

# Versed

*adj.* Practiced or skilled; knowledgeable.

BULLETIN OF THE  
OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY,  
AMERICAN LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2004

SPECIAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2004 ISSUE

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### White Privilege In Library Land

**John D. Berry**

ALA Councilor at Large and Native American Studies Librarian/Comparative Ethnic Studies Librarian, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley

Having just returned from the CARL (California Academic and Research Libraries) conference, where I was a panelist on a Diversity Panel for Reference service, I just had to stop and think to myself: What exactly is necessary, to get across the ideals and values of diversity, not just in improved reference services, but profession wide?

My co-panelists were younger, probably more articulate and female, all to the good and they were most eloquent. We were all willing to do this session and believe in our professions need for diversity, professionally and in regards to services to our communities.

At the end of our session, during the question and answer period, one academic librarian in the audience said and I paraphrase, "So, if we just treat everybody nicely, that should do it." Not particularly phrased as a question either. I know this librarian did not mean this poorly, but they still apparently didn't get it. Superficially, that answer could be yes. But, that doesn't really get it either.

Perhaps an adapted version of some of the questions from "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh will help.

These are yes or no questions, if you can say yes to most of these questions, you possess "white privilege."

1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the professional company of people of my race most of the time.

2. If I should need to change jobs, I can be pretty sure of working in my library position in a library professionally staffed, primarily, if not exclusively with people of my race.
3. I can be pretty sure that my colleagues in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
5. I can be pretty sure that the person in charge in a library will be a person of my race.
6. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
7. I can examine the majority of materials in my library, print or media and see people of my race widely represented.
8. When conducting collection development, I can easily find materials featuring people of my race.
9. When I research national history or "civilization," I find that I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
10. I can criticize my library or my profession and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as an outsider.
11. I can go home from most professional meetings or conferences feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
12. If my work day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask myself of each

*For more dialogue on this topic, don't miss...*

### No Crystal Stair, Only Glass Ceilings

#### Underrepresented Groups and Library Leadership

**ALA Annual Conference**  
**Saturday, June 26, 2004**  
**1:30-3:30 P.M.**  
**Orlando Convention Center, 223 B**

Library Directors and Deputy Directors from ethnically diverse backgrounds are still somewhat rare. This program brings together library leaders from underrepresented groups to tell their personal stories of challenge and triumph. Gain insight and strategies for navigating the road to leadership. Frank talk about mentoring; networking; avoiding pigeonholes and pitfalls for those trying to break out of the box and for anyone who wants to know what it takes to accelerate their careers. Featuring Luis Herrera (Director, Pasadena Public Library); Ling Hwey Jeng (Dean, Texas Women's University School of Library and Information Science); Ruby Licona (Associate Dean, Mississippi State University Libraries); Laurel Minott (Deputy Director, Northwestern University Library); Greg Reese (Director, East Cleveland Public Library); and Andrew Venable (Director, Cleveland Public Library).

negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.

continued on **PAGE 12**

## IN THIS ISSUE

<b>From the Field:</b> An Interview with John Ayala . . . . .	2
<b>From the Field:</b> Self-advocacy and Minority Retention . . . . .	6
<b>Mark Your Calendar:</b> Annual Events and Summer Conferences . . . . .	4
<b>Diversity Toolchest:</b> Academic Research Residencies and More . . . . .	8
<b>Spectrum Scope:</b> From Library School to Career . . . . .	11

## About Versed

*Versed*, the official publication of the American Library Association's Office for Diversity, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, is published 5 times per year online at [www.ala.org/versed](http://www.ala.org/versed) with paper printings available twice yearly at ALA Midwinter Meetings and Annual Conferences.

True to its meaning: practiced, skilled, or knowledgeable; *Versed* will bring together the most progressive practitioners and the best practices in current library-based diversity work.

Please consider submitting an article or editorial; sharing a successful program or initiative; reviewing and recommending diversity-related books and videos of interest to library service (whole bibliographies and videographies are especially welcome); tackling pressing social or professional issues; and publicizing diversity related events or conferences. Visit [www.ala.org/versed](http://www.ala.org/versed) for our submission guidelines and editorial calendar or email inquiries to: [diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org).

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## FROM THE FIELD

# The Tenor of the Times

## Social Activism and the Recruitment of Mexican American Librarians in the 1970s: An interview with John Ayala

### Hector Escobar

**John Ayala** is Dean, Learning Resources, Fullerton Community College.

**Hector Escobar** is Latino Studies/Reference Librarian, University of Notre Dame.

*In this first in a series of oral interviews between veteran and "new generation" librarians, pioneering librarian, John Ayala talks with former Spectrum Scholar and current ALA Councilor Hector Escobar about early efforts to recruit Latinos to Librarianship.*

**HE:** *Tell us a bit about yourself and how you became involved with Hispanic recruitment.*

**JA:** Well actually I was assisted by the Committee to Recruit Mexican American Librarians. We had a gentleman who was trying to recruit librarians through MECHA, a Mexican American student group. The students were giving the guy a hard time, saying 'why should we become librarians?' and I walked in. I was a bookmobile driver at the time for the city of Long Beach and was getting ready to go to library school. So I began talking to the students and giving them various reasons why we should be serving our communities. The guy told me about the organization and mentioned people that I should know. I knew one of them already, Harriet Covey, she had been my branch librarian when I was growing up. I told him that I was going to be going to library school in LA. I had applied at three library schools, UCLA, USC and Immaculate Heart College and I actually ended up going to Immaculate Heart because they offered me the best package, a full paid fellowship.

**HE:** *Now, your current position is Director of the library at Fullerton College?*

**JA:** I am Dean of the library at Fullerton College. I have been here for 14 years. Prior to this I was Director of the

Library at Long Beach City College, Pacific Coast College. I have been in community college libraries for 32 years and in libraries for 41 years.

