

# Versed

*adj.* Practiced or skilled; knowledgeable.

BULLETIN OF THE  
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AMERICAN LIBRARY  
ASSOCIATION

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## EDITORIAL

### *Toward a Curriculum of Readiness*

**Tracie D. Hall**

Director, ALA Office for Diversity

Having completed my second year in the Office for Diversity I still feel myself a sophomore. The protocol, the politics, the politics behind the politics, has provided a formidable learning curve. The amount of process involved in moving an idea from concept to action is often sobering for a self-described “doer” like me. Sometimes my impatience rails up like a mustang at odds with its saddle. Other times I make peace with knowing that patience, if partnered with persistence, is truly the gatekeeper to deep and systemic change.

Indeed it was the desire for systemic change that challenged me to look for ways to better serve not only the community that used my library, but also to improve library services to similar communities across the nation. Work with homeless youth in my early twenties had led me, perhaps providentially, to work with youth in libraries and then back to school for the degree. Less than five years out of library school, I found myself heading a branch of an urban public library in a neighborhood that sometimes made my own upbringing in Watts seem utopic. Alongside my resourceful staff, I faced every kind of harsh social reality: the cyclical poverty that placed the community in a chokehold; young girls who seemed to go from double-dutch to motherhood overnight; the drug trade as the most viable employer of young men; cruel and senseless violence; and a resignation

#### National Dialogue on the Curriculum of Readiness for the 21st Century Librarian

*ALA Annual Conference  
Tuesday, June 28, 2005  
8:30 A.M.–3:30 P.M.  
McCormick Place, S102d*

and indifference that becomes compounded as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes increasingly faint.

I remember once when one of my favorite library patrons walked in pushing the battered stroller that carried her third child. All three children were under five, bright and burningly beautiful. I bent down to receive the customary embraces of the two eldest. Their mother, observing me playfully trying to free myself from the grip of her son, met my eyes and earnestly asked, “Do you want him? I can’t afford to feed them all.” I smiled and might even have laughed nervously, trying to make light of her question. But we both knew that she had meant it. In the span of a few years in that library, I would come to know the interiors of so many lives—who was struggling with heroin; who was living with domestic abuse; who was hiding illiteracy; who was undocumented and coping with exploitative work conditions to make ends meet; who was close to giving up . . .

This was not the information environment that library school had prepared me for. This was real life. I don’t think that any library class could have prepared me for the shooting death of one of the most avid teen readers I have ever met. He could and should have been a Young Adult Library Services Association poster kid, if it hadn’t been for coming of age in a neighborhood where for many living past twenty-five is a major accomplishment. And even my “Services to Special Populations” course could not have readied me for an environment where pertinent library services only peripherally involved conventional library resources or technologies. To serve my users I had to be willing to break some rules and take some risks in order to meet people where they were. Relevant library service meant helping users decipher home and tax liens or using the staff lunchroom to hold private consultations between immigrant services advocates and library users anxious about residency and naturalization issues.

When I think about my library education and the complex experiences I have faced as a librarian and as a library manager, I can’t help but feel that some of the emphasis placed on database construction (which I loved, by the way) and conventional reference would have been enriched by equal attention paid to community development and psychology; social justice; interrogations of race, class, gender, and sexuality; adult education; ESL education; an introduction to social work; and business management and some basic principles of accounting—all concepts that are essential to readiness for library service.

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## 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

# *Myths, Missionary Expeditions, and Mobilizing the Profession*

*Versed enters the huddle with three of the profession's most compelling voices for a no-holds-barred conversation on racism, recruitment, risk-taking, and the power of persistence.*

**Reinette Jones** is Interdisciplinary Information Literacy and Diversity Activities Librarian, University of Kentucky.

**Howard F. McGinn** is Dean of University Libraries, Seton Hall University.

**Patricia A. Tarin** is Director, Knowledge River Program, Center for the Study of Hispanic and American Indian Library and Information Issues, University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science.

**Versed:** The need for greater diversity in recruitment to the profession has become one of the field's most pressing issues. At the same time we're seeing many libraries wrangling with the threat of downsizing and closures. Can these issues be connected? Is the lack of diversity in the profession one of the reasons that the library is losing some of its relevance and resonance for contemporary society?

**McGinn:** I think the lack of diversity in libraries points to a much deeper issue. I co-chair the Black Caucus of the ALA's Affirmative Action Committee. I've received stories from across the country. I think that there is a deep-seated racism in the culture of American librarianship.

**Tarin:** Generally speaking, I agree. I think there is a very high degree of institutional racism that isn't acknowledged for the most part because it isn't overt. That creates difficulties, particularly in the area of retention. A new eager, minority librarian joins the staff and is not mentored or welcomed so they don't see librarianship as a long-term career for themselves. If they find another route they'll take that, sad to say. This doesn't happen everywhere, but it happens enough of the time that it creates a problem.

**Jones:** I'd like to add to that. I think that sexism is as deep and detrimental as racism in coming into this profession. Now, I am basing this entirely on what I have observed in Kentucky, but for example, men coming into the library profession, especially those without additional degrees, come into a profession that is predominately female. When you add race to that it makes such a difference as to where that individual is going to be employed and you can almost predict where they are going to be hired. If they're African-American it's going to be in the public library and probably in a larger city like Louisville. It's not going to be in the academic or special library. It takes years for African-American men to become academic librarians.

**McGinn:** Yes!

**Versed:** All three of you have been active in the profession for long periods. What are some of the changes you've seen in this area and if you haven't seen pronounced change why might that be?

**Jones:** In Kentucky we are at the beginning, but I can say that I have seen tremendous change in the last five years. When I first started talking about diversity in libraries, I was put in a corner and

told I was talking about something that wasn't important. It has only been this year that my position as a diversity librarian was created. And I am creating a diversity plan that will be aligned with the university's diversity plan. The university does not have one yet and you can see in the library that we are going along at the same speed as the university, which is unfortunate, because I feel we should be taking giant leaps. But I can say in the last five years that in the state library association we now have a diversity committee and the African-American Librarians and Library Employees Round Table. It used to be a very frightening thing for librarians in the state to even say the word "diversity," define it, and add action to the words.

**Versed:** Pat, can you talk about Knowledge River and its impact on the profession?

**Tarin:** Yes, and I think I need to start even before that. I am one of the people who have been working in this area for thirty years. When I started my career in 1974, I started in an outreach position in a Latino neighborhood in Chicago. For the last thirty years people have been playing the "outreach game" and the "diversity game," but it never seems to take. The commitment, the will to make it really happen doesn't seem to sustain itself in libraries.

**Versed:** What are some of the barriers?

**Tarin:** I think it's pretty basic. It's fear of the unknown and difference, and asking people to go outside their comfort zone. I think that one thing that happened in the last ten years is that the demographics are different. The numbers of minorities are now so high that people can no longer ignore it. They have to do something about it. In most major urban areas minorities are the majority of the population. That's a statistical fact, and you can't continue to ignore that leap in the population growth. So finally, some activity is being generated. I laugh because very recently in the 2000 Census they discovered that Latinos are going to be the largest minority group and are in fact the largest minority group. What's funny is that on the day before they announced this, Latinos didn't exist. The day after, there are all these marketing efforts to reach Latinos and find ways to serve these populations, not only in libraries but also generally in society. But these same people were always there. So

I do think there is increased awareness, but not always in a positive way. There's the professor at Harvard who recently wrote a paper stating that the problem with our society is that we have too many Mexicans. He literally said that they were ruining the culture.

**Versed:** That's such an anti-intellectual view, really. Howard, let's address this to you. You've been particularly proactive in the area of recruitment and hiring. Did you have to swim upstream to manage this, and what's been the fallout to some of the recruitment work that you've done?

