not reflect the diversity within greater society, “[our] profession loses relevance for many citizens.”<sup>12</sup>

Over the years, there have been several programs designed to attract minorities into the profession. There have been scholarships, including ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program,<sup>13</sup> the University of Arizona’s Knowledge River,<sup>14</sup> and the Association of Research Libraries’ (ARL’s) Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce.<sup>15</sup> There are mentoring programs, such as the Association of College & Research Libraries’ Dr. E.J. Josey Spectrum Mentoring Program.<sup>16</sup> Several universities, including the University of Delaware,<sup>17</sup> the University of Iowa,<sup>18</sup> and the University of Tennessee,<sup>19</sup> have also established diversity-based library residencies for recent LIS graduates.

Clearly, individual library associations and institutions have been trying a variety of ways to recruit and retain new librarians, as well as to address the lack of diversity within the field. Many do so through monetary benefits and mentoring, while others do so through training. But how can different institutions in the same geographic area work together to attract potential librarians, including those who are already working as paraprofessionals? How can they prepare them for the various types of librarianship even before they obtain their degrees and fast-track them to the mid-level and management positions that will be vacated by retirees? The CIRLA Fellows Program provides answers.

**Partnership and Fellowship**

CIRLA ([www.cirlla.org](http://www.cirlla.org)) is a consortium of educational and research institutions in Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, DC whose purpose is “to enhance education and research at member institutions through collaborative development of library collections and service programs and expanding use of information technology.”<sup>20</sup> It is comprised of Georgetown University, George Washington University, Howard University, Johns Hopkins University, the Library of Congress,

**Table 2: Difference in Population by Race and Ethnicity**

	% Total Population, 1990	% Total Population, 2000	Numerical Difference (2000 minus 1990), Single Race Only	% Difference, Single Race
White	76%	69%	6,424,478	3%
Black/African American	12%	12%	4,731,544	16%
Asian	3%	4%	3,480,688	52%
Hispanic/Latino	9%	13%	12,951,759	58%
Native American/Alaska Native	<1%	<1%	275,110	15%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	27,631	9%

the National Agricultural Library, the Smithsonian Institution, the University of Delaware, the University of Maryland, and the recently-joined National Library of Medicine.

CIRLA, in partnership with ARL, conceived of a program that would not only diversify the library profession but would also address the shortage of librarians in research libraries, the constituents of these two organizations. The CIRLA Fellows Program (<http://cirlafellows.georgetown.edu>), which is funded in part through an IMLS grant, targets diverse (both in personal background and work experience) individuals who want to be trained in the specialties needed by research libraries. It is intended to create a cohort of students who receive broad-based work experiences and other benefits that would facilitate their entry into and success in research libraries specifically and the profession in general. Though originally envisioned as an avenue to recruit members of underrepresented ethnic or racial groups, the program broadened its scope to include individuals who can contribute to diversity based on other aspects of their personal background or through their experiences.

### **Systems and Processes**

Unlike other incentive programs for students—whether for minorities or not—that only offer one or two primary benefits, the CIRLA Fellows Program is more inclusive. It provides a total package, combining paid training, mentoring, and professional development over a two-year period and topping those with a one-year post-degree professional position. It makes these advantages available not only to unaffiliated students (external fellows) but also to degree-seeking paraprofessionals already working at one of the CIRLA institutions (internal fellows).

### **Work Curriculum**

The most significant aspect of the CIRLA Fellows Program is the extensive work curriculum that was methodically developed by an implementation team, comprised of representatives from the member libraries and ARL. Because the goal is to allow fellows to experience the various career possibilities within research libraries, the team came up with a core curriculum that consists of the following four areas:

- Reference/Public Services
- Cataloging/Metadata/Technical Services
- Acquisitions/Collection Development
- Digital Initiatives/Technology/Systems

The team also generated a list of core competencies and goals for each curriculum area to ensure that fellows, who work at different CIRLA libraries, gain the same knowledge and skills.

Through four-month rotations, fellows obtain a basic understanding of, and practical experience in, routine operations in these areas. External fellows, who are full-time students, select a “home” institution, where they work 20 hours a week. Because the program involves a consortium of libraries, these fellows have the benefit of choosing as their base the institution that best fits their learning goals and/or personal circumstances. Internal fellows, who are full-time employees and part-time students, continue to work at their library of employment but receive release time (usually one day a week) to do abbreviated rotations outside their departments.

