



RBMS Diversity Committee

Recruiting Members of Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups to the Special Collections Library Profession: A How-To Session

A presentation sponsored by the RBMS Diversity
Committee

Sarah S. Fisher, Athena N. Jackson, and Fernando Peña
June 24, 2010 | RBMS Preconference | Philadelphia, PA

Session Triptych

Fernando Peña

**HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

**Genesis of the
Diversity
Recruitment
Toolkit**

Athena Jackson

**DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT
TOOLKIT**

**Description
Deployment
Tips**

Sarah Fisher

**APPLYING THE
TOOLKIT**

**Exploring ideas
for use of the
Toolkit**

I. Fernando Peña

Historical Perspective



RBMS Diversity Committee

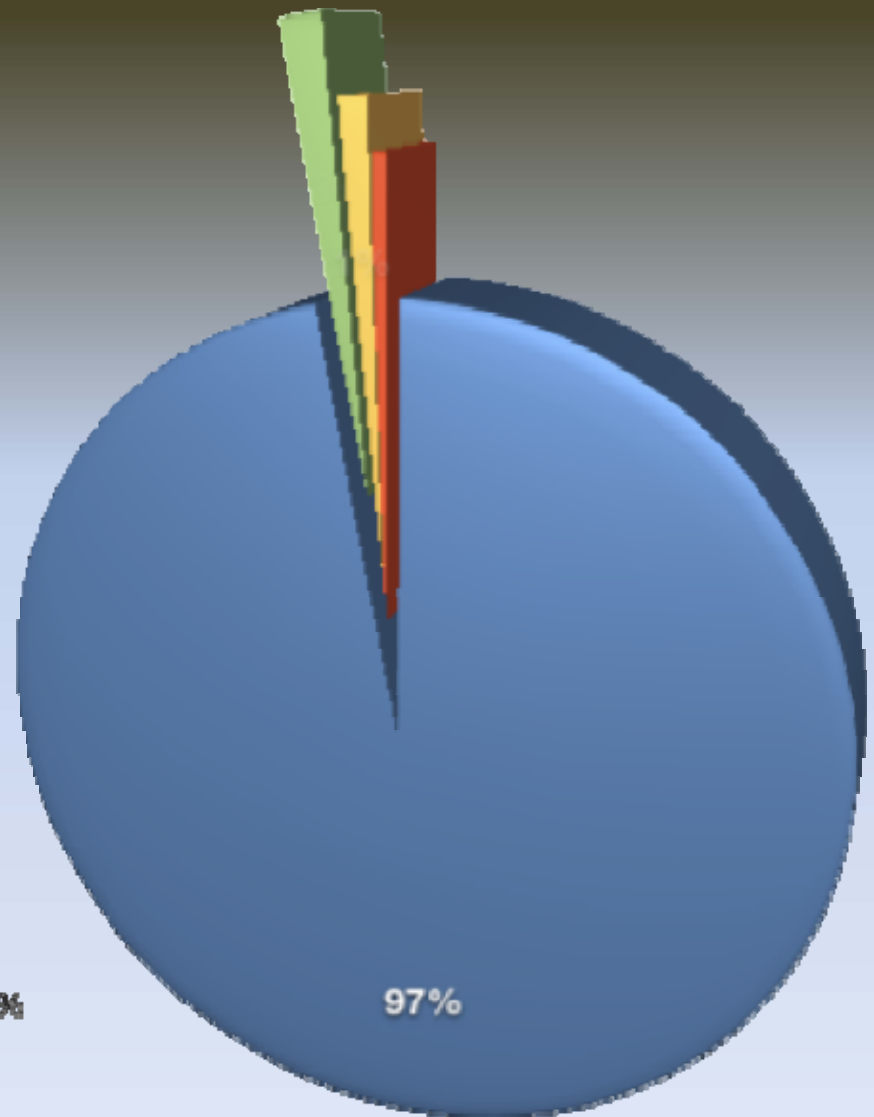
A Short History of Diversity Initiatives in RBMS, Outreach Visits, and the Tool Kit

- J. Fernando Peña
- June 24, 2010 | RBMS Preconference | Philadelphia, PA

"Why Diversity, Why Now?"