**McGinn:** Let me first go back to some of the ideas that Pat mentioned. I have come to be bothered by the term "outreach" because white library directors in cities usually pronounce it as if they have

### Change is the end result of all true learning.

—Leo Buscaglia

to undertake major missionary expeditions to neighborhoods to care for the poor Black, Asian, and Latino people. It's backwards. This is our core constituency in most urban public libraries. Yes, I have had to swim upstream and to fight. But I've been fortunate to find some situations where I haven't. The worst situation I ever had—I should mention that I received my library degree in 1970 and I started recruiting African-American staff from Rev. Leon Sullivan's Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia that year—was when I was state librarian in North Carolina and began promoting Black professional and paraprofessional staff. I was very naïve. I ran into an enormous amount of backlash. It became so bad that I finally resigned and left the State Library of North Carolina. I later found out that there was a lot of disenchantment with what people thought were my very aggressive policies in assuring equity when hiring and promoting Black employees. But in New Haven and now at Seton Hall University, it's been the exact opposite. The New Haven mayor who I reported to, John DeStefano, had a very diverse staff of administrators, so if people had a problem with my trying to hire staff that matched the community,

that didn't go very far. When I got to New Haven there had been only one Black librarian in twenty years. In a space of eighteen months I hired nine Black librarians, not counting support staff. I think I was able to do this because I had the support of city officials. And I received a lot of help with recruiting Black applicants from E. J. Josey [professor emeritus of U. Pittsburgh's LIS program and founder of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association] and Martha Hale [dean of Catholic University of America's LIS program] and from the Department of Information and Library Science at Southern Connecticut State University. Now at Seton Hall, I just hired two African-American male librarians to tenure track faculty positions in the past three weeks. This is a general trend here in New Jersey. Betty Turock at Rutgers has been a champion for diversity in recruitment so there is a lot of support in this state for being proactive. I've been fortunate to find those connections to good people.

**Tarin:** Yet, we should add here that there is a big myth that people aren't there for you to hire.

**Versed:** Yes, what we hear is that people of color just aren't there to recruit. Pat, talk about why you believe this is a "myth."

**Tarin:** Well, for instance, on the recruitment side of getting people into library school, I work in a program where I recruit Native Americans and Latinos into the profession. And Native Americans are supposed to be "impossible" to recruit because of being such a tiny percentage of the population—the pipeline being so very small, the minute numbers, relatively speaking, of Native Americans that even graduate from college, that are even eligible to become librarians is a very small number, but we've found that we are able to recruit six or seven Native American librarians every year.

**Versed:** How? That's going to be the question that readers have, how are you able to do this?

**Tarin:** I must admit that I am in Arizona, but location isn't everything. We send out information all over the country and we find the students. We find them. It's a matter of using different messages. It isn't one single way. We use our personal networks and AILA [the American Indian Librarian Association] and REFORMA [the National Association to Promote Library

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MYTHS continued from previous page

Services to the Spanish Speaking]; but in addition to that we've developed a large database of all kinds of Native American centers, Mexican American centers, universities, and all the major academic and public libraries. We send out probably five hundred mailings a year in addition to the personal contacts we make. And now one of the biggest recruitment resources is our own graduates. I am not saying this kind of recruitment is an easy thing, but it is doable. That's what's missing in our field. There is lip service, but there isn't action.

**McGinn:** Yes, something that was mentioned earlier is important—the personal initiative. There are far too many library and library school directors that don't make that effort, perhaps because they're frightened. There are some library directors, at least in public libraries, who won't go into minority neighborhoods in their own cities.

**Tarin:** I think you have to be interested in people and be willing to take risks, and these are tiny risks.

**McGinn:** You do, you do. Here at Seton Hall we sit right on the Newark city line. We have about 9,000 students, 30 percent of our students are Black or Latino or both. It just wouldn't make good business sense for us not to recruit Black and Latino faculty and staff, when at any given time 2,700 of our students are Black or Latino. These students are the present and future of our libraries.

**Versed:** Reinette, calling on your academic library experience, there are many studies projecting that minorities will become "majorities" on college campuses. There are other studies that point to the importance of diverse campus faculty to the academic success of students from diverse backgrounds. Do you want to jump in here?

**Jones:** I believe there is a connection between staff and academic performance, and I want to thank Pat and Howard for some of the things they've mentioned. One thing we're doing in Kentucky is to join together librarians regardless of library type or organizational memberships. It's a group called KLDivERS [Kentucky Librarians Diversity, Education, and Recruitment]. We come together and go to conferences, not just library conferences—the next conference is the Migrant Network Coalition Conference. We have had some success.

People are actually beginning to know this group, sometimes even more than the organizations that have been here quite some time because we are not just going to library-related conferences.

**Tarin:** I am glad that you brought that

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

**Don't Move Out, Move Up!  
Strategies for Librarians to  
Move Up the Ladder,  
Not Out the Door**

ALA Annual Conference  
Sunday, June 26, 2005  
10:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M.  
Sheraton Chicago Hotel &  
Towers, Superior A/B Rooms

up because that is something that we do as well. I regularly go to other types of meetings where I think I am going to find either potential students or the people that reach those students, such as the Chicano Faculty Association meeting.

**Jones:** Something else happened at the last conference I attended—I had people come up to me and say, "How come the librarians didn't do a program this time? I saw librarians at the last conference." It told me that we have made a mark, an entry point. They are looking for the librarians. So on our agenda for this month's meeting will be our going back to those conferences: the Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education (KABHE), the Migrant Network Coalition, the Strategies for Change Conference. There is also a working group of librarians who are in the process of trying to get the SOLINET "National Diversity in Libraries Conference" in Kentucky for 2008. And I have been talking about this with various people at conferences, and they in turn are asking about the status of the proposal. But one thing that really threw me was when someone asked, "Why should African-Americans go into librarianship?"

**Versed:** How did you answer?

**Jones:** I mentioned income, because when you look at the income based on race in this state, no one race outdistances the median income of librarians in

this state. I know that we talk about pay equity, but if you are a librarian in the state of Kentucky, you're making a pretty good salary—62 percent of the people employed full-time in Kentucky earn less than the librarians employed in Kentucky

**Versed:** We're going to wrap up, but Reinette's last observation is intriguing. It echoes a comment that librarian, currently a doctoral student in Florida, Sterling Coleman made a year ago when we interviewed him for *Versed*. One of the things he said is that we as librarians of color have not done a good job of letting youth know that with a career in librarianship you can purchase a house or buy a car. Yes, it's true that librarians are very underpaid, terribly underpaid in most situations compared to occupations requiring advanced degrees, but is the profession letting itself off the hook too easily in the recruitment arena by saying the problem is just about salaries?

**McGinn:** Two years ago, I finally completed my doctorate at Emporia State University. I wrote my dissertation on job satisfaction of Black librarians in some urban systems of the Midwest, New England, and the Mid-Atlantic states. I did a lot of interviewing. Salary was not a factor in why people were happy or unhappy. It wasn't even mentioned. What gave people the greatest job satisfaction was being able to help people and doing the work of a librarian. A third major reason was one I was totally unprepared for—a feeling by Black librarians that they were doing the work of God. They felt a calling. It was really striking. The major reason for workplace dissatisfaction was working in a hostile workplace and being subjected to discrimination by library directors, staff, and patrons.

**Tarin:** To move beyond the salary issue and show a different angle, look at it from the perspective of some of our potential recruits to library school. They are minority students that have just graduated with undergraduate degrees. They are often from areas where early education was not particularly good. They're often not going to be prepared to go into the sciences or into law or medicine. It's really a sad statement but it's often true. And fortunately there are some who can and do go into these fields, but I know that not many are prepared to do that. What are their career options? And then we have to ask ourselves, why do so many go into teaching and not think about librarianship?

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## FROM THE FIELD

## *Something to Dedicate a Life to: An Interview with Betty Turock*

### *From Work with the Black Panthers to Taking on the FCC, Betty Turock Reflects on a Career Devoted to Diversity, Feminism, and Social Equity*

**Cristina Hernandez**

**Cristina Hernandez** is Librarian, Newcomb College Center for Research on Women at Tulane University. She received an MLIS from Louisiana State University in the Spring of 2005.

**Betty J. Turock** is Professor Emeritus, School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University.

**CH:** How did you enter the field of librarianship?

**BT:** That's a rather interesting story. I got my bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and finished a year of graduate study in clinical psychology on fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania. By that time my husband and I had been engaged for a year and a half. We got married and he began his career with AT&T, where we became corporate nomads, moving from place to place with each of his promotions. That ended the dream of a Ph.D. in psychology. We had two children and I began to look for a place to put some of my unspent energy and enthusiasm. I went back to school and took courses for certification as a teacher. One of my teachers was the superintendent of schools in a system right across the street from the town in which I lived. One night he asked me to stay after class and said, "You're wasting your time here. I have a job for you. How would you like to become the materials coordinator in my school district? We got a major grant from the federal government and we are opening three new libraries. You'll be in charge of the libraries and also audiovisual services." Somewhat astonished, I replied, "But I know nothing about libraries." And

what do you think his response was? He said, "What's to know?" Fortunately I knew enough to go to Rutgers University, which at that time was one of the very newest programs in the country and also one of the youngest ALA-certified graduate schools. Once I began library school and was taught by people like Susan Artandi and Ernie DeProspero, who had such a passion for what libraries could do, it was clear I had found a career that I could dedicate a life to.