In addition to the core curriculum, the program includes an elective curriculum. It allows fellows to individualize their experience by choosing two extra rotations based on their specific interests or learning objectives. This part of the Program takes advantage of the collaboration between and the strengths of the member libraries, as fellows are encouraged to fulfill these rotations externally or outside their home institutions. Electives could be in any area, including: Archives, Special Collections, Preservation, Scholarly Communication, Teaching and Learning with Technology, Language or Subject Collection Development, Licensing and Copyright, etc. These elective rotations could also be used to gain further or more specialized training in the core areas.

The program is similar to library residencies in its rotational structure but, since it is intended for students rather than recent graduates, it enables fellows to use their work curriculum to complement their LIS coursework and vice-versa. For example, fellows can put into action what they have learned in their classes, or they may be inspired to take additional classes in specific areas, or they may realize that they are not interested in other areas. Thus, not only do they get two years worth of focused work experiences even before they graduate, but they are able to exploit simultaneously their work and academic programs to explore, or even discover, their particular interests in librarianship.

### **Mentoring Relationship**

As they go through their work curriculum, the fellows have mentors who serve as their guides. Each CIRLA library has a designated mentor, and fellows work closely with the mentors from their home institutions.

These individuals are the point persons for the program and make arrangements for the rotations in different departments. They ensure that the fellows are on target with their work curriculum and are attaining the delineated competencies. They also act as advisors to the fellows, who are juggling work and school with personal lives and longer-term career planning.

While their relationships with their assigned mentors are the more institutionalized, fellows have access to other coaches. They have at their disposal the mentors from other CIRLA libraries. They can also utilize their supervisors and co-workers in their various rotations for additional guidance.

### ***Professional Development***

To supplement the specific insights afforded by the work curriculum and the mentoring, fellows have several professional development opportunities that give them broader pictures or, at least, different views. They receive monies to attend at least one national conference, where they can learn about a wide range of library issues and trends, as well as network with professionals in the field. They are also encouraged to participate in local and in-house seminars, meetings, and trainings.

At regular intervals throughout the program, the fellows (and mentors) attend full-day meetings hosted by the various CIRLA institutions. During the first part of the day, they have workshops on topics of special interest to them, such as navigating professional associations and conferences, diversity issues, digital initiatives, special collections, and eGovernment. They may also have interactive sessions where, for instance, they get to play the role of human resource personnel going through applicants' résumés or go through mock job interviews.

During these meetings, fellows network with the host library's staff and administrators. They also tour some of the buildings, departments, and collections. Through these open houses (and the external rotations), fellows not only learn about the libraries, collections, and projects, but they get to compare and contrast the different environments, priorities, policies, management styles, etc.

### ***Career-Launching Opportunity***

To cap off the program experience, fellows have the chance to continue their training and career development through one-year, full-time, post-degree, professional positions at one of the CIRLA libraries. According to Irene Hoffman, the initial Project Director of

the program, "This is a win-win opportunity for both the libraries and the fellows: the libraries will be able to capitalize on the rich experiences fellows have gained through the program, while the fellows will be able to put their new skills into practice."<sup>21</sup>

### **Facts and Figures**

The CIRLA Fellows Program ran from September 2004 to December 2006 (not including the time it took to put processes in place and to wrap up the IMLS grant). Here are some of its statistical highlights:

- Sixteen fellows entered the program: eleven joined in September 2004, four in September 2005, and one in January 2006. Two fellows left the program, one for personal reasons and the other to accept a full-time position as a reference librarian in an educational publishing firm.

- Since they entered the program at various stages of their degree-seeking, many fellows graduated early on. Four obtained positions at CIRLA libraries as: Engineering Reference Librarian at the University of Maryland; Librarian at the Japan Resource Center at George Washington University; Research Assistant at the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress; and Digital Services Librarian at the National Agricultural Library. They continued to participate in the Program and were designated as Senior Fellows.

- All nine<sup>22</sup> CIRLA institutions hosted open houses. The Library of Congress sponsored a week-long introduction to the various divisions and initiatives.