**HE:** *You must like it!*

**JA:** Ah, it likes me. It hasn't done badly for me. I can't complain. But I have to tell you the story of how I got involved in libraries, because it really is about recruitment. My branch librarian, Harriet Covey, had a youth group . . . and she originally began trying to recruit my brother because he was the academician in the family. I was a B student, he was an A student, not much of a difference, but enough I guess. She began talking to him about becoming a librarian but he wanted to go into education. He was an education major and I was majoring in administration of justice. But I heard the talk and about a year later, I decided that I didn't want to be an administration of justice major anymore. So I went back to her and told her that I was interested in working in libraries and she told me "Well, you don't fit the image." And I said "What's the image?" I guess she meant being an academic. But she said "If you are serious, I'll help you get a job," and she did. She helped me get hired on as the bookmobile driver specifically because I could work directly with patrons, whereas if I worked in the

library I would strictly be doing clerical work.

**HE:** *She wanted you to be one with the people.*

**JA:** Yes, I think “reader’s advisory” was the term she used (laughs). So I worked there for five years off and on with a two-year break in the middle because I went off to the little conflict called Vietnam. But I came back to being the bookmobile driver and then I got a small promotion. I started at the library in 1963, left for the war in ’67 and came back in ’69.

**HE:** *This alludes to my second question, how was librarianship at the time impacted by the political climate of the ’60s and the ’70s?*

**JA:** In terms of what was going on, as I got involved with the Committee to Recruit Mexican American Librarians when I started school, there was a lot of talk in terms of how the library had to relate to the community and if they couldn’t speak the language of their patrons the library was going to die, so they were looking for Spanish speaking librarians. They were looking for African American librarians who could relate to their communities, and they were looking for Asian American librarians. The county of Los Angeles had had a suit filed against them and they were looking for minority librarians to join the ranks and be put into the various communities. So I was lucky. When I graduated I had several libraries that wanted me to work for them because they were looking for that kind of diversity at that time and were bringing people in who represented the communities served at the public libraries. It went along with the tenor of the times because we were basically a reflection of what was happening on the social activist front. And the Committee to recruit Mexican American Librarians was a reflection of that as well. After I graduated from library school and went to work, I became the chairman of the group and as chairman I became involved with Dr. Arnulfo Trejo, who was the founder of REFORMA and I became one of the founders of that group and one of the founding presidents. . . .

**HE:** *This was back in the ’70s as well when Dr. Trejo supervised fellowships at the University of Arizona and many of those people are currently very involved in library activism.*

**JA:** Well there’s a story there too. Elizabeth Martinez had written a grant for Cal State Fullerton’s library school and we started the Mexican American Library Science program at Fullerton. Once Dr. Trejo and Jose Taylor, who was a librarian at Los Angeles Public and another founding president of REFORMA, and I were at



John Ayala at the 2004 Midwinter Meeting

an airport after a conference and we told Dr. Trejo, we said you’re a natural, you should write a grant for this type of thing . . . because we were both lecturing in the program . . . so he did. He got the grant. It was called the GLISA, the Graduate Library Institute for Spanish Speaking Americans.

**HE:** *What stands out in terms of the ’70s was the high number of individuals who came out of those programs.*

**JA:** Yes. The Mexican American Library Science program at Cal State Fullerton graduated 45 people from the program.

**HE:** *That’s impressive. Besides the project at Fullerton and GLISA, were there other Hispanic recruitment programs going on?*

**JA:** Well those were the two programs doing most of the recruitment. I would go

out with Dr. Sanchez from the Mexican American Library Science program and we would interview people for the scholarships. One of the people that we interviewed who sticks in my mind is Robert Trujillo who is now at Stanford. And that’s good. We have some pretty high ranking people who came out of that program.

**HE:** *Now that three decades have passed and you look back at the ’60s and ’70s and now at the current picture, from your point of view have you seen any significant improvements or substantial changes in the numbers?*

**JA:** I think I have seen it in degrees but not drastically, I know there have been increases in Hispanic librarianship but I think that part of the problem is that there are other professions that are more attractive to Hispanics. But I think that it is still worthwhile to go out and make those efforts. About ten years ago, I participated in a recruitment video for ALA, it’s now outdated, but I have used it in various recruitment presentations at conferences and such. I’ve continued to work in recruitment. I’ve done mentoring through REFORMA both nationally and here in our local chapter in Orange County and I have also established a scholarship in my late wife’s name for \$250 every year and it pays for about half of a class. The scholarship that I have developed is for those who are willing to work in Hispanic communities. It’s not ethnically exclusive. You don’t have to be Hispanic to get it, but we’re asking you to have that interest and direct yourself to working in that area.

**HE:** *I had seen your name associated with the “Grow Your Own” campaign. Could you describe that a little bit and what that is about.*

**JA:** In the ’80s, there was an initiative of the same name that came out of California Library Association to which I acted as an advisor. But about the new one [sponsored by the ALA Office for Diversity] to which I have a lot of loyalty, I hope that we can do some things to help grow our own and get Hispanics interested in librarianship. I have never really distinguished between whether you are Hispanic or not Hispanic, what I have always said is what’s important is that you are willing to serve in our communities and make a difference.

continued on **PAGE 4**

AYALA continued from page 3

**HE:** *Exactly. Immerse yourself in the culture and get interested in helping out.*

**JA:** Yes, you get people in the profession who are not interested in working in communities of color. They want to work in middle-class, or Anglo communities and that's fine. But I look for people willing to work in communities of color.