**CH:** You have had a long career working in various types of positions in all types of libraries. You have acted as a library consultant and advisor to the Department of Education, and since 1981 you have been dedicated to LIS education. As a new librarian who is sensitive to the dangers of being pigeonholed into a particular type of position or library, I find your career path invigorating. What drove you to take on such a diverse career path?

**BT:** My career path reflects a continuous process of mentoring. I originally began in schools because that's what I was offered. That's why I have come to believe so wholeheartedly in mentoring people new to the field. They have no idea of all the wonders that are ahead of them. I started my career in libraries

when my children were very young. By the time we got to Phoenix, Arizona, I knew that I had to finish the degree to qualify for the jobs I wanted. I felt that of all the schools I had gone to as we traveled across the country, Rutgers had given me the best education. I went back there at a time when debate and discussion centered on the library's role in a democratic society—the library was presented as a democratic bastion and I came to understand the egalitarian nature of public librarianship, it welcomed everyone and it had something to offer everyone. It fit exactly the profile I was looking for in a career.

In the meantime, as my husband moved across the country, I looked for positions. I would call up the state library associations and listen to their hotlines listing local jobs. I would take whatever appealed most to me based on what the job offered and what I thought I could do in it. For example, when I was in Illinois I had two jobs. I was the storyteller at the Wheaton Public Library in the morning and in the afternoon and early evening I went to George Williams College where they had just installed their first dial-access retrieval system in the language laboratory. So I was combining what I had learned at Rutgers.

When I took courses I looked for areas that would give me an edge in the market, that a lot of people didn't have, but were in great demand. Then, when I went to the marketplace I was able to find jobs that I could apply for and get. When I left Phoenix for Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and had my degree, for the first time I could look to fill the passionate interest I had in what the public library could do. When, finally, I entered library education, it was once again because people had mentored me. My professors at Rutgers had encouraged me to get my Ph.D. from the time I entered the master's program. So it was a combination of planning as I took my courses; applying for positions that looked exciting to me regardless of what kind of environment they were in as long as it was a library; then finding a real home in the public library and finally in library education. At each step it was mentoring that made a difference.

**CH:** You were elected ALA president in 1995. During your candidacy for ALA president you mentioned that you headed a newly desegregated library. What was that like?

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# Mark Your Calendar!

## Joint Conference of Librarians of Color 2006

The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) "Gathering at the Waters: Embracing Our Spirits, Telling Our Stories," will be held October 11–15, 2006, at the Adams Mark in Dallas, Texas. Visit the ALA's Office for Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS) website for ongoing information on this important event: [www.ala.org/olos](http://www.ala.org/olos).

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

### The "R" Words: Race/Ethnicity, Recruitment, and Retention in Library and Information Services

Saturday: June 25, 1:30–3:30 P.M.

*McCormick Place, S101b*

Diversity in the profession is of critical concern. Data collected over the last decade indicates that only 1 of 10 librarians are from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. This reality fails to reflect the 152% growth in the nation's minority populations during the same period. Evidence of higher attrition among minorities in the profession is of further concern. Moderated by Salvador Guereña, University of California Santa Barbara. Speakers: Jametoria Burton, Research Librarian, University of Iowa; Isabel Espinal, Humanities & Anthropology Lib., University of MA Amherst; Michael Havener, Director & Professor, University of Rhode Island GSLIS; Reinetta Jones, Librarian, University of Kentucky.

### Out of the Margins: GLBT Librarians, Libraries, and Literary Activism

Saturday, June 25, 1:30–3:30 P.M.

*McCormick Place, N426a*

From activism in the profession, to the creation of specialized libraries and archives that document and celebrate GLBT life and history and the production of creative literature that resist boundaries, these individuals are ensuring that Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer existence is neither relegated to the margins nor hidden on the shelves. Speakers: Steven Fullwood, Founder, Black Gay & Lesbian Archive; Reginald Harris, Poet & Head, Information Tech. Support Dept., Enoch Pratt Free Library; Natalie Kendall, Librarian, Leather Archives & Museum; Tatiana de la Tierra, Information Literacy Librarian, University of Buffalo; Joe Tragert, Marketing VP EBSCO Publishing, EBSCO GLBT Life Database Project; Paul Keith, Librarian, Gerber/Hart Library.

### Charting Courses: Excellence in Diversity Research 2005

Saturday, June 25, 4–5:30 P.M.

*Palmer House Hilton, Salon V/VI*

2004 Diversity Research Grants Recipients share findings: Jane Karp discusses the development of a comprehensive bedside laptop computer course serving institutionalized older adults; Elizabeth L. Marcoux researches aspects of tribal children's

literature that may contribute to its use as a communication mechanism for cultural dissemination of tribal interests; and Kyung-Sun Kim analyzes minority recruitment and retention in LIS schools. These award-winning researchers will be joined by the 2005 Achievement in Diversity Research honoree, Dr. Mark Winston. Speakers: Jane Karp, Library Elderly Outreach, St. John's County Public Library; Elizabeth L. Marcoux, Assistant Professor, University of Washington SI; Kyung-Sun Kim, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin Madison SLIS

### Residencies—Not Just for Doctors!

Saturday, June 25, 4–5:30 P.M.

*McCormick Place, S503a*

Participants in post-graduate academic, public, and diversity-focused library residency programs examine their experiences. If you are implementing a residency in your library or want to ensure your current residency's continuing excellence and growth, this is the program for you. Also a must-see for recent and soon-to-be graduates looking to expand their opportunities. Sponsored by the Spectrum Scholar Interest Group and moderated by Kawanna M. Bright, Minority Librarian Resident, University of Tennessee. Speakers: Anthony Davis Jr., Pauline A. Young Resident, University of Delaware; Jody Gray, Resident Librarian, University of Minnesota; Michael Gutiérrez, Librarian, University of Delaware; Shannon Jones, Education Services Outreach Librarian, Virginia Commonwealth University.

### "Able" minded: Disability Rights in Library Hiring and User Services

Sunday, June 26, 10:30 A.M.–12 P.M.

*Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, BR II*

Panelists will discuss accessibility issues for academic and public libraries. Learn about an accessibility planning process through which librarians and user communities ensure that facilities and services comply with relevant laws; collaborating with a campus disability services office and managing an assistive technology center; implementing and providing public library services to people with disabilities; and the experiences of professionals with a disability. Speakers: Rhea Joyce Rubin, Consultant, Rubin Consulting; Simon Healey, Librarian II, Free Library of Philadelphia; Katherine Dexter Willis, Research and Info Services, North Carolina State Univ. Libraries.

### Don't Move Out, Move Up! Strategies for Librarians to Move Up the Ladder, Not Out the Door

Sunday, June 26, 10:30 A.M.–12 P.M.

*Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Superior A/B Rooms*

As attention is paid to the need for recruiting racially and ethnically diverse librarians, researchers point to evidence of higher attrition of librarians from these same underrepresented groups. This panel explores strategies to not only ride the waves, but also navigate the waters to a fulfilling career. Moderated by Willette Stinson, Prairie View A&M University. Speakers: Roberta Webb, South District Chief, Chicago Public Library; Ninfa Trejo, Library Director, Pima Community College; Sharon Epps, Senior Assistant Librarian, University of Delaware; Miriam Pollack, Library Consultant, Miriam Pollack & Associates.

### How Do I Know It's Discrimination? Recognizing and Resolving Discriminatory Employment Practices in Libraries

Cosponsor: ALA/APA

Sunday, June 26, 1:30–3:30 P.M.

*Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Sheraton BR II*

As charges of discrimination become more and more frequent in libraries it becomes increasingly important that human resources personnel, managers, supervisors, and individual library workers are able to identify and reconcile unlawful practices and disparate treatment in the workplace before they require third-party resolution or formal litigation. This program will look at civil rights and equal employment protections and guidelines for making and handling discrimination challenges. Moderated by Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson, Deputy Director, Detroit Public Library. Speakers: Desiree Goodwin, Librarian; Sharon L. Tufts, Head of Human Resources, Cleveland Public Library; Julius Rhodes, SPHR & Consultant, mpr group.

### DINE: Diversity Interest Network and Exchange

Sunday, June 26, 4–6 P.M.