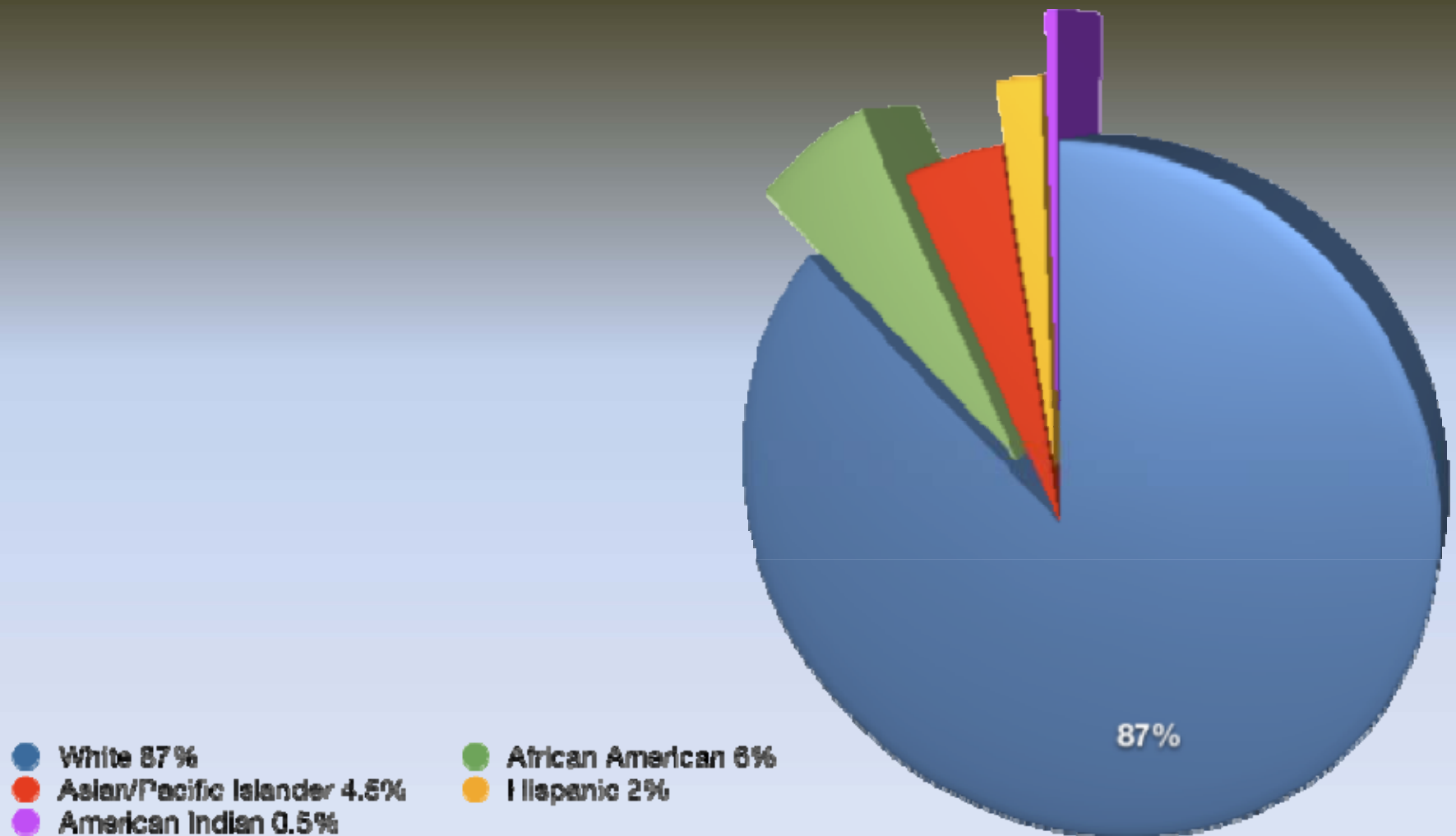


1997 RBMS M&PD Survey

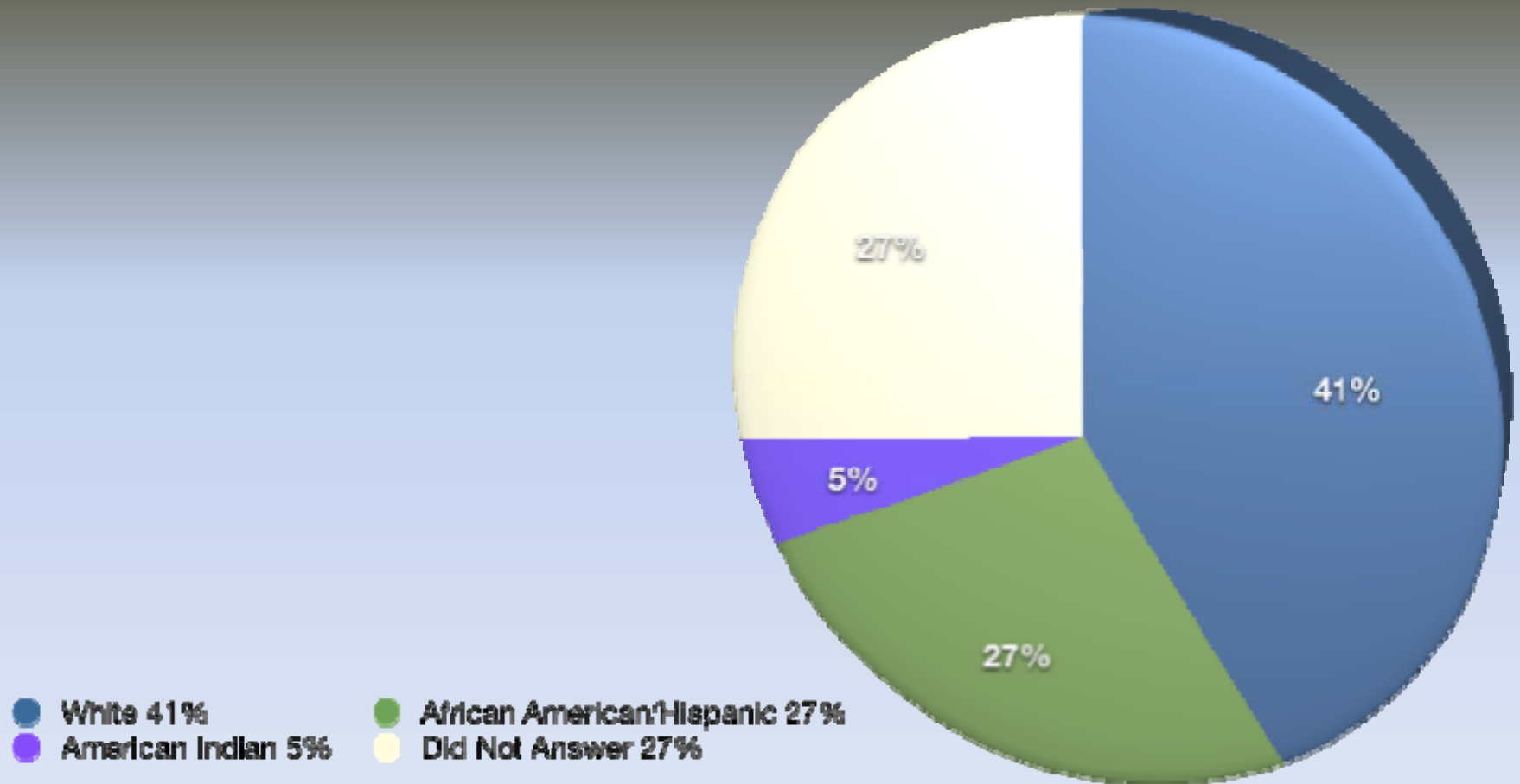


- White 97%
- African American 1.5%
- Hispanic 1%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 0.5%

1998 ALA Survey of Academic Libraries



2000 ACRL Non-RBMS Member Survey



First Diversity Initiatives in RBMS

- **June 2002 roundtable discussion** at Atlanta RBMS Preconference on demographic surveys
- **Result:** RBMS must develop its own diversity action plan, building on groundwork laid by ALA and ACRL and by Society of American Archivists
- **Next step:** In August 2002 RBMS approves Statement on Diversity and appoints Task Force to draft diversity action plan

RBMS Statement on Diversity

(Approved Aug. 2002)

“The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL/ALA is committed to diversity in its membership, in rare books and special collections librarianship, and among users of rare books, manuscripts and special collections.