- The fellows attended numerous conferences, including ALA Midwinter (2005, 2006, 2007), ALA Annual (2005, 2006), Computers in Libraries (2006), Council on East Asian Libraries (2006), EduCause (2006), Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Preconference (2006), Society of American Archivists (SAA) (2005, 2006), Special Libraries Association (2006), and Virtual Reference Conference (2005).

- Six of the fellows worked together on a poster about the program that they presented at ALA Annual (2006). One fellow presented a poster about one of her rotations at the SAA Conference (2006). Another fellow will be presenting a paper about the program at the Association of College & Research Libraries Conference (2007).

- All but three fellows have received their LIS degrees. Of the eleven graduates, three (Senior Fellows) are continuing with their recently-obtained jobs. Of the eight (including one Senior Fellow) who were offered post-degree positions at the Library of Congress, six

have begun their terms; one chose to stay at her paraprofessional position at Howard University; and one has not begun his position. The three who are still in school remain in their paraprofessional positions.

### Overall Outcomes

The CIRLA Fellows Program has been a successful experiment in collaborating for diversity recruitment. Among its outcomes are:

- *Heightened Collaboration.* Though the CIRLA consortium already existed beforehand, this program enabled the libraries and their staff to cooperate on a different level. Externally, mentors, library directors, and other representatives had to work closely together to structure and implement the program and to ensure its success. Internally, library staff had to work together in training and the fellows.

- *Fellowship and Camaraderie.* The program created a cohort of students from four different universities (Catholic University of America, Southern Connecticut State University, University of Maryland, University of Pittsburgh), bringing together individuals who may otherwise not have met. As they finished their degrees, went through their rotations, and attended trainings and conferences, the fellows had a peer group with whom they could share their experiences, discuss issues and concerns, and form friendships.

- *Supportive Relationships.* In addition to taking care of the logistical aspects of the rotations, the mentors served as advocates for the fellows, especially when they encountered staff resistance. In that capacity and in their role as advisors, they displayed genuine concern for the fellows' well-being, which probably explains why fellows have expressed the desire to continue their relationships with their mentors even after the program has concluded.

- *Trained Professionals.* The work curriculum, mentoring, professional development opportunities, and post-degree positions are producing fellows who are not only well-trained but also knowledgeable about information issues. With the depth and breadth of their experiences, fellows will be entering the workforce with more skills and qualifications than most recent graduates, thus making them better-prepared to fill the mid-level positions being vacated by retirees.

- *Increased Diversity.* The program has increased diversity in CIRLA libraries with the hiring of some fellows in permanent professional positions and with the placement of others in year-long, post-degree positions. Even during their rotations, the fellows were already in-

vigorating the libraries with their different backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas.

- *Replicable Model.* The Program is designed to be a replicable model for diversity recruitment and training. The delineated work curriculum and competencies make it easier for other consortia to follow CIRLA's lead. To this end, the Program administrators also intend to produce a document that would serve as a guide to those who are interested in implementing similar programs.

### Lessons Learned

The program was far from perfect though, and there are things that could be done to improve it. Those who are planning on replicating the program should take these into consideration:

- *Planning and Administration.* With so many institutions involved, it required a great deal of time to plan and administer the program. A full-time project director was really needed to facilitate communication and processes. However, with a curriculum and guide to follow and, perhaps, with less libraries involved, it is possible that a similar program would not be as time-consuming.

- *Staff Expectations and Training.* While the library directors were supportive of the program, there needed to be more buy-in from staff, especially those who were involved in training the fellows. All library staff needed to be informed about the program, the expectations from them, and the expected challenges. It might have been helpful to have this information written down for ready reference. Also, supervisors (not just designated mentors) needed training on how to be mentors or coaches.

- *Consistency.* It would probably have been better if all fellows were at the same stage in their degree-seeking when they joined this program. Fellows who graduated early faced difficulties in supporting themselves financially while fulfilling the remainder of their part-time rotations. Though it was helpful for some to have peers who were advanced stages of their LIS programs, it would probably have created a greater sense of camaraderie among the fellows if they were going through their LIS programs together. They could have related to each other not just about the rotations but also about their classes and projects. Also, while it is an excellent idea to have internal fellows, it takes them longer to acquire their degrees, and it might make more sense to put them in a separate cohort.