*Embassy Suites Lakefront, Ohio River Room*

This DINE session will focus on the Diversity Librarians' Network. The Diversity Librarians' Network (DLN) is being developed by the University of Tennessee Libraries' Minority Resident Librarians in order to bring together diversity librarians from library residency, fellowship, and internship programs (as well as interested faculty, students, and human resources professionals) into a forum for sharing ideas and networking. Visit [www.lib.utk.edu/residents/dln](http://www.lib.utk.edu/residents/dln) for more info. Sponsored by the ALA Committee on Diversity, the Diversity Interest Network & Exchange meetings at ALA Midwinter and Annual seek to bring together representatives from diversity-interest committees and groups working across the Association, as well as individuals interested in diversity issues, for information sharing and networking. Light dessert, coffee, and tea provided.

### Diversity in Libraries around the World: Perspectives and Practices from International Library Associations

Cosponsor: ALA/IRO

Monday, June 27, 4–5:30 P.M.

*Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers, Michigan B Room*

As global population and migration trends shift, diversity in the library workforce and in services to users has become an international priority. During this program, representatives from various international library associations look at the past, present, and future of diversity as library policy and practice. Moderated by Ismail Abdullahi, Clark Atlanta University. Speakers: Don Butcher, Executive Director, Canadian Library Association; Bob Mckee, Chief Executive; Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (UK); Rob Bruijnzeels, Project Manager, "Libraries 2040," The Netherlands Public Library Association; Barbara Schleihagen, Director International Cooperation, German Library Association.

### National Dialogue on the Curriculum of Readiness for the 21st Century Librarian

Tuesday, June 28, 8:30 A.M.–3 P.M.

*McCormick Place, S102d*

Co-sponsored by ALISE and funded in part by IMLS, this summit brings together leaders in LIS education and practice. Participants will discuss needed reform and enhancements to LIS education with special attention to the recruitment of students from under represented backgrounds. Proceedings include engaging panels; active discussions; and work sessions. Recommendations will contribute to a published report disseminated to the profession.

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BT: It changed my life. It was in Winston-Salem, actually my first job after finishing my master's degree. The library was in an area that we referred to as "urbed-out," in other words, the library sat where a lot of African-Americans once lived. But over a period of years, one after another of their homes were torn down and replaced with high-rise apartments for the elderly, with a mental health facility, with a hospital, etc. While it was still a center, it was no longer a community where many people lived. The library sat unused. It was unused by white city residents because they knew it was second rate. It was unused by the African-American community because for them it was a symbol of segregation. I learned a lesson there that I never forgot—"separate and equal" did

not exist, but "separate and unequal" did. I began to work with people who had a real passion for seeing that equality was at the heart of community institutions. I worked with the Harambees, the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], and the Black Panthers. At that time, the Black Panthers were presented in the media in Winston-Salem with guns in hand. The Black Panthers that I worked with were uniformly young and dedicated to getting free breakfast for kids so they wouldn't go to school hungry; writing grants for free ambulance service because without insurance in Winston-Salem at that time, if you called an ambulance they wouldn't come and get you; and holding clothing drives. Many of their activities I brought into the library. The experience deepened my appreciation for what the public library could do. It showed

me a way of life that I did not know existed previously. It made me—I have to use the word "yearn"—yearn to be involved with issues that brought equality to all people and to understand that I could never empathize totally with another person if I didn't first understand the way in which they lived and how they happened to grow to be the people they were. I took the East Winston experience with me wherever I went in libraries and into library education and remembered that we have to reach out to the community to bring the library to the people and the people to the library; we have to listen and be responsive to what people are saying when we ask them what they need. New directions better answer their needs in many cases. It was in East Winston that I learned not to be afraid to take libraries in new directions.

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**CH:** That's a powerful lesson. This leads into my next question. Dr. Turock, much of your professional advocacy and research has centered on equity of access, diversity, and recruitment. I think many of us can see the relationship between those concepts, why are they so deeply intertwined for you?

**BT:** They are deeply intertwined because when we look at our country we see that the demographic moorings are changing, but the professional moorings—the way we're anchored—are remaining static. In order to be a relevant institution the library has to respond to the need for change. Diversity is an essential part of the social, economic, and political domains of a world that's now connected by electronic advances. Distances are closed. We can communicate in milliseconds. The library is an agency that responds to and proactively meets the needs of the community, the nation, the world. If the nation and the community are becoming more diverse then it's essential that we have people in libraries that reflect that diversity. It is not just bringing them into the profession, because I believe, frankly, that it's easier to bring them in than it is to retain them. We have to recognize and take away the obstacles to achieving diversity and also offer positions of leadership so that these very talented individuals don't become discouraged with their life in libraries. They must see places where they can serve and bring the library closer to the people.

Retention requires mentors and role models and spokespersons and the understanding that cultural competency exists in people who bring new and different knowledge of the history of emerging majorities and who possess needed linguistic abilities. Without that change it's difficult for the emerging majority populations we want to serve to feel comfortable in the library. And without that comfort I worry, not about computers taking over the work of librarians, as much as I worry about the ambiance, the climate that the library creates for the people so that they will want to use our services. For me diversity is a part of all of that. It's being responsive to what's occurring in our nation and our communities and it's proactive in making certain that we do as much as we can to find, recruit, and retain people who bring new dimensions to our field.

**CH:** When it comes to diversity and recruitment you put your money where your mouth is when you established the Betty J. Turock scholarship endowment to benefit Spectrum Scholars. So far three scholarships have been awarded. What prompted you to give such a significant gift?

**BT:** The money supporting the scholarship was given by my two sons, David and Drew, who had done well in their careers. I had struggled and argued for a scholarship program with diversity as its hallmark while I was on the executive board. We had been searching for a vehicle for that program. With Elizabeth Martinez and her ALA staff we came up with the Spectrum Initiative and put together the program's details. Finally, we were able to convince the council and the executive

### Restlessness and discontent are the first necessities of progress.

—Thomas A. Edison

board that ALA should support Spectrum. It began the year I was president (1995–96) and officially went into effect the last year I was on the board as past-president. My sons talked to me about how I would like my time as an ALA officer to be remembered. They said, "Mom, what can we do to make certain that something remains as your ALA legacy?" And I answered, "You know I'd like to think that there was consistency in my career and in my life for advancing equity of access and equal service for all people." So my kids created within Spectrum, the Betty J. Turock Scholarship. When I retired from Rutgers they started a scholarship there for emerging majority students as well.

**CH:** In spite of all the recruitment initiatives that have been created in the past ten years it can feel like the profession is still just treading water when it comes to achieving diversity in library schools and the profession. As a former library school director what radical redesign or new collaborations need to occur to recruit, educate, and prepare librarians to serve racially and culturally dynamic communities?

**BT:** If you look at the latest statistics, we're not doing well at all in making the profession more representative of the populations it serves. In fact, we have

regressed. That means we have to put greater energy and more funding into recruiting and retaining people of color. One of the things that we have been investigating at Rutgers with a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS] is the influence of greater interdependence between the field and the university. According to the research done by Mark Winston, Rutgers faculty member, and the model produced by Barbara Simpson-Darden, who recently received her Ph.D. from Rutgers, members of emerging majorities who want to become librarians already reside in libraries. In fact, when Simpson-Darden did her research on African-American academic leaders she found that most had been encouraged and mentored by people in the profession and that the majority had worked at some time in a library. The research of both Simpson-Darden and Winston show the positive elements that encourage people to come to library education, we also have learned the barriers both in school and when they leave school. Out of their research came the idea that greater interdependence between the field and the library was an absolute necessity to advance the diversity of our profession.

Over the last two years we have had a grant that does a couple of things. One, it starts at the undergraduate level supporting people working in libraries and provides them with free tuition and time away from the job, giving money to the libraries in which they work so that the libraries can hire people to replace their hours. Two, it supports working with recruits to make sure they complete a college degree and are eligible to enter the master's program in library and information science at Rutgers. Once they begin at Rutgers they have a mentor on the faculty and in their place of work. They are also linked with others working in the field through associations where liaison relationships have been created. Interdependence is not without its problems—we've recognized many issues that we didn't know existed. As we work at dealing with those issues, reinforcing the positive things that have come out of our work and overcoming obstacles, I think we come closer to developing a model that will be useful to the entire profession. Next, we have to look at building a model for bringing emerging majorities into leadership positions within the professional associations and within libraries so that they won't feel thwarted and without a future. We'll apply for another grant and



keep working on this. The IMLS under the leadership of Bob Martin should be commended for the funding they've put into making the profession more diverse. Unfortunately Bob's time is up in the position of director. Because of the national legislation that set up the IMLS, he'll finish in July. I only hope the person who follows will continue this piece of the IMLS mission and be as committed to it as he was. ALA has to work to make sure the next director makes professional diversity a cornerstone of IMLS funding for the future.