RBMS encourages participation in the section by people of any race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability; it supports its members in serving the broadest possible population; and it seeks to represent the concerns and interests of rare books and special collections librarians at a variety of institutions, including academic libraries, public libraries, research libraries, special libraries, and historical societies.”

RBMS Task Force on Diversity

(Appointed Aug. 2002)

- Julie Grob (Univ. of Houston), chair; Caroline Duroselle-Melish (Univ. of Rochester, now at Harvard); James Fox (Univ. of Oregon); Adan Griego (Stanford); and Suzy Taraba (Wesleyan)
- Charged with creating an action plan for encouraging diversity in the section
- Considered six main areas: scholarships, mentoring, publicity, outreach, liaison relationships, and encouraging diverse collections

RBMS Task Force on Diversity

- Focused on actions and goals relatively easy to carry out but with potentially strong impact
- Screened out actions that would be too cumbersome or have limited impact
- Developed concrete examples of how to achieve each goal
- Designated responsible parties for each goal to ensure that actions were accomplished

RBMS Diversity Action Plan

(Approved June 2003)

- **Goal 1:** To encourage librarians of various backgrounds, particularly underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, to join RBMS
- **Goal 2:** To promote special collections librarianship as a career to members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- **Goal 3:** To liaise and pursue initiatives with other groups that focus on diversity or diverse collections

RBMS Diversity Action Plan

(Approved June 2003)

- **Goal 4:** To encourage special collections in collecting materials from diverse communities
- **Goal 5:** To promote diversity as a value to RBMS members

RBMS Diversity Action Plan Initial Implementation

- **Goal 1:** Offer preconference scholarships to professionals; create new mentoring program; revise new introductory RBMS membership materials that mention diversity
- **Goal 3:** Liaise with various ALA and ACRL diversity-related groups

RBMS Diversity Action Plan

Initial Implementation

- **Goal 4:** Hold and co-sponsor workshops, preconference programs and tours on collecting materials from diverse communities
- **Goal 5:** Hold workshops and programs on improving diversity in RBMS and profession; submitted article on diversity in RBM

RBMS Diversity Action Plan

- **Goal 2:** To promote Special Collections librarianship as a career
- A. Offer preconference scholarships to students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- B. Hold presentations on special collections at heavy minority enrollment institutions in cities where RBMS or ALA conferences are held

Outreach Presentations: Preliminary Discussions

- **Location:** 2006 ALA Midwinter Conference in San Antonio
- **Audience:** Concentrate on undergraduates in ethnic studies classes or similar
- **Other possible venues:** University career centers or libraries
- **Content:** Promote profession as attractive career; discuss range of career paths; high-light presenter's path in special collections

Our Lady of the Lake University

San Antonio, Texas



St. Mary's University

San Antonio, Texas



Outreach Presentations

San Antonio, Jan. 19-20, 2006

- **Our Lady of the Lake University:** Texas history class; approx. 20 students plus handful of visitors and staff; contact, Prof. Maria Carolina Flores
- **St. Mary's University:** Special gathering of approx. 15 students plus faculty and staff at university library; contact, Dr. Antonia I. Castañeda

University of Washington

Seattle, Washington



Seattle University

Seattle, Washington



Outreach Presentations

Seattle, Jan. 22-23, 2007

- **University of Washington:** Center for Career Services; 5 students (3 from LIS program); contact, Diane Martin, Associate Director for Career Services
- **Seattle University:** African-American history class; 14 students; contact, Dr. Saheed Adejumobi, History Dept.

Outreach Presentations

San Antonio and Seattle

Presentation Structure:

- Background on RBMS, reason for visit, and need for diversity in field
- Overview of special collections librarianship, kinds of collections and materials, etc., especially special collections in local area
- Academic preparation necessary
- Personal stories about our career paths

Outreach Presentations

San Antonio and Seattle

- **Presentation Structure:**
- Examples of objects in our collections
- Opportunities for students, e.g. Spectrum scholarships, RBMS Preconference scholarships, Rare Book School, and mentoring programs

Outreach Presentations

San Antonio and Seattle

Difficulties and Obstacles:

- Establishing reliable contacts at venue
- Gathering target audience without help of local contact
- Coordinating ALA conference with academic calendar
- Convincing professors to add outreach presentations to rigid syllabus

I. Athena N. Jackson
The Diversity Recruitment
Toolkit



RBMS Diversity Committee

Recruiting Members of Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups to the Special Collections Library Profession: Using the Diversity Recruitment Toolkit

Athena N. Jackson

Digitizing Louisiana Newspapers Project Manager

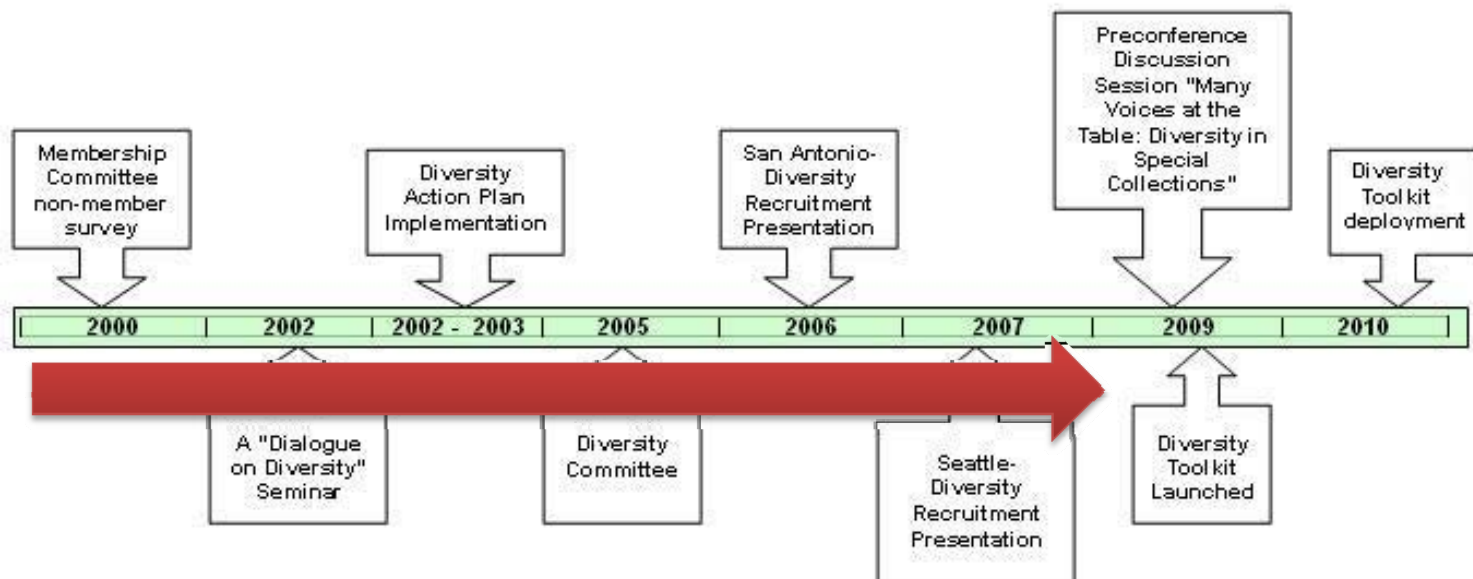
RBMS Diversity Committee Co-Chair, 2009-2011

June 24, 2010 | RBMS Preconference | Philadelphia, PA

Preparing the Toolkit

RBMS Diversity Committee:

Greatest Hits (So Far!)



Preparing the Toolkit: 2009

2009 RBMS Preconference Discussion Session*

“Many voices at the table: Diversity in special collections”

- ❖ “There is still a need for more proactive recruitment”
- ❖ “A letter is not enough”
- ❖ “Do not be paralyzed”

Diversity Toolkit Launched

- ❖ developed from the Diversity Action Plan goals
- ❖ strengthened by initial outreach sessions prior to 2009

Special thanks to: Diana Wess, Lynn Thomas, and the 2009-2010 Executive Committee

*Notes from this discussion session can be found here:

http://wikis.ala.org/acrl/index.php/C._Many_Voices_at_the_Table:_Diversity_in_Special_Collections

Diversity Recruitment Toolkit



Contents

- Overview, News & Events
- About RBMS
- Manual
- History
- Diversity
- Committees
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Publications
- Standards
- Resources

RBMS Diversity Committee

Charge: To encourage members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to join and participate in RBMS; to recruit members of these groups into the Special Collections profession; to partner with other groups in the library field that focus on diversity or diverse collections; to generate and facilitate seminars, workshops, and programs about collecting materials related to racial and ethnic groups and providing outreach to patrons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Coordination: The Diversity Committee will work in close collaboration with other RBMS committees and discussion groups to fulfill this charge. A member of this committee serves on the Scholarship Subcommittee of the Membership and Professional Development Committee.