**HE:** *How do you create interest in librarianship among Latinos, especially when there are so many opportunities now that are available to Latinos and other minorities that weren't available twenty years ago?*

**JA:** I like to look for people who are working in libraries who may not be librarians but have some sort of affinity to the work. I also like to look in education because there is that affinity to librarianship. That is where I have found fertile ground. Because when you talk to young people working in libraries and even older adults, they are like, "I never thought about it."

**HE:** *This is another question about recruitment. I can see an age gap between people like yourself, Luis Herrera, Luis Chaparro who have done recruitment for years and this new generation of librarians entering the profession. In terms of passing on the torch, how do you create that message that recruitment is so important and not to give up because we definitely need to fill the ranks. How do you pass that eagerness to recruit so that it doesn't fall by the wayside in the years to come?*

**JA:** I can retire in two years, but I don't expect to retire from recruitment. I plan to stay active with ALA, my local REFORMA chapter and REFORMA national.

**HE:** *I certainly believe that.*

**JA:** And I think that the people that I've mentored, when they have established themselves as well as the people you just mentioned, I think that we will carry the ball. I have great belief and faith in that. I think when they have established themselves in the profession and

**"No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive."**

—Mahatma Gandhi

get to the point where they have a little more time and resources it will happen . . . I see people like Isabel Espinal and Roxanna Benavides, and I see people here on the West Coast, like Ana Elba Pavon from the Bay Area who is currently running for the REFORMA presidency, who are involved and who are up and coming and I think they are going to continue the work we have been doing and even expand it.

**HE:** *What's noticeable now is that there is some commitment from the ALA to actually recruit, but twenty years ago what was the situation? Were you on your own?*

**JA:** There was some resistance from the library schools thirty years ago to recruiting diverse students and giving scholarships. And there was resistance from our community, the Hispanic community, that said why are you trying to do this? Why are you wasting your time? You'll never get anywhere. Number one, you're male, and number two, you're Hispanic.

**HE:** *Yes, from our culture there is the machismo factor and people who think you should work in a factory.*

**JA:** But I wasn't good with my hands and I like to read. And yet, there was a group on the other end that said, it's good that you are here, that you want to serve your community. But there was also resistance. When I was still in library school I remember being in the audience during a program at the CLA conference talking about serving Spanish speakers. People were sitting in the back saying, "Why do we have to serve these folks? These people don't read anyway." And these were library type folks making these disparaging comments. I'm not saying that we don't still encounter resistance in terms of people's political views, but I don't think we're facing the same roadblocks. 

## Mark Your Calendar!

### Diversity-Related Meetings this Summer

July 23–July 25, 2004

#### Sexual Minority Youth in the Heartland 2004: A Conference for Professionals

Sponsored by Indiana University; Indiana Department of Health; the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction; Neal Marshal Black Culture Center; Asian Culture Center; PFLAG; and others. Indiana Memorial Union, Indiana University. FMI contact Doug Bader at [smyhl@indiana.edu](mailto:smyhl@indiana.edu) or (800) 933-9330, or visit: [www.smyhl.indiana.edu/smyhl/program.html](http://www.smyhl.indiana.edu/smyhl/program.html).

August 17–August 18, 2004

#### Building Organizational Strength Through Inclusion: The 2004 Diversity Conference

Co-sponsored by Ohio Library Council's Diversity Awareness and Resources Committee, OHIONET, and OCLC. Embassy Suites Hotel, Dublin, Ohio. FMI visit [www.olc.org/WorkshopDescription.asp?ID=264](http://www.olc.org/WorkshopDescription.asp?ID=264).

September 13–15, 2004

#### Diversity 2004 Conference—Hear It! Feel It! Live It!

Sponsored by the Greater Rochester Diversity Council. Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Rochester, New York. FMI contact Barbara Cutrona at (585) 224-2727 or visit [www.rochesterdiversitycouncil.com](http://www.rochesterdiversitycouncil.com).

# Mark Your Calendar!

## Join us at ALA Annual Conference for the following events!

### **Celebrating a Life of Diversity Leadership:**

#### **A Dinner Honoring Dr. E. J. Josey**

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 7–10 P.M.

ROSEN CENTRE HOTEL, BALLROOM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Dr. Josey has spent nearly 50 years advocating and agitating for diversity for the profession of library and information science. He is currently professor emeritus, University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences, the author of more than 400 books and articles, and he was recently awarded Honorary Membership to ALA. Dr. Josey will reflect on his life as a diversity leader, and ALA President, Dr. Carla D. Hayden, and ALA Executive Director, Keith Michael Fiels, will also be in attendance. This dinner will be held as part of the Diversity Leadership Institute but is open to the public. The event is free to DLI registrants and \$40 for non-DLI participants.

### **No Crystal Stair, Only Glass Ceilings:**

#### **Underrepresented Groups and Library Leadership**

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1:30–3:30 P.M.

ORLANDO CONVENTION CENTER, 223B

Library Directors and Deputy Directors from ethnically diverse backgrounds are still somewhat rare. This program brings together library leaders from underrepresented groups to tell their personal stories of challenge and triumph. Gain insight and strategies for navigating the road to leadership. Frank talk about mentoring; networking; avoiding pigeonholes and pitfalls for those trying to break out of the box and for anyone who wants to know what it takes to accelerate their careers. Featuring Luis Herrera (Director, Pasadena Public Library); Ling Hwey Jeng (Dean, Texas Women's University School of Library and Information Science); Ruby Licon (Associate Dean, Mississippi State University Libraries); Laurel Minott (Deputy Director, Northwestern University Library); Greg Reese (Director, East Cleveland Public Library) and Andrew Venable (Director, Cleveland Public Library). Moderated by Reinet Jones (librarian, University of Kentucky).

### **Charting Courses: Excellence in Diversity Research**

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 4–5:30 P.M.