**CH:** During your ALA presidency you focused on the theme "Equity on the Information Superhighway." Your testimony underscored the essential role libraries play in defending the public interest in national information policy. Now as a professor, how do you think library schools can help to prepare students to be successful defenders of the public interest?

**BT:** Within the profession, debate has often centered on whether or not librarians should be advocates in the political arena. I believe that librarians, when united as a political force, can have a powerful effect on legislation and policy. I was fortunate to be president at the time the Telecommunications Act came up for renewal. It had not been updated in more than thirty years and a great deal had changed in telecommunications in this country during that period. The idea of a telecommunications bill that didn't involve libraries seemed incomplete to me and to others—Carol Henderson in the Washington Office and Elizabeth Martinez at headquarters. We agreed that making libraries a part of the legislation was imperative. At that time the number of libraries that offered electronic access to the public was low, less than twenty percent. Now it's around 98 percent. The theme served to demonstrate to librarians what advocacy could accomplish.

With the Telecommunications Act, a number of organizations got together as a coalition. We sat down with the head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and told him what we thought the new bill should contain. One thing was that libraries should be points of universal service. By that we meant that for the first time libraries should be recognized and given federal funding as a place where everyone could access new technologies regardless of their economic status. The

argument was compelling enough for the FCC to go forward with that role for libraries. I testified many times before Congress. When I did I was speaking not just for ALA, but also for all the library associations that had come together. I always thought that the role of libraries along with the role of a democratic government was to serve the public interest. I didn't talk about what libraries needed, I talked about what the public needed and how libraries were an answer to that need.

Library educators can help their students become defenders of the public interest by including Information Policy as a course within the curriculum and reinforcing advocacy throughout the curriculum; they can impress on students

**You cannot step twice  
into the same river,  
for other waters are  
continually flowing in.**

—Heraclitus

their role in the enactment of legislation and policy in which libraries serve as a major vehicle for the public interest.

**CH:** As a woman and as a feminist, I really enjoyed reading your article "Women and Leadership." Going beyond leadership issues, could you share with us how you think feminist approaches can benefit how we practice librarianship?

**BT:** Feminism has gone through many stages of development. At each one the level of awareness has been raised about how feminism fits into the pattern of social equity. The feminist view at this stage does not privilege either women or men. Each brings strength whether to the workplace or to the social situation. All of their similar and differing skills and abilities need to be honored by society. The valuable insights gained from living as a woman shouldn't be applied to gender issues alone, but to all issues that extend to diversity. When I look at research on women and their history, there is an affirmation that in management women have added significantly to an egalitarian view of leadership and leading. The evolution of feminism then demonstrates a growing

respect for women and men, for humanity in general, and the unique skills and attributes we can all contribute to society.

**CH:** I want to thank you for this interview. I just have one last question, and this is for we new librarians. Do you have any advice for new librarians who want to commit their careers to questions of social justice and social responsibility?

**BT:** That's a wonderful question. Working in an environment that provides you with an outlet for your devotion to social justice is very important. While most libraries provide lip service to the idea that they promote social equality, a new librarian coming out of an educational program who wants to dedicate a career in that direction needs to look for past performance. One of the reasons I went to work in the public library in Montclair, New Jersey, was because of its history of responsive service to its community. It is important to look for a match between your interests and the library's history.

The other reality, of course, is that we all need a job. So when I found myself in an unsupportive situation the professional associations offered enormous opportunity for fulfillment of the drive for greater social equity and social responsibility. Not only do they have a place to express that interest, but also they offer a place to influence library practice. ALA has many places in which they would welcome assistance in working for social equity. The Office for Diversity, which came out of the Spectrum Initiative, offers multiple opportunities, as do ALA's other offices and divisions.

I think, based on personal history, that no matter where I found myself I remembered that although I may be the newest person in the organization, it didn't mean that I did not have the ability and the responsibility to examine issues of social justice in the communities I served. I would look for activities to sponsor and other organizations with which to work who had a similar goal. It's one thing to say you're going to accomplish something; it's another to bring excitement to the work so that others want to join you. Finding a place with a history you want to be a part of, involving yourself in issues of social justice no matter where you are in the hierarchy, and joining professional associations to exercise your passion for social equity are very important beginnings for a rewarding career. 

## Man of the People

### East Cleveland's Greg L. Reese Weighs in on Library Recruitment, Curriculum Reform, and Working the System

#### Greg L. Reese

**Greg L. Reese** is Director of the East Cleveland Public Library and former President of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, and recruitment activist sits down with the Office for Diversity's Tracie Hall for a *Versed* Q&A session.

**Versed:** How did you get started working in libraries?

**Reese:** I received a BA from Morehouse College in History in 1975. I was living in Atlanta at the time and I decided to move back to my hometown in Cleveland, Ohio, and I needed a job. My sister's best friend worked for Cuyahoga County Public library in the personnel department and she said, "Greg, would you like to work in libraries?" I said, "Oh no . . . no." And she said, "Well think about it." I couldn't find a job and I was going to be married in a few months, so I decided I better hold down something. I started working in Cuyahoga County Public Library in August of 1975. My thirtieth anniversary is August 1 of this year . . . but that's how I began, really not excited about it, but needing a job. Once I got into the flow of things I began to enjoy some aspects of it, but I was in a community—Parma, Ohio—that was a very racist. I was the first African-American to ever enter the building, so it was a real challenge from day one to enter this field.

**Versed:** Greg, what was your initial position at Cuyahoga County?

**Reese:** I was a paraprofessional and then a reference librarian, but as an African-American I wasn't able to work the reference desk at the very beginning so I was trained on filing catalog cards. I did things behind the scenes like working with the pages in the stacks. They were a little reluctant to put me on the front desk. Eventually I got there and the public reacted accordingly. One lady almost had a heart attack when she saw me at the reference desk. I couldn't go to restaurants in the neighborhood. I had a white co-worker and we tried to go into

this one restaurant, as I stepped into the bar the guys leaned back on the bar stools and looked at me like "don't you even think about it, buddy. I had a rough time. I was there for about eight months and then I asked my supervisor for a transfer.

**Versed:** Where did you go after that?

**Reese:** I stayed in the same system, Cuyahoga County, but I went to Warrensville library. And at that time, 1976, the community was maybe 70 percent African-American. A very affluent community, a special community for the whole country and it's still nice today. I was there as a young adult librarian, a reference librarian, and as an outreach person for three years, which I really enjoyed. In 1980, I became manager of that facility, my introduction to management. I did that for five years, and then I came to East Cleveland in 1985.

**Versed:** When did you decide to go to library school?

**Reese:** Right after I left Parma. I said, "Look, if I'm going to hang with this profession I need all the money I can get." I understood that if I went to library school and got the MLS I would increase my overall salary, and that's what prompted me to get into school. When I went, I had to go to library school full time and work full time. The library created a schedule where I worked all evenings and all weekends. But when you're determined . . . I finished the program in ten months.

**Versed:** Where did you graduate?

**Reese:** Case Western. They've been closed for several years but they now have a joint venture going with Syracuse so they've reopened. That's great news because the only accredited school in

Ohio before that was Kent State. I had a hard time from the very beginning. There weren't many African-Americans interested in this field, just as it exists today, thirty years later, unfortunately.

**Versed:** Let's talk about your library school experience. As a leader in the profession you have consistently called on library education to become more relevant to actual practice. Do you think your own library education adequately prepared you for the kinds of issues and responsibilities you've had to manage?

**Reese:** Absolutely not. I think we are pretty on top of things when it comes public libraries and reference services, I think we give attention to general reference and technology. But we drop the ball when you move into administration and management. Marketing the profession, fundraising, being good managers and running a great, sound organization and developing the appropriate interpersonal skills to be effective—we didn't learn any of that in library school and we're really still not teaching that in library school. I believe that if we want to remain forerunners in the information business we need to take a close look at ourselves, because it's very competitive out there in the information world. No, I didn't learn any of these things. That's why I have been a pioneer in many of the things I've done. I just raised \$3.6 million by myself to build an addition. No one taught me that. I didn't learn that in school. At that time we didn't think we'd have the money crunch that we're having in 2005. We called ourselves "library rich" here in Ohio for many years. Now everybody is competing for dollars. We have to sit down with our legislators. We have to learn how to lobby. We have to use networking skills.

**Versed:** About your role as library director in East Cleveland, a city that faces many socioeconomic struggles, in checking the US Census I see that the per capita income for the city as of 2000 was \$12,602, and that 32 percent of the population is living below the poverty line. You said that library school did not really prepare you for that. Is it even fair to expect library schools to be able to transfer the kinds of leadership skills necessary to meet the challenges you've had to meet?