Practices and Procedures: Specific activities of the Diversity Committee may include maintaining a set of diversity resource pages on the RBMS web site; developing or facilitating programming and workshops that fulfill its charge at regional and national conferences; and facilitating presentations by RBMS members to students at colleges and universities with high minority enrollments.

- [Current Members \(from RBMS Committee Roster\)](#)

RBMS Diversity Recruitment Toolkit

An online guide for RBMS members and library professionals who wish to make presentations about careers in special collections librarianship to students and paraprofessional staff, particularly those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

- Diversity Toolkit [[MS Word](#)] [[PDF](#)]
- Assessment tool [[MS Word](#)] [[PDF](#)]
- Preserving Culture as a Career: Becoming a Special Collections Librarian (a sample handout to distribute to audience) [[MS Word](#)] [[PDF](#)]

Resources and Documents

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<http://rbms.info/committees/diversity/index.shtml>

1. Diversity Toolkit

- ❖ Goals for presentation
- ❖ Outreach strategies
- ❖ Planning a successful presentation
- ❖ Giving a successful presentation

2. Assessment Tool

1 PAGE BRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE:

- ❖ Before you heard this presentation had you:
 - Heard of special collections?
 - Used special collections?
- ❖ If, YES, have you considered a career in special collections?
- ❖ Did the presenter(s) successfully explain special collections librarianship?
- ❖ What did you like best about the presentation?
- ❖ How could the presentation have been improved?

3. Handout:

Preserving Careers as a Special Collections Librarian

- ❖ What do you need to become a special collections librarian?
- ❖ Opportunities for students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups
- ❖ Examples of special collections and archives
- ❖ Related professions
- ❖ Other suggestions
- ❖ Job information

Deploying the Toolkit

Boston Public Library, Boston, MA

- Prior to: 2010 ALA Midwinter Meeting
- Audience: invited students in local SLIS programs; contact: Em Claire Knowles (SLIS professor – Simmons College)
- Content: First deployment of the Diversity Recruitment Toolkit by Verónica Reyes-Escudero & Athena N. Jackson

Deploying the Toolkit

University of North Texas - SLIS 5290
Special Collections, University of
Houston, Special Collections

- Spring Semester, 2010
- Audience: UNT-SLIS students registered in course; contact: Pat Bozeman (SLIS professor - UNT)
- Content: Hybrid deployment of the Diversity Recruitment Toolkit by Athena N. Jackson

Deploying the Toolkit

Louisiana State University– SLIS course:
Academic Libraries

- Spring Semester, 2010
- Audience: LSU-SLIS students registered in course; contact: Alma Dawson (SLIS professor – LSU)
- Content: Deployment of the Diversity Recruitment Toolkit by Athena N. Jackson