JW MARRIOTT GRANDE LAKES RESORT, DEL LAGO 3

Recipients of the 2003 Diversity Research Grants will share the results of their research. 2003 presenters include Jody Gray and Michelle Harrell, Rae-Anne Montague, and La Loria Konata and Dr. Tim Zou. These award-winning researchers will be joined by the inaugural recipient of the Achievement in Diversity Research honor award, Dr. Kathleen de la Peña McCook.

### **New Visions, New Voices: New Leaders Speak on the Future of Libraries and Librarianship**

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 10:30 A.M.–12 P.M.

ORLANDO CONVENTION CENTER, 223B

Some of the bravest, brightest, and boldest new voices in the profession share their visions for libraries and librarians. You've read their underground 'zines and websites, you've come across their inspiring writings and outreach models, you've noticed the unmistakable gleam in their eyes, you've heard rumblings of their covert operations, now come hear them share their missions and manifestos for moving forward agendas of equal access; intellectual freedom and leadership

diversity. Featuring: Rory Litwin (publisher, *Library Juice*), Sara Pete (co-author, *Riot Librarian* zine, and librarian, Timberland Regional Library), Rob Rao (library activist and Montreal radio personality), Ira Revels (librarian, Cornell University Library and member, BCALA executive board) and Richenda Wilkinson (librarian, Oregon State University Library and Native education activist). Moderated by Veronda Pichford (Special Projects Coordinator, Chicago Library System).

### **Bridges to a Better You**

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 1:30–3:30 P.M.

SHERATON HOTEL, CARIBBEAN ROOM

Spectrum Scholars show how 21st century librarianship is all about having your cake and eating it too. From activism to poetry to fashion, the new faces of the profession provide tips on using librarianship to create the career and the life you want. Featuring: Maria Carpenter (librarian, Northeastern University), Toni Olivas (librarian, Auburn University Libraries), and Elisia L. Johnson (librarian, Carson Correctional Facility).

### **DiVERSEity: Writers and Librarians of Color Partnering to Build a Multi-Ethnic Readership**

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 4–5:30 P.M.

PEABODY ORLANDO HOTEL, CONWAY

Writers, booksellers, and librarians speak on developing relevant, resonant literature and growing multicultural readership. As the surge in ethnic literature lures increasingly diverse readers to bookstores and libraries, proactive librarians are capitalizing on this trend to build circulation and win back lost users. With cultural book clubs, open-mics, writing workshops, special programming and irresistible marketing tactics, libraries across the country are tapping into new and underserved customer markets. Featuring Carroll Parrot Blue (author, *Dawn at My Back*); Elizabeth Ann Briscoe-Wilson (Director, Lincoln University Library); Rueben Martinez (owner, *Libreria Martinez*); and Yxta Maya Murray (author, *The Conquest and What It Takes to Get to Vegas*). Moderated by Ronald Gauthier (Branch Manager, New Orleans Public Library). Special guest: celebrated author Walter Dean Myers.

### **DINE: Diversity Interest Network and Exchange**

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 4:30–5:30 P.M.

ROSEN CENTRE HOTEL, SALON 3

Sponsored by the ALA Committee on Diversity this meeting seeks to bring together the various diversity-interest committees, groups and individuals working across the Association and its affiliates, as well as independently, to report on recent work; upcoming programs and initiatives; and issues of general concern to the profession. One or more representatives from each diversity interest group is invited to attend this important roundtable meeting and networking session. Light dessert, coffee and tea will be provided.

### **Mentoring for a Diverse Leadership**

MONDAY, JUNE 28, 10:30 A.M.–12 P.M.

SHERATON HOTEL, CARIBBEAN ROOM

To serve our diverse user communities effectively, we must increase the number of librarians from underrepresented groups in positions of influence and leadership. Join us as panelists discuss strategies and best practices for developing leadership through mentoring.

## FROM THE FIELD

# Don't Move Out, Move Up!

## Self-Advocacy is Critical to Minority Retention in the Profession

**Anthony Loum**

Adult Coordinator of Library Services, Brooklyn Public Library



Anthony Loum (center back) and staff of Cypress Hills branch in 2000.

Since I was a young boy, I have been thirsty for the opportunity to advance. I grew up in The Gambia, West Africa and while still in high school, began writing to various schools in the United States for the chance to complete my studies. By luck I was able to meet an American who helped me find a sponsoring family.

I completed my senior year of high school in Seattle, Washington and went on to complete an Associate of Arts degree in Business from a local Community College. From there I applied to the University of Washington (UW) where I studied French with the goal of becoming a teacher. To support myself during my undergraduate work, I worked as a student assistant at the undergraduate library. After finishing my Bachelor of Arts degree, I enrolled in and completed the High School Teaching

Certification Program and a masters degree in education. It was then that I learned that I would not be able to teach because at that time in Washington State, only U.S. citizens were eligible to receive certification to teach in public schools. That law has since been overturned and I was finally awarded the certification, which I had studied for. I was then faced with looking for jobs outside of my training. I started working in the retail industry although I knew that I needed something more challenging. Because I had spent nearly five years working in a library as a student assistant while pursuing my education, I decided to try to look for full time work in that field.

Before coming to the states I had attended Saint Augustine's High School, a Catholic School run by Irish Priests, in

the Gambia. I remembered our school motto was *Nil Desperandum, Do Not Despair*. I know that was what kept me going, because in my quest to find library work I had over twenty interviews and was turned down for every position that I applied for. It was suggested that I apply for a volunteer position. The head librarian at the UW's Engineering Library, Charles Lord, who I count among my mentors took me on as a volunteer working eight hours a week. After six months, I was hired in a temporary part time capacity and two months later, I was hired as a full time library technician. One of my biggest accomplishments in that position was converting the manual reserve system to an automated one. After about two years I was promoted to Lead Library Technician at the undergraduate library. Suzette Radford currently at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, was my supervisor at that time. She and Charles Lord began encouraging me to go to library school. It wasn't until I'd received another promotion to the position of Supervisor of Circulation and Technical Services at the Business Administration Library that I received the final, necessary push in the form of a comment from Gordon Aamot who was head of the business library. Gordon reminded me that in few years I had moved from a voluntary and entry level to a supervisory position and that I was reaching the end of the road in terms of where I could go. I knew he was right. Despite all of the effort that I'd put in to my work I still needed something that would completely engage me.