**Reese:** I think today we need to do that. When I started library school many library directors felt that libraries shouldn't even be located in communities such as mine, that libraries should be in the more affluent communities, that libraries were

for the educated. Really, it's just the opposite of that. My library is the most important institution in the community. And we're a community center. We are a public library. Not only do we continue the traditional services—story hours for the kids, Shakespearean literature, and things of that nature—but I just had a big jazz concert here at the library. I had a nationally recognized artist on my stage and we turned away a hundred people. We're doing it all. We do tax preparation. We have legal clinics. I work the system for my community. That needs to be addressed in library school. Because you're going to have different communities across the spectrum and we need to be trained for that. Every community is not going to have patrons just walk into the door loving reading and joining book clubs. In your poorer communities it's very hard to get people to come in. They're working, they have to take care of the family, put bread on the table . . .

**Versed:** Greg, your absolute belief that your library is the center of your community is really powerful. Yet when I look around many libraries in urban settings are having real problems connoting that message to policy makers, legislators, and even other institutions in their own communities. Why have you been so successful in getting that message out?

**Reese:** I think I have been successful in influencing the community to feel, through the services we provide, that this place is essential. As far as legislators—we're still having a hard time convincing them as to how important the library is. I think that's why we're still having a battle. As a result of that, I had to find another way to fund a new building. My taxpayers had just supported an operating levy for me by a two-to-one margin, in this poverty-stricken community, that let me know they respected the institution. I couldn't go back to them and say, "I want to float a bond issue to build a building." I thought, suppose I try to ask for the dollars to build this building? That was kind of taboo in the library world a few years ago, but I said to heck with this, this institution is for our community. That's when I knocked on my first door and to make a long story short, I was awarded a million dollars towards this campaign. They believed in me [enough] to do that. I've raised \$3.6 million and the building was finished at the end of May. All of my colleagues have development directors. We

just had a Trustee dinner as part of the Ohio Library Council [OLC] Chapter Conference and the whole topic there was fundraising. We had a guy there who was a fundraiser and my board member nudged me in the side and she says, "Greg, we've done all of that, haven't we?" And at the end of the program the director of OLC got up and said, "No one's taken the lead on this like the East Cleveland Public Library and its director, Greg Reese," and people got up and applauded. That's one reason why we need to recruit more people of color,

**If you have always  
done it that way, it is  
probably wrong.**

—Charles Kettering

those that can relate to the community they serve from an intellectual as well as a cultural standpoint. You know, I understand the "hood." I'm from the "hood" (laughs). I understand the needs in this community and that's why we can do such a good job, because we communicate easily with the people that we serve.

**Versed:** In 1999, you and Ernestine Hawkins co-wrote *Stop Talking, Start Doing: Attracting People of Color to the Library Profession*, which is still one of the foremost resources on recruiting people of color to the library field. What prompted you and Ernestine to write the book?

**Reese:** Out of frustration really. Right now we've got a children's service position open that we can't fill. They [students of color] are still not coming out of schools. I went to the trustee meeting that I told you about last week, there was maybe one hundred people in that room and about six were African-Americans. It was that way thirty years ago. I don't know what kind of progress we're making. I would go to the high schools and the guidance counselors would know about every profession except librarianship and when they would have career days nobody would be representing careers in library science. So I thought I would just try to put it in a very grassroots format, easy to read, easy to interpret and speak from our hearts about how important it is to recruit people of color into our profession. As recently as

two weeks ago, the Connecticut Chapter of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association did a program around *Me a Librarian* (one of the videos) and it just made me feel good. What surprises me is that the numbers—after all the work—don't seem to be changing that much and maybe I'm wrong. . . . I know you have all the statistics, but . . .

**Versed:** I think that what you are saying is something that frustrates us all. We're seeing minute increases in recruiting what should be called "emerging majorities" into the profession, but when we compare that to the population overall we really haven't been able to bring the goals to fruition. The issue of low salaries is often touted as the primary barrier for attracting racially and ethnically diverse people into the profession. But when we look at certain social service and human service fields where salaries are similar, we find much more representative diversity. In working with young people, I have found that they are more likely to initially select a potential career based on affinity rather than money. Why do you think librarianship has had such a hard time achieving diversity in the profession?

**Reese:** Yes, I don't think it is all about salary. I've said this over and over, we don't market the profession appropriately especially to the African-American community. People can't deal with the term "librarian," people still relate it to the old lady with the bun. The profession is not attractive to a lot of people. When they learn more about it, what's involved with being a librarian or information specialist, working with the technology and interacting with people, they take a whole different view of it. Then, they ask, "How can I be just like you and how much education do I have to have?" And I say, "Well, you've got to finish high school, then you've got to do four years of undergrad work, and then you've got to do graduate level work." They say, "Oh no. I won't make it that far, sir." And that's why the whole issue of library education comes into play here and how it should be structured and should there be a four-year undergrad program with the graduate-level program being in place if you want to be an administrator, dean, or director. I strongly feel that we have to take a close look at that. What blows me away is that there's a mix of programs in library and information science across the country. Some are doing four-year programs, some

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are doing thirty-six hours. That gives us no clout at all. You look at being a doctor or being a lawyer, the pattern is basically the same everywhere. [With varying criteria for librarianship] you're confusing your public as to what we are and what we're about. I don't think that's helping the situation at all.

**Versed:** I think library education is one of the most prominent issues right now. I know that you've spoken a lot about that. We have some camps talking about reforms and in other camps we have people saying that practitioners can't impose on library school curriculums. But I think that what you're saying is critically important whether we face it or not. What sort of suggestions would you prescribe?

**Reese:** I think the practitioner needs to be more involved in what's happening in our library schools. In some instances you'll have a professor at the library school that has been teaching there for twenty years and hasn't actually practiced in the profession and they're totally lost, I'm sorry. We need to make sure that whoever is educating our people in the schools is right on top of what's going on out here. I would suggest that we look at the curriculum very closely and we need help from practitioners. You can't just sit there and read a book to decide what we should do. I have had a wonderful career, but I am very disappointed at the number of people of color we have been able to attract to the profession. I applaud ALA for the Spectrum Initiative. But it takes more. It takes a grand marketing process—maybe TV spots. And ALA has done some good things, but we need to do it on a local level. I am a little disappointed even in the ethnic caucuses, and I was past-president of BCALA. We need to be more proactive and we need to deal with more social issues. For instance, you've got people who want to go to library schools that are being blocked because they don't have a 3.2 overall GPA. I've had to fight that battle. I graduated Morehouse with a 2.6 and flunked out of Ohio State three times? And now I've got people coming to me to get into library school. African-Americans who are looking to be a part of our profession have been turned away. They're not welcomed. I got on the recruitment bandwagon back in 1990 when one of my staff members was refused admission to Kent State because

she had a lower GPA, yet she had worked as a children's librarian for eleven years and had gotten letters of reference from myself and the director of Cleveland Public Library. The dean [of the library school] said, "absolutely not." I wrote letters all over the country. It got her in the program and she did exceptionally well.

**Versed:** I think the profession is becoming more and more proactive in the area of recruitment and I am seeing more organizing in the area of diversity, but sometimes it feels like "slow change." It might be my impatient nature, but where do you see progress being made and what do we still need to do to attract a more representative, culturally competent, and effective workforce?

**Reese:** I don't see the change myself. I can't even hire minority individuals because they're just not there. We're not turning enough librarians of color out of our library schools. That concerns me. I think if we ever go to a four-year program and people can come out of high school and say, "I want to be an information specialist. I'm going to Ohio State University," that might help us. We're not attracting the people of color that we need so desperately to work in communities like East Cleveland. It can be done but we, as a library community, need to come together, sit down and look at these issues. At the New Orleans ALA Conference in 1999, I had a meeting with seven library school deans, including E. J. Josey, and we talked about admissions. Requirements were all over the board, it was crazy. At Pittsburgh the GRE wasn't required. Here in Ohio, at Kent State, it was. So you had African-Americans commuting all the way to Pittsburgh because it was the only way they could get into a program.

**Versed:** Greg, some of these ideas are a bit radical. There are some four-year information technology and information science programs, but you can't come out of these programs with professional librarian status. So your suggestion to move eligibility for professional practice to the undergraduate level, I think, is resonant with the expectation for education. People can receive bachelor's in education. And though the bachelor's in library science is no longer very popular, your proposal is that it is a necessary concept that perhaps we should reinvigorate. Is that true?