Tips & Approaches

Toolkit is agile in nature

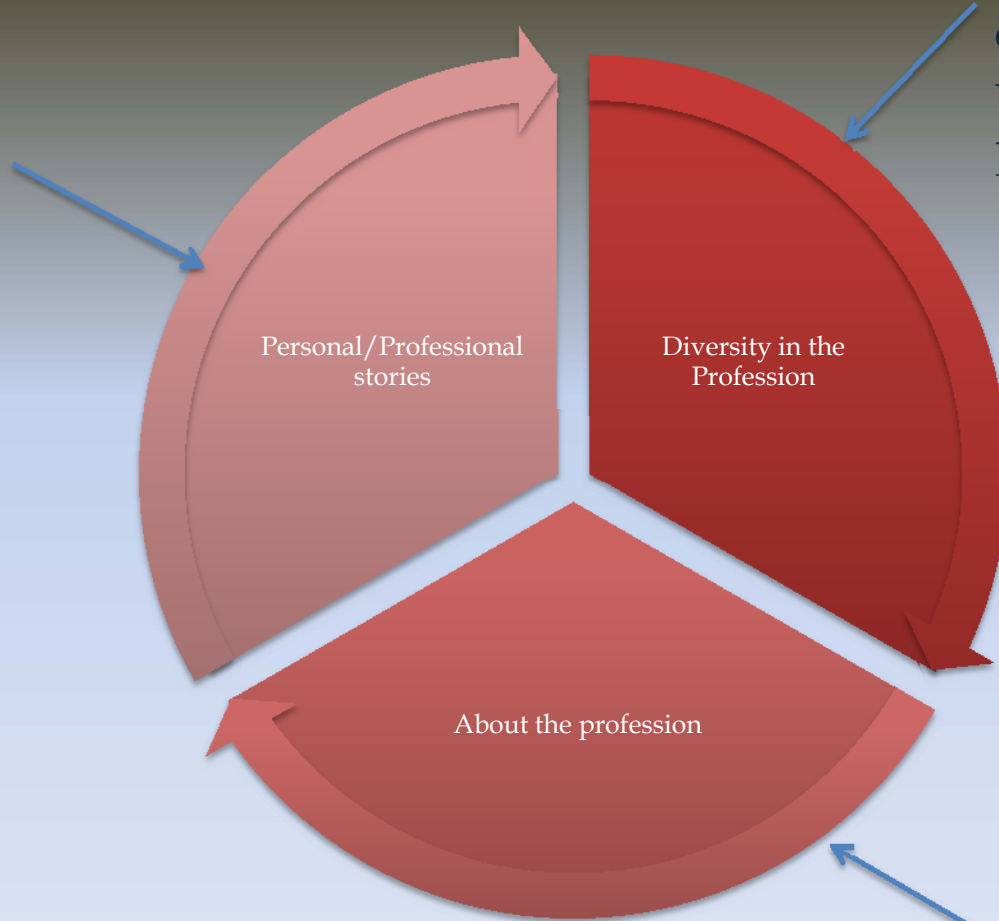
- Comfort levels in presentation
- Start small and build relationships
- Consider Audience / Venue

Cover the main points at levels that match the venue / audience

- About the profession
- Personal / Professional stories
- Diversity in the profession