- *Flexibility.* Though it was good to have the program relatively structured, there should have been more

for flexibility. For instance, there should have been some leeway in the amount of time that fellows spent in their rotations, as some of them did not need to last four months while others could have lasted longer. Also, while it is important to have a home institution, some departments have limited staff, and it would have been better for everyone involved if fellows did certain rotations in libraries with greater capacities.

- *Longer-Term Planning.* While the value of the post-degree positions is undeniable, these put the fellows' career in a sort of limbo. Even as they started their year-long positions, fellows already had to worry about finding more permanent positions. Program administrators should, perhaps, put processes in place that would facilitate the eventual transition.

Collaborations of any kind are bound to create complications, and the CIRLA Fellows Program has not been an exception. However, the difficulties are minor compared to the benefits garnered from the partnership. In unifying to diversify research libraries, CIRLA institutions have not only been instrumental in transforming students of varying backgrounds into highly-qualified librarians, but they have also allowed these individuals to rejuvenate their ranks. By establishing a replicable model for recruitment and training, CIRLA libraries and ARL have set into motion the means to replenish quickly the void being left by retirees and to do so with individuals who are specifically trained in research librarianship and who reflect the diversity found in greater society.

## Notes

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. 2007. "Librarian." In *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006–07 Edition. Available at: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm>.

2. Denise M. Davis. 2005. "Library Retirements—What to Expect." Office for Research and Statistics, Office for Diversity, American Library Association. Available at: [http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/reports/LISGradsPositionsAndRetirements\\_rev1.pdf](http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/reports/LISGradsPositionsAndRetirements_rev1.pdf).

3. Rebecca T. Lenzini, 2002. "The Graying of the Library Profession: A Survey of Our Professional Association and Their Responses." *Searcher* 10 (7): 88. Available at: <http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/jul02/lenzini.htm>.

4. The fund is now called the Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian Program (<http://www.ims.gov/applicants/grants/21centuryLibrarian.shtml>). It has dispensed over \$75 million in grants from 2003–2006, and its budget remains at over \$20 million for 2007 (<http://www.ims.gov/pdf/budgethistory.pdf>).

5. Mary Jo Lynch, Stephen Tordella, and Thomas Godfrey. 2005. "Retirement and Recruitment: A Deeper Look." *American Libraries* 36 (1): 28.

6. Denise M. Davis and Tracie D. Hall. 2006. *Diversity Counts*. Office for Research and Statistics, Office for Diversity, American Library Association, 9. Available at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/diversitycounts/DiversityCountsReport.pdf>.

7. Elizabeth M. Grieco and Rachel C. Cassidy. 2001. "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin 2000." U.S. Census Bureau. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>.

8. Davis and Hall, 9.

9. Grieco and Cassidy, 10.

10. This percentage only includes respondents who selected a single race. If those who selected more than one race are taken into consideration, the percentage increases to a total of 153 percent for Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American and Asian groups and another 222 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's "Table 4. Difference in Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin, for the United States: 1990 to 2000." Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t1/tab04.pdf>.

11. Davis and Hall, 3.

12. Denise Adkins and Isabel Espinal. 2004. "The Diversity Mandate." *Library Journal*. Available at: <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA408334.html>.

13. See <http://www.ala.org/ala/diversity/spectrum/spectrum.htm>.

14. See <http://knowledgeriver.arizona.edu>.

15. See <http://www.arl.org/diversity/init/index.shtml>.

16. See <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlproftools/mentor-program.htm>.

17. See <http://www2.lib.udel.edu/personnel/brochure.htm>.

18. See <http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/about/employment/residency.html>.

19. See <http://www.lib.utk.edu/diversity/activities/residency/minorityresidency.html>.

20. Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance home page: <http://www.cirla.org>.

21. Irene M. Hoffman. 2006. "Diversity and Research Libraries: The CIRLA Fellows Program." In *Achieving Diversity: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*, eds. Barbara I. Dewey and Loretta Parham. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 96.

22. During most of the grant period, there were only nine member libraries. The National Library of Medicine joined CIRLA in the latter part of 2006.