**Reese:** Yes, tying in all the technical, technological information you need with

the traditional subject areas we need in reference work in public, academic, and school libraries. I think the design of a four-year program would give our profession more clout and make it more attractive to our young people. I don't see how we are going to be leaders in this profession or in business period with a thirty-six-hour degree, not at this point.

**Versed:** It's also compelling to examine what it takes—and you've mentioned this—to work in East Cleveland. In my library school days, it seemed that so many of us weren't being directed toward public libraries at all, and if we were, we were directed towards library service in suburban areas or schools. And when I talk to students these days they mention that as well. One student talked about how in giving career advice, a professor actively discouraged her class from working for an urban library system. This leads me to wonder who'll be left to work in urban libraries? There are equally complex, but often different skill sets required for work in the East Cleverlands, the Hartfords, and the South Central Los Angeleses, as opposed to the affluent or middle class suburbs around the country. Can you speak to that?

**Reese:** Absolutely. In 1996, I wanted to introduce computer technology to the public in East Cleveland. I was going to change the name of one of my branches to the North Branch Library and Technology Center. Before we even got the computers in, the public became aware of the change. They wrote me a letter, they were up in arms that some guy from Cleveland Heights was going to come to East Cleveland and change our library. But I understood that. I had grown up maybe two miles from these people, and now this was my community. I sat down with them and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, you must have computer technology all wrong. You know when you go to the bank and use the ATM? That's computer technology." These were people who needed the education. By the time I finished that meeting everyone in the room had signed up for a library card and registered for the training classes. That place has been going strong since 1996. Some people are intimidated by the technology and you need to make sure the door is open to them. Some librarians would have been impatient. In my new building I've received almost \$300,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. My public is so excited. We

have a line trying to get into the computer lab. So don't tell me that just because it's the inner city, people don't want to learn. We have to work with the community. I don't see that [approach] a lot because we don't have a lot of people from these communities coming out of library school. I've been here since 1985. I haven't had a desire to go anywhere. I've received many calls over the years to go to other libraries. But I wanted to stay here. My parents were here. And at this stage of my career, I am having a ball coming in everyday . . .

**Versed:** If you could make three wishes for the profession that will manifest in ten years, what would those be?

**Reese:** One of my greatest wishes would be to have more African-Americans involved in the library profession. I think it's such an important profession. I think we do so much for individuals. That's my primary goal, to see more people of color come into the library profession. And from a public library perspective, I think we need to have more library directors and library leaders that do the kinds of things that I'm doing (laughs). I hate to sound like I am bragging, but around the country we need to make sure our programs are targeting the people we serve. And the third thing is to make sure that we work with our library schools and make sure that the curriculum is responding to what we are doing in the twenty-first century. We need to come together, the practitioners and the professors. **V**

**Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.**

—Edmund Burke

#### EDITORIAL continued from page 1

Collection Development and Readers Advisory (I had the good fortune of being proselytized by Nancy Pearl herself!) are two of my greatest professional passions, but I would have failed my community in northeast Hartford and the profession itself if I had let my work as a librarian end there. In an interview

#### MYTHS continued from page 4

**Versed:** You're right. Fifty percent of all doctoral degrees earned by people of color are earned in one field . . .

**Tarin:** Education. People need to have models. That's why we don't have many minority engineers or architects or have representation in a lot of other fields. Librarians need to have more contact with students in ways that display to them what the career really is about. That's a missing element.

**Versed:** I want to ask you all to do a little prescription for the profession. We have Knowledge River, the Spectrum Initiative, the Association of Research Libraries' recruitment program, and many other diversity initiatives, but in some ways the idea of diversity seems to still float on top of the profession like oil on water. As we approach future work what can we do to ensure that we achieve this seemingly elusive diversity once and for all?

**Jones:** One of the things we need to do is get out of the library. We need to market ourselves. When is the last time you heard a librarian say, "I love what I do?" When I go out and talk to young people I make sure that I am telling them that I love being a librarian. I am not a traditional librarian and I am never going to be. I don't get excited about my job because of the computers; I get a high from the people I interact with every day.

**McGinn:** I think that if you forecast fifteen years into the future there could be two problems. The first is the continued deterioration of the urban library due to neglect by local government. The second is often the cause of the first—the detachment of librarians from their communities, a detachment that occurs

because librarians don't understand their communities, don't even live in their communities. This detachment adds to a greater sense of the public's feeling of disconnection from the library, especially in Black and Latino neighborhoods. I think the library schools are going to have to move away from notions of political correctness and take more risks. We need more champions like Betty Turock and E. J. Josey. Until the American library community puts as much energy into diversity issues as it puts into intellectual freedom issues we're not going to get anywhere. Our commitment to First Amendment rights is essential, but we must get equally involved in diversity and equity issues. It is much more difficult to eradicate racism than it is to defend the First Amendment.

**Tarin:** I agree that we're on a collision course with what's happening in larger society. If the resources aren't there for libraries and libraries continue to de-skill librarianship by sending more and more professional work to support staff and leaving librarians with less contact with the public, our prospects will not be favorable. Right now, with IMLS's emphasis on diversity and recruitment and the bump in the numbers of people recruited to the field, this is our opportunity to develop a new leadership that will influence the next thirty years. We need to be at every table, in every kind of library. Our future is based on our ability to mobilize the next generation of leaders.

**Jones:** I think we're still in a portion of the learning curve where the numbers are not yet way up. We are still figuring things out. But I hope we don't stop trying just because the numbers are not what we want them to be at present.

**Tarin:** I totally agree. You just get up everyday and do it all over again. **V**

herein recruitment champion Greg Reese calls on library schools and practitioners to come together to make library education more relevant to the needs of the country's culturally and socially dynamic population. I echo this. I am an admitted bibliophile, passionate about research and information aggregation, and a friend to any technology that expedites these processes, but I became

a librarian so that I could work with library users. As the indefatigable Reinette Jones says elsewhere in these pages, "I don't get a high from computers; I get a high from the people."

Here's to library education (both formal and self-learning) that puts people, in all their incarnations and with their myriad information needs, first! **V**

# The Diversity Librarians' Network

## Connecting, Sharing, Succeeding!

**Kawanna Bright, Jayati Chaudhuri, and Maud Mundava**

**Kawanna Bright** is Information Sciences Librarian, **Jayati Chaudhuri** is Asian Studies Librarian, and **Maud Mundava** is Consumer Studies Librarian at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) Libraries. They are the first cohort of Minority Resident Librarians at the UTK Libraries.

The Diversity Librarians' Network (DLN) was developed by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) Minority Resident Librarians in order to bring together diverse librarians from diversity recruitment programs, primarily defined here as residency, fellowship, and internship programs. Though diversity programs are the main focus, we also include general residency, fellowship, and internship programs in our network.

The drive to create a network such as this was based on the difficulties that we encountered during our application process when trying to locate information about programs similar to UTK's. The existence of these types of programs had not been readily known to any of us prior to applying at UTK. In an effort to learn more, we all searched the Internet, but were unable to locate any resource that provided comprehensive and up-to-date information on these programs. The best resource we found was the Association of Research Libraries' Research Library Residency and Internship Programs database, which includes detailed information on a number of programs. Unfortunately, the database relies on individual programs to update and re-enter information as their programs change, leading to duplicate entries for the same program from different years, and entries for programs that no longer exist. Other efforts at presenting this information in one location found during our searches generally consisted

of list-only Web pages that provide links to programs' home Web sites, which may or may not be up-to-date.

With this in mind we considered it necessary to apply for a grant that could assist us in establishing a resource enabling users to easily retrieve information. This resource would include a Web site featuring profiles for library recruitment programs, an Electronic Discussion Board (EDB), a calendar of diversity news and events, resource lists, mentoring opportunities, and a blog. Additional opportunities to connect with other information professionals in the field with similar interests would also be provided.

The DLN received initial funding of \$1000 from ALA's Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) Cultural Diversity Grant to provide for the development and launch of the network. Continued support of the network will be provided by the UTK libraries as well as through future funding endeavors pursued by the network's developers. The primary purpose of the DLN is to create a forum for sharing ideas and networking for diverse librarians from diversity recruitment programs and faculty, students, and human resources professionals with an interest in these programs and their participants. Additionally, our mission is to create a resource that will serve as a single point of reference for all library professionals interested in diversity.