In 1993, I applied to and entered the University of Washington's School of Library and Information Sciences as a part time student. Because I was working full time, library school was challenging for me. I felt a little isolated from most of the other students who were enrolled full time or taking more classes than the one or two a semester I usually took. Also, there were very few minority students and that was another isolating factor. Faculty members Spencer Shaw and Raya Fidel were instrumental in bringing minority students together by hosting potlucks in their homes. Those potlucks served as my only real connection to other students outside of class.

In 1997, after three and a half years, I graduated from the MLIS program with my second masters degree. Seattle had become my home, so I wanted to stay there. I applied to every public and academic library in the area, but once again I could not find a position. I held on to my position in Circulation and Technical Services and stayed there for another two years trying not to be discouraged. After graduation from library school, I developed a feeling of emptiness after being accustomed to working full time combined with my part-time graduate work. I had to find something to occupy my newly found free time. Consequently, I enrolled in real estate school through the sponsorship of a friend who was a real estate broker. I ended up earning a Washington State real estate license and practiced real estate part-time while working at the UW Libraries full time.

In 1999, while attending the BCALA conference in Las Vegas, I came across recruiters from Brooklyn Public Library headed by Barbara Harris who was the interim head of the Office of Neighborhood Services. Brooklyn Public Library expressed an interest in me. It was exciting. In Seattle, I was beginning to feel that no one was interested in what I had to offer. Suddenly on the east coast, there was a library that felt like I could make a valuable contribution.

BPL offered me a position as an Assistant Branch Librarian at the Cypress Hills branch located in the East New York section of Brooklyn. Even though Seattle was home, I knew that staying there would be a dead-end for my career. Two years later, BPL transformed its structure to a cluster system and I was awarded a promotion as Adult Manager of Library Services, which gave me the opportunity to work in four different neighborhood branches of Arlington, Brownsville, New Lots, and Cypress Hills. They were all ethnically diverse and socially dynamic communities with residents hungry for what the library has to offer. Working in my cluster gave me the chance to experiment and developed programming involving literacy as well as technology. Some of our computer classes have had people coming from all over Brooklyn, as well as Queens, the Bronx, and even Harlem.

BPL recently offered me the opportunity to serve as the Adult Coordinator of Library Services for all fifty-eight branches of Brooklyn, which is the fifth largest public library system in the nation. In this position I will be responsible for training other librarians in providing adult programming and services. This is a very big step in my career. Although I love working directly with the public in the communities of my cluster, this is a chance to set

a standard for service throughout the whole system.

When I reflect back on my professional experiences at Seattle and now in Brooklyn, I know that I have faced the same obstacles faced by other people of color. Sometimes it seems that we must work twice as hard to get half as far. The burden of proof is always on us. It is my productivity and industriousness that has gotten me this far. Nothing else. All I ever need in life is an opportunity. Once given that, I know I can succeed. That opportunity and chance was what was lacking in my earlier career. I faced barriers in even getting a support position in a library and once I had the MLIS degree, I encountered even greater obstacles. I could speculate on why that was, but I choose not to. Instead I believe in letting the work I do speak for me.

What is of utmost importance for minority librarians is finding an environment that recognizes and values our work. Retention in librarianship begins with us. Too much of a geographic loyalty can be detrimental to one's career. One has to be ready to move on when an opportunity to go where one is appreciated presents itself. I could have become discouraged by my early experiences, but what I learned is that sometimes it's not about moving out of the profession—it's about moving up. **V**

## FROM THE FIELD

# International Outreach at the University of Alabama

**Mangala Krishnamurthy and Jennifer McClure**

Mangala Krishnamurthy and Jennifer McClure are Reference Librarians, University Libraries, University of Alabama.

Librarians and students gathered on a rainy Friday afternoon to socialize, exchange ideas, and just take a break from classes and work at the Capstone International Coffee at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa last March. In one corner, a business student from Kenya

lamented the stressful pace of American life, while in another a young scientist from Japan practiced her English as she discussed the recent Academy Awards.

The International Coffee was just one in a series of outreach activities by the UA libraries targeting the international com-

munity. With almost 900 international students representing 78 countries on a campus of more than 19,000 students, UA has a strong international presence, yet many of these students have never before encountered the electronic resources, open stacks, or complex branch system typical of many contemporary American university libraries. The goal of the outreach program was thus twofold: to help international students to be successful in their studies by providing them with the tools needed to use library resources; and to join with the larger university community in welcoming these students to our campus and to engage in a productive exchange of ideas and cultures.

continued on **PAGE 8**

**INTERNATIONAL** continued from page 7

The first step was to appoint a liaison to the international community to coordinate the outreach activities. The current liaison, a native of India with degrees from both Indian and American universities, was well positioned to mediate among the various cultures. In addition to her liaison duties, she also serves on a university-wide International Committee.

The program has proceeded on two fronts, one internal, bringing students into the libraries, and one external, taking librarians out to the many international organizations and events on campus. On the internal level, the libraries have provided a variety of orientations and instruction sessions, particularly in the sciences, designed specifically for international students. Of the university's 348 graduate students in science and engineering, fully 50% are international students. A recently mounted web page for international students ([www.lib.ua.edu/services/international](http://www.lib.ua.edu/services/international)) offers basic information about the libraries, links to ALA's multi-lingual glossaries of library terminology, and information concerning financial aid and employment opportunities.