Approaches

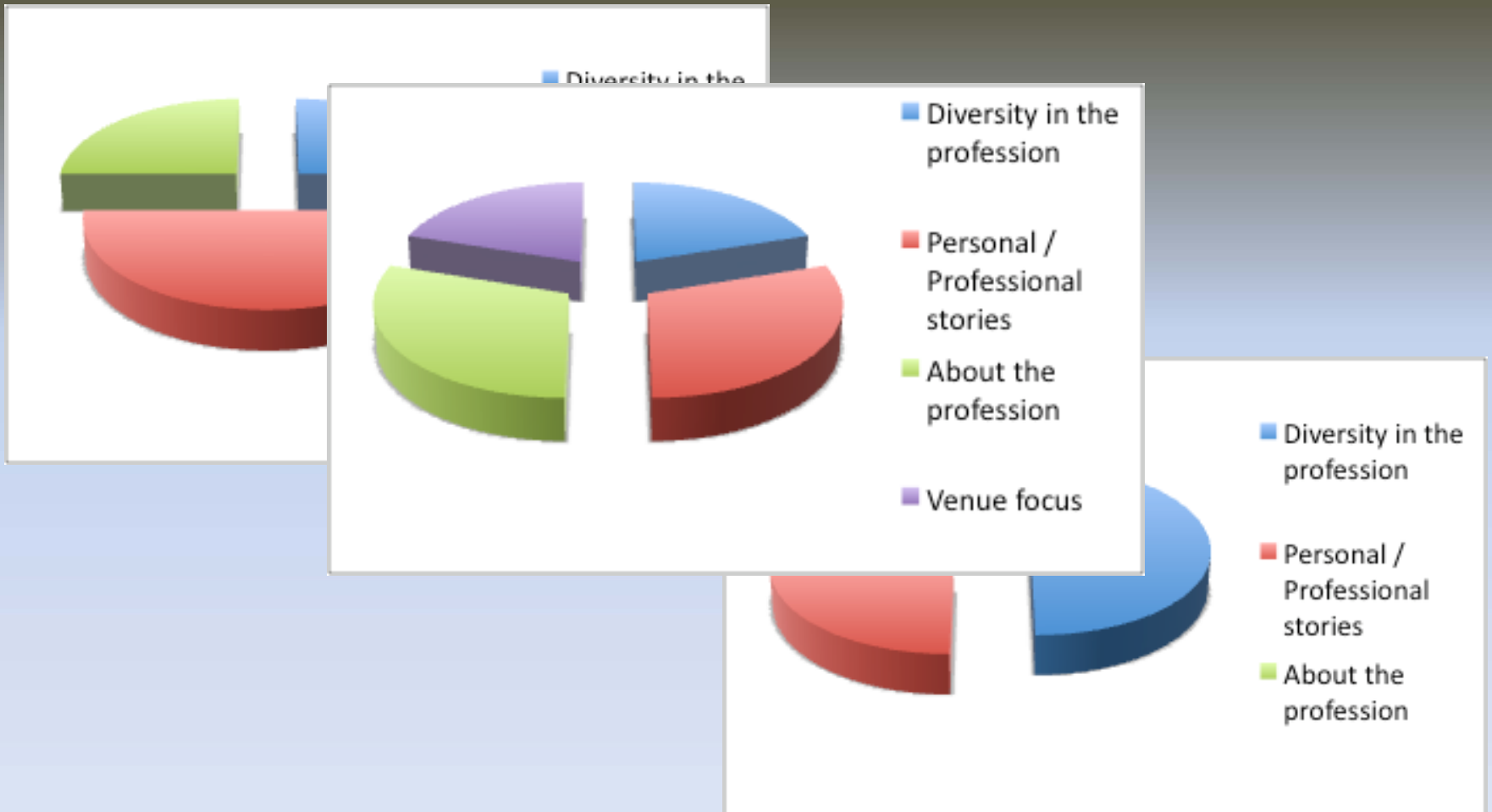
Statistics, history of the Diversity Committee, Examples of diverse collections are great ways to connect this point to the audience



Connect with the audience by sharing what inspired you to consider the profession

Show and tell is always a great visual connection for audience

Approaches



Feedback



The presenter was clear, concise, and informative. It was obvious that she enjoyed her career, what she is involved in, and this particular topic. **I enjoyed the use of statistics** (pie charts, etc.) for the comparatives (e.g. 1997 vs. 2007). The slide presentation was put together well. - Jennifer Koenig, LSU-SLIS

Athena is a very enthusiastic and engaging speaker. **I was surprised at the extremely low levels of diversity** in Special Collections in the late 1990's, but impressed with the progress since then. The RBMS Diversity Committee has done some truly vital work. - Ross Mays, LSU-SLIS



I also **liked the practical example** of the gains which can be made from maintaining special libraries, by that I mean the histories that can be recorded such as the picture you showed of the family and then you told us some of the histories of the children in the family. -Jenny Tapp, LSU-SLIS

I really enjoyed this presentation, **but had no idea that diversity was such an issue** in a Special Collections setting. It really made me think about how important it is to bring awareness of this situation to others, what I could do to help, and how to go about doing it. I look forward to seeing what this new knowledge will bring to the profession and how Special Collections professionals will meet the challenges they face...I think the only thing **I'd be really interested in seeing is more ways to get involved.** - Lisa Tafoya, UNT-SLIS



III. Sarah Fisher

Applying the Toolkit



RBMS Diversity Committee

Taking the Toolkit further

Ways we can all contribute

Mentoring

Be approachable

Talk to everyone

Students, Staff, Faculty, Visitors

Hiring

What grade staff are you hiring?

Qualifications

Where to advertise

Outreach

Let's take the toolkit:

Back to high school!

How about undergraduates?

SUMMARY

Fernando Peña

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Rich History
- Justification for Need
- Professional Support

Athena Jackson

DIVERSITY RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT

- Dynamic Design
- Abundant Resources
- Works!

Sarah Fisher

APPLYING THE TOOLKIT

- Adaptable Application
- Complements other Forms of Outreach
- Allays Apprehension

Stay in Touch!