The primary objective of the DLN is to create an engaged community of par-

ticipants who will share their work experiences, accomplishments, and challenges through the EDB and professional and social events facilitated by the network. Developing the EDB and the Web site into lively and responsive current awareness tools, with timely notices of diversity awareness and discussions of relevant issues, is another key goal of the network. In addition, the DLN aims to facilitate networking between new program participants and faculty advisors by providing a readily available forum for them to connect.

The DLN offers a number of resources that will appeal to a wide audience. The network is specifically targeted towards the following: current diversity recruitment program leaders and mentors in search of information to help them evaluate and update their own programs; libraries interested in beginning a diversity recruitment program at their own institutions; diverse students currently enrolled in library and information science programs in search of information on current recruitment programs and considering applying for positions; administrators and other coordinators of diversity recruitment programs interested in sharing information about their programs with others in similar positions; diversity recruitment programs interested in finding well-qualified candidates; current diversity recruitment program participants in search of networking connections with previous participants who have similar experiences; and previous diversity recruitment program participants looking to mentor and share their experiences with current and future program participants.

The DLN has nearly limitless potential for future growth and advancement. We already have twenty users registered on the EDB.

The productive partnerships formed by those involved in this networking service will help librarians foster and sustain diversity in their institutions and within the library profession. By creating a one-stop shop where librarians can discuss diversity-related issues, endeavors, and practices from their institutions, we improve their ability to share best practices. Together we can make a difference!

*To learn more about how you can become involved in the DLN, visit [www.lib.utk.edu/residents/dln](http://www.lib.utk.edu/residents/dln) or contact the DLN directors at [dln@lib.utk.edu](mailto:dln@lib.utk.edu).* 

## FROM THE FIELD

## Diversity Resources Page (DRP)

### *A Digital Library on Diversity and Multicultural Issues at the University of Tennessee*

**Bharat Mehra and Katherine E. Stepp**

**Bharat Mehra** is Assistant Professor, School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

**Katherine E. Stepp** is Graduate Student, School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

The contemporary digital revolution has made access to large amounts of information easy but it has also resulted in even greater difficulties locating appropriate digital resources on multicultural and diversity issues currently fragmented and scattered all over the Web. Additionally, today's information overload provides digital diversity-related collections that are often questionable in terms of their authority (source), authenticity and accuracy (content), and representation of information. This makes it extremely difficult for people to find meaningful information on multicultural and diversity issues relevant to their needs and everyday lives. The Diversity Resources Page (DRP), a project under development in the School of Information Sciences (SIS) at the University of Tennessee (UTK), addresses these problems related to availability of digital resources on multiculturalism and diversity by building apt local and global digital collections that incorporate culturally relevant, user-friendly, and easy-to-use


searching and retrieving mechanisms to multiple sources of information.

The DRP is conceptualized as an online place where users find information and communication resources on diversity issues. It is a newly developing virtual community that provides collections and services to meet the needs of diverse local and global underserved populations. Here users will find Web-based and offline materials on international dimensions in education, multiculturalism, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, income, geography, disability, skill, and other variables that shape inequity in our global networked community.

Currently, the DRP is in the development stage where we are completing bibliographic information and metadata for a diversity collection of two hundred to three hundred documents and building an underlying organizational digital library schema via the Greenstone Digital Library software. During summer 2005, a Scholarly Activity/Research Incentive

Fund award from the UTK's Office of Research is providing financial support to conduct DRP usability and evaluation workshops. The DRP's digital collections will subsequently become accessible online during fall 2005.

Additionally, DRP work processes are employing student efforts in service learning and academic outreach that includes: (1) developing and evaluating local and non-local collections, services, and resources on diversity in libraries and information-related settings; (2) interacting with underserved users in our globally intertwined macro community and eliciting their responses about their information seeking and use; and (3) building connections with community social justice agencies to develop local information that is not readily available in formal information provision centers such as libraries. Student contributions in service learning efforts are evaluated and incorporated in the DRP to provide accurate, authentic, and trustworthy information. Student involvement in diversity-related digital library development and evaluation provides assistance in the creation of appropriate digital collections and such strategies should be more actively incorporated in the building of permanent and more stable institutional repositories in the future. Similar initiatives can be duplicated at other universities and library environments in order to extend student involvement in service learning methods that are sustainable, efficient, low-cost, and immersed in local settings. Future efforts will identify processes, successes, challenges, and best practices in development and usability of the DRP for building community responsive digital collections on diversity and multicultural issues.

*For more information or to submit contributions to the DRP, contact Bharat Mehra, Assistant Professor in the School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, at [bmehra@utk.edu](mailto:bmehra@utk.edu).* 

**It is not light that we need, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.  
We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.**—Frederick Douglass

**Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation  
and social standing, never can bring about a reform.**—Susan B. Anthony

## Looking for Diversity in All the Right Places

### A Checklist for Librarians Who Value Diversity

**Donna Braquet**

Donna Braquet is Assistant Professor and Life Sciences Librarian, University of Tennessee

In the past decade recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce has become an increasing priority for corporate, government, and non-profit sectors. It is now commonly understood that employees, customers, and the organization itself benefit from having a diverse workforce. Libraries are no exception. In fact, it has been suggested that a diverse library workforce is essential to providing services, programs and collections to a diverse community of users. Despite these proactive steps, the number of minority librarians is still below what it could be, and should be.

Recruitment of minorities and those who value diversity can, at times, be a Catch-22. Ironically, the libraries that could benefit most from a more diverse workforce are often located in homogeneous communities that may not be attractive to minorities and diversity advocates. Or, the library, institution, or community may not have the policies or services in place to fully support a diverse workforce.

Job hunting involves a lot of information gathering, which comes naturally to librarians. It is no secret that candidates use the Internet to investigate potential employers by searching for telltale documents such as annual reports, committee minutes, strategic plans, and user surveys. This same tactic can be used to gather information about library, campus, and community diversity. The following checklist provides a starting point for librarians who take diversity into account when making career decisions.

### *Diversity within the Library*

A natural starting point to determining a good fit for those valuing diversity is the level of commitment demonstrated by the organization itself. A given library can give prominence to diversity issues in a number of ways. Most often seen in academic libraries, a diversity committee within a library shows exceptional and ongoing commitment to diversity. Other names for such groups could be Diversity Task Force, Diversity Working Group, Diversity Advisory Committee. A library may have developed a diversity statement or policy, which may pertain to internal staff diversity or service to users. A library's collection development policy should also be taken into account. Mission statements, value statements, and organizational values may include commitment to diversity, multiculturalism, or overall inclusiveness. Strategic plans provide a lot of information about the priorities, direction, and accomplishments of an organization. Strategic plans often contain more specific action items of the larger goals, and possibly accomplishments of previous years, which may be quite useful.

### *Community Diversity*

Many jobseekers will relocate to pursue their careers. The diversity of a community and the cultural outlets it provides can be an important concern during these life-altering decisions. Information on commu-

nity diversity is a key resource that recruiters interested in appealing to diverse candidates should collect and provide. Concerned jobseekers can identify a general profile of the community by reviewing demographic data and local media. Easily accessible demographic data for the nation can be found online at State and County Quick Facts (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/0>), Guide to State Statistical Resources ([www.census.gov/statab/www/stateabs.html](http://www.census.gov/statab/www/stateabs.html)), and ethnic, religious, and political maps by city, by ER Sys.com ([www.ersys.com](http://www.ersys.com)). A directory of alternative weekly newspapers (<http://aan.org/gyrobase/Aan/NewsweeklyDirectory>) can also provide sources for additional glimpses into the community.

### *Campus Community (Academic Libraries)*

Offices on campus that handle issues of diversity, equity, or affirmative action will often be the best starting place for learning about a university's diversity resources. Some of the resources that might be found may include: campus events, reports on campus diversity, a statement from the university president, diversity policies, campus committees on diversity, diversity action plans, campus climate surveys, diversity newsletters, diversity training tutorials, diversity initiatives, and discrimination grievance procedures.

The number and types of diversity-related student and faculty organizations can also be an indication of the degree of campus diversity. The Office of Student Affairs page, the Faculty page, and the Current Students page will most often provide this information. Diversity centers show a long-lasting and focused commitment to diversity.

Student newspapers can also be a good indicator of the campus climate by providing a calendar of events and articles or editorials about diversity issues on campus.

Looking for diversity (in all the right places) starts with the list of resources above. To continue your research, conduct searches that combine the library, institution, or city with diversity-related terms in the following sources: (1) the "site search" feature of the library, institution, or city Web site; (2) Google or your favorite search engine; and (3) local online newspapers and magazines or newspaper databases, such as Factiva or Lexis-Nexis. 