The libraries' many international student workers have proved to be valuable ambassadors to the university community. Aside from providing an international face to the libraries, they have helped to heighten awareness throughout the system. American librarians, staff members,

and student assistants who work with international students become more proficient communicators and more sensitive to the needs of the international community, while the students themselves break out of their own national groups through friendships and working relationships with an American cohort.

Further enhancing communication has been the libraries' virtual reference program. For students with limited English, chat and email reference services can provide a welcome alternative to reference desk or telephone encounters. In the first six months of the libraries' chat program, 10% of the questions came from international students, though these students represent only 4.6% of the total student population.

As in the case of all outreach efforts, to bring students into the libraries it is sometimes necessary for librarians to go out into the community. Thus, the second part of the libraries' outreach initiative involved partnering with some of the many other organizations on campus that are involved with international students. For the Japan program's annual "Sakura Festival," the Libraries mounted an exhibit and hosted a talk on Japanese papermaking. For the university's "Understanding Islam" program, a post-9/11 seminar to foster communication, the libraries participated in planning the event and contributed a bibliography of library and web resources relating to Islam. In addition, the libraries have par-

ticipated in annual celebrations of International Education Week with talks by a renowned Indian poet and an authority on Cuban literature, and with exhibits in support of a university-wide Cuba conference. On a more regular basis, the libraries sponsor one of the weekly Capstone International Coffees each term, participate in the International Center's campus orientations for new students, and personally contact each of the resident scholars who visit our campus.

The libraries' international initiative is an ongoing effort. Possible plans for the future include fall open-house gatherings in the libraries, a brown-bag discussion of the implications of the Patriot Act, additional outside speakers in the libraries, improved foreign-language collections, and a panel discussion of international issues by representatives from local university, community college, public, and special libraries.

As awareness has increased among the UA library staff, many individuals have become involved on a personal level, attending brown-bag lunches to discuss issues of interest to the international students, hosting foreign exchange students in their homes, attending international coffees and foreign films, and generally enjoying the richness of UA's international community. And as international representation increases among the libraries' employees, we become in part the very community we hope to reach. 

## DIVERSITY TOOLCHEST

## Academic Research Residency Programs

### Looking Back on the Journey

**Charmaine H. Henriques**

Federal Documents Librarian, Government Publications and Maps Department, Northwestern University

For librarians new to the profession, the job market may seem bleak given many of the more promising opportunities require several years of professional training. But for those with an interest in academic

librarianship, a residency program can jumpstart your career.

After reading about academic research library residency programs, I wanted to pursue this avenue but had to make cer-

tain choices. Under the suggestion of my advisor, I photocopied a map of the United States and checked off geographic areas I was willing to consider. The first list encompassed nine states, so I expanded the area. I also had to decide to what type of institution, based on environment, setting, size, and reputation, I would apply. I had to consider the residency experience I wanted and how the training would tie in with my professional needs. At first, I desired a situation where I rotated throughout the library because I wanted to experience all librarianship had to offer. However I knew I did not want to be a generalist, so being assigned to a particular department in the library and building up an area of expertise was also

appealing. Residencies can last anywhere from one to three years, so duration was yet another area of concern.

My research into programs led me to learn more about the University of Iowa Minority Research Librarian Residency Program. In 1989, the university libraries and the School of Library and Information Science agreed to pursue the Minority Research Libraries Fellowship. Susan Vega Garcia became the inaugural Minority Research Libraries Fellow in 1993. In 1996, the Minority Research Libraries Fellowship was revamped as the Minority Research Librarian Residency Program, a post MLS three-year professional experience. Two residents were recruited and assigned to the Research and Information Services Department. Since then four more residents have entered the program, with myself as the first resident assigned to the Government Publications Department. The program has been renamed, and is now known as the Librarian Residency Program.

When the University of Iowa Libraries showed interest in recruiting me for a post in the Government Publications Department, I did more research. I read literature and looked at several government document Web pages at a variety of universities and federal agencies. I spoke to library professionals about the University of Iowa. I had discussions with several government documents librarians to hear their take on their positions.

The interview process included a phone interview followed by an onsite interview. I was flown out to the University for four days, asked to do a presentation and was questioned by several committees comprised of my future co-workers, librarians from other departments, and one of the other residents. I had the chance to talk to various librarians and library administrators about their departments, the University, and Iowa City in general. It was a tiring experience, but I was able to get a feel for the library and the reputation of the department and to ask in-depth questions.

With a residency program you may want to ask specific questions about diversity, title, travel, moving assistance, education support, details about specific responsibilities and expectations, opportunities for special projects and to work with others within the library system, organizational structure, evaluation and promotion procedure, training and orientation plan, and possibilities for perma-

nent employment within the library since a residency can be temporary employment.

After answering these questions, I accepted the residency assignment in the Government Publications Department. In addition to being a state and regional depository for U.S. federal publications, the Government Publications Department is a depository for United Nations and European Union publications, automatically receiving a range of publications from a number of different agencies to make them available to the public. Even though I interacted with other departments I did not rotate throughout the library. Fortunately, working with documents demands a combination of technical and public service work. I found the area of expertise I was seeking while still getting a feel for the different areas of librarianship.

**"America is woven of many strands. I would recognize them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy, but description."**

—Ralph Ellison

Like all new employees of the University Libraries I was given a training plan. I met with individuals in the library system that had specific relations to Government Publications and toured their facilities. The Coordinator of Instructional Services provided orientation on the goals and teaching opportunities of the User Education program. After familiarizing myself with the electronic classroom, I was encouraged to observe classes, then act as a helper in the room during some sessions. In the final stages I co-taught classes with senior librarians and then taught on my own. Eventually I was asked to also participate in certain initiatives and develop curriculum.

In reality, my position was no different from any other professional librarian's. Each year I was asked to create a set of goals and meet them. I was evaluated on initiative, expertise, and professional commitment. I was responsible for general maintenance of the collection in all formats, provided reference service, and par-

ticipated in user education. I was given the opportunity to take part in library-sponsored projects and to participate in library committees, task forces, and planning activities. I was able to take advantage of continuing education opportunities in management issues and the latest in information technologies through the Libraries' and University's Staff Development and Training Programs.

The Minority Research Librarian Residency Program at the University of Iowa Libraries has the support of the library infrastructure, and I was able to work with a wonderful department. My participation in the program was an important and positive start to my professional librarian career. However, I think it is important to evaluate these programs critically. My residency was to be for three years, but now the duration of the residency program is two years. While three years seems like long time, with a longer period of time there are more opportunities to serve on local and national committees and take part in projects.

Even though the current library administration is taking a look at this particular issue, I feel greater efforts still need to be made in increased travel support for the residency program. The resident must become professionally involved to obtain more than just work experience.

Professional development is a requirement of the profession and makes the resident more marketable when competing for other employment opportunities. Librarianship is not known for high salaries and the resident is at an entry-level term position. In order to become professionally involved we are asking the resident to risk potential self-sustaining funds.

In addition, the establishment of a visiting fellowship for librarians of color with several years experience would be a formidable extension of the Minority Research Residency Program. Residency programs have been a wonderful recruitment tool by academic research libraries for early career librarians from underrepresented groups, but efforts also have to be made in the areas of retention and promotion. A fellowship would be a way to increase much needed diversity beyond entry-level positions and it would be magnificent for the University of Iowa Libraries to be a forbearer in this realm. It is time to take residency programs to another level. ♣

# Personal Bias in Library Collections and Services

## An Annotated Bibliography

**Sarah C. King**

MLIS candidate, University of South Florida School of Library and Information Science, and Graduate Assistant, University of South Florida Library

Regardless of library type, size, or the number of collecting librarians, selection based on personal values can be difficult or even impossible to avoid. Lack of exposure to varied sources or lesser known points of view can lead to unbalanced collections. Also adding to the difficulty of establishing balanced collections is the demise of the small publisher. Without a varied group of publishers, access to diverse views grows ever more limited. Large publishers that focus on the bottom line are less likely to publish works that may not find a mainstream audience.

While the availability of materials lies outside the control of the average librarian, there are a number of resources designed to help individuals or groups charged with collection development make informed and unbiased selections. The following is an annotated list of some of these resources:

**Berman, Sanford.** "Inside' Censorship: De Facto Censorship Implicit in Collection Decisions." *Progressive Librarian* 18 (2001): 48–63.

This article, composed by pioneer censorship and Library of Congress Subject Heading bias opponent Sanford Berman, details different types of internal censorship as they relate to circulation, budget, and personal opinion, and explains how to avoid them.

**Coley, Ken P.** "Moving Toward a Method to Test for Self-Censorship by School Library Media Specialists." *School Library Media Research* 5 (2002).

This article presents a research study that

covers the details of self-censorship in school media libraries. Trepidation and fear of challenge are cited as the main causes for censorship in this study.

**Dilevko, J, and K. Grewal.** "Neutrality and Media Literacy at the Reference Desk: a Case Study." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 24:1 (1998): 21–32.

The effect of librarian bias on the reference interview is examined in this study. The authors argue that librarians need to be both informed and impartial in order to avoid influencing or discomfiting patrons.

**Dilevko, Juris, and Kalina Grewal.** "A New Approach to Collection Bias in Academic Libraries: The Extent of Corporate Control in Journal Holdings." *Library and Information Science Research* 19:4 (1997): 359–85.

The issue of publisher's influence on balanced library collections is covered again in this article. Rather than evaluating the issue of bias from a political standpoint, the authors evaluate the limitation of the periodicals available through large publishing firms.

**Harmeyer, Dave.** "Potential Collection Development Bias: Some Evidence on a Controversial Topic in California." *College and Research Libraries* 56 (1995): 101–11.

This study attempts to analyze the effect of librarian political bias on book selection. Although the research plan is has been much critiqued, the premise is interesting and relevant.

**Kuharets, Olga R.** (ed) *Venture into Cultures: A Resource Book of Multicultural Materials and Programs*. Chicago, ALA (2001).

Sections of this book feature African, Caribbean, Indian, Jewish-American, Korean, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Native American, and Russian materials designed to help librarians create programs for children. Each area features a short essay, recommended children's books by grade level, websites, videos, audiotapes, and recommendations for programming.

**LaRue, James.** "Reading with the Enemy." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 68:5 (1994): 43–45.

LaRue offers a witty analysis of the bias and censorship front, and provides us with an excellent example of how to perform well informed collection development.

**Neely, Teresa and Lee-Smeltzer, Kuang-Hwei** (eds.) *Diversity Now: People, Collections, and Services in Academic Libraries*. Binghamton, Haworth Press (2002).

Examines diversity in collection development and access among other areas of concern.

**Pratt, Allan D.** "Are We Really Infallible at Book Selection?" *Library Journal* 120 (1995): 44.

This interestingly oppositional article claims that since purely balanced collections can never be achieved, librarians should make their selections reflect either one standpoint or the other. Its stance is contradictory to the others cited in this bibliography, but it represents an important alternative solution to the problem of bias.

**Warner, J.N.** "Moving Beyond Whiteness in North American Academic Libraries." *Libri* 51:3 (2001): 167–72.

This study examines the presence of balance in allegedly diverse university library collections. In spite of a move toward diversity, many libraries are found to be lacking materials on important issues. 

# From Library School to Career in 3 Easy Steps!

## Allison Sutton

Assistant Professor and Psychology and Social Work Subject Specialist, Education and Social Science Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Making the transition from library school to career involves change and adjustment. If your budding library career, as they often do, requires you to take responsibility for your own leadership development and includes the demand to publish, it can be especially beneficial to develop a strategy. Three key strategies which can ease this transition are:

1. Embracing the learning exchange,
2. Willingness to serve, and
3. Connecting values to scholarship.

### Embracing the learning exchange

Embracing the learning exchange means you should be open to applying and sharing what you've learned and learning from others in your new environment. It's helpful to announce that you are new to the field. Librarians love to help! I can't tell you how often it has proven helpful for me to interject a statement that indicated my newness to librarianship just before asking for input.

Of course, as you move along in the LIS program you are constantly absorbing information and just after graduation your head is full. Avoid the temptation to show everybody just how much you know. Your knowledge and abilities will be better appreciated if you are able to articulate your idea, plan or special formula in a way that shows how it is tied to or will help your unit or perhaps the entire organization, to meet a strategic planning goal. Share your input in a suggestive and not demanding or demeaning manner.

Being emphatic can be normal as a student because you are developing your own stands on the LIS issues for the first time. Remember though that in your new environment you are leaving lasting first impressions by simply expressing a point of view. People are more apt to listen to you if you are not jumping in at every moment and you aren't coming off like the graduate with the latest and greatest information that will resolve everything.

Embracing the learning exchange also means that you should ask questions when you don't understand or need clarification during a meeting. If you are too timid to ask as the discussion is taking place, wait until after the meeting to ask one of your colleagues.

Make it a practice to take notes and review them once you get back to your office after a meeting. You will have learned a lot—don't expect to remember everything! Instead, create a comfortable environment for continuing

to learn in your immediate surroundings—build your own ready-reference shelf. Choose key library school texts, handouts or notes that will help you to perform on the job, examples might include: notes from classes, a handout of writing tips and examples appropriate for the office, favorite and easy to read Web authoring guides, papers, presentations, articles and other projects.

Although completing your LIS program may have you longing for the days of no more reading, it is also important to continue to read the scholarly literature to keep up with what is happening in LIS. Reading helps you to have focus, provides assistance that will help you to do a better job and strengthens your

commitment to the profession. Re-reading or even scanning an article, notes or other materials gathered and used during your LIS placement will, more often than you may think, be clearly related to ongoing discussions, serve as a starting point for completion of a project or give you an

idea for a new procedure, and help you to formulate or shore-up a hypothesis for your next research project. Consider your reading professional development.

*For more dialogue on this topic, don't miss...*

### Bridges to a Better You

**ALA Annual Conference**  
**Sunday, June 27, 1:30–3:30 P.M.**  
**Sheraton Hotel, Caribbean Room**

Spectrum Scholars show how 21st century librarianship is all about having your cake and eating it too. From activism to poetry to fashion, the new faces of the profession provide tips on using librarianship to create the career and the life you want.

### Willingness to serve

Once you've embraced the learning exchange, it's time to develop your own leadership opportunities.

Willingness to serve is the most important quality a leader

can have. It shows others that you have a

continued on **PAGE 12**

**“Learning to embrace diversity begins with the attitude of transformation.”**

—April Holland

positive spirit and genuine concern and it encourages them to support you. Offer to serve both internally and externally in your library, your division or in a capacity within the broader community and professional organizations. Be willing to take a small, less significant role. Observe others in positions you aspire to. And remember, networking can take place in a variety of scenarios: in person with others working at your library, but not directly within the same department; introducing yourself and chatting with a librarian you meet in a session at a conference; writing brief emails to stay in

touch with another librarian; or expression of passion for an issue submitted to an electronic discussion list.

To demonstrate your willingness to serve, consider challenging opportunities when they are presented. I recently participated in negotiations for our electronic resources contract with a major publisher. I thought of it as a big deal to represent the entire social sciences division of librarians in these negotiations—it was, but I received guidance and support through the process.

### *Connecting Values to Scholarship*

Even as you demonstrate your growing leadership through your willingness to serve, you may be asked to further establish yourself through publishing. A key strategy to consider as you take the step toward publishing is connecting values to scholarship. You can develop the passion, tenacity and commitment needed to publish by asking yourself a few questions. What is important to you and interests

you the most? Which articles in the LIS literature keep your attention? Which would you read at will without them being assigned? Is there a pattern? How can you contribute to the LIS literature in a way that provides you with a real sense of contribution? Then, have *courage* and believe that you have a contribution to make that is important to the LIS literature. Be thorough in your review of the literature. Choose a partner for some of your publishing projects.

My favorite photograph in my small collection of graduation photos was taken just after the ceremony during the recessional. I am fully robed, I am stepping forward, clinching my degree and smiling. The facial expression is one that clearly says “I DID IT!!!”

Each of you has or will soon have a similar photo in your own collection. As you make your baby steps into your new library career, remember that feeling and employ these strategies or develop new ones to lay a simple plan for how “YOU CAN DO IT!” 

#### GUEST EDITORIAL continued from page 1

If you can answer yes to most of these questions you have social and institutional power, “white privilege,” which you may not have earned, but never the less possess. Accepting this awareness is critical if you have a commitment to the goals and values of diversity and equity, not only within our profession, but also within our society and nation.

Attending diversity events are learning opportunities. Yes, they can challenge our perceptions and understandings. Yes, they can be uncomfortable. Change is never easy, but, if our avowed professional goals and ethics are to be sustained as our profession changes, these changes must be effected by each of us, personally.

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