

## EDITORIAL

### Being Here Matters

Tracie D. Hall

Tracie D. Hall is Director of the American Library Association Office for Diversity.

We are nowhere by accident. That you are at this moment reading these words is no mere coincidence, but part of a small chain of actions and events that have conspired to push you closer and closer towards your purpose on this planet: to live a life of usefulness. Albanian-born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, known to the world as Mother Teresa, lived in full recognition of the power of “being here.” Her work among India’s poor touched the world. Yet when she first committed herself to opening a school for Calcutta’s street children, she came not armed with money—but with intention. She wanted to touch those who had been forgotten. “Show up and things will happen,” she is reported to have said. By the time of her death in 1997, Mother Teresa’s mission had grown to over 4,000 individuals overseeing orphanages, hospices, and charity centers on almost every continent. By simply showing up and being attentive to her surroundings, one woman, who had decades earlier taken a vow of poverty, single-handedly enriched the lives of thousands.

What does it mean to be in New Orleans? That ALA is here means that the association recognizes the importance of its conference to the city’s economic recovery. More than just a financial presence, ALA members are taking the rebuilding of New Orleans into their own hands. Whether copy-cataloging boxes of

**We may have all come on different ships, but we’re in the same boat now.**

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

donated books, or taking up hammer and wrench in some of the city’s libraries and schools, ALA and its members will actively play a part in the rebuilding process.

That you are here, as an individual, matters deeply. By being here you assert and reiterate your connection to people and places outside of yourself. As the voices within these pages testify, those of us who work in libraries have a distinct calling. We are required to bear witness to human need (economic, educational, social) and to respond with the information resources necessary to lead to transformation. There is no issue—not cyclical poverty, not racism in the guise of economic segregation, not immigration or workers’ rights—that should be off limits to us. As librarian Anwar Ahmad says in these pages “we can be everywhere the people are.” So, New Orleans—we are here! 

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

### Outside the Magic Circle: Library Services and Underserved Users

ALA Annual Conference  
Saturday, June 24, 2006  
1:30–3:30 P.M.  
MCC Rm. 294

“It’s easy to forget that there are people too poor to have a car, a credit card or a checking account, people stranded outside the magic circle,” observed journalist Cynthia Tucker. She was speaking to the situation faced by 2005 hurricane evacuees, and to the realities of all individuals who are poor, isolated, displaced—people locked outside of circles of privilege. This panel brings together LIS, literacy, and social services practitioners to share best practices. Featuring Dr. Alma Dawson, Associate Professor, Louisiana State University, Library & Information Sciences; *Times-Picayune* journalist Jarvis DeBerry; Dr. Petrice Sams-Abiodun, Associate Director, Loyola University Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy; Ronald Gauthier, Assistant Manager of the Norcross Branch, Gwinnett County Public Library System, and Former Manager, New Orleans Public Library ML King Branch (Ninth Ward); and Robert Skinner, Director, and Adrienne Webber, Assistant Director, Xavier University Library Resource Center.

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## About Versed

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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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### Office for Diversity American Library Association

50 East Huron Street  
Chicago, IL 60611  
phone: 1-800-545-2433 ext. 5020  
fax: (312) 280-3256  
e-mail: [diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org)  
online: [www.ala.org/diversity](http://www.ala.org/diversity)

Tracie D. Hall, Director  
Wendy Prellwitz, Program Officer

Design by Karen Sheets.  
Layout by ALA Production Services.

## FROM THE FIELD

# Outside The Magic Circle

## *Hurricane Katrina Revealed Two Distinctly Separate Americas; Now, What Can Libraries Do About It?*

Few of us will forget the images captured in the aftermath of Katrina and the subsequent flooding of people in New Orleans seemingly left behind, people turned away from neighboring communities, people desperate for help. Whether you felt compelled to look or to turn away, what happened in New Orleans is indelibly etched on our collective psyche. Weeks before heading to the city affectionately dubbed "The Big Easy," *Versed* sat down with librarians Alma Dawson, associate professor, Louisiana State University School of Library and Information Science; Ronald Gauthier, assistant manager of the Norcross Branch, Gwinnett County Public Library System, and former manager, New Orleans Public Library ML King Branch (Ninth Ward); and Robert Skinner, director, Xavier University Library Resource Center; literacy specialist Dr. Petrice Sams-Abiodun, associate director, Loyola University Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy; and journalist Jarvis DeBerry of New Orleans's *The Times-Picayune* to talk about the increasing socioeconomic disparities in New Orleans and nationwide and the implications for libraries.

**Versed:** New Orleans was certainly not the only area affected by Katrina, but the social divides uncovered by the devastation riveted us all. The inequities were palpable. *The Atlanta Journal Constitution's* Cynthia Tucker probably said it best when she commented that many of those left behind in New Orleans—those poor or elderly or dependent on social welfare or working for extremely low wages or who were without cars and credit cards or cell phones—were people living "outside the magic circle." That magic circle is a powerful place of privilege and at the same time it is almost invisible because most of us take it for granted. As ALA lands in New Orleans less than a year after one of the largest natural disasters this country has

faced, what are some of your thoughts on the realities that the city is facing during the recovery process.

**Petrice Sams-Abiodun:** What happened here in New Orleans hurt the entire city, not only one group. Everyone was hurt. The media fixed on the people who did not have a means to leave. But there were others who for whatever reason made the decision that they were not leaving their homes. That is a whole other population. But the race and class differences have always been there.

**Jarvis DeBerry:** I know many people who were at the Superdome because they didn't want to leave New Orleans, or decided to leave too late. So it is a myth that everyone was trapped. Yet, I say that and I don't know if we would have had the same scenes in St. Bernard Parish—a 90 percent white working class community—just southeast of Orleans Parish that was even more devastated by the flooding. In New Orleans, there was this gaping wound of poverty in the city that was suddenly exposed to the world. But even before the flood, all you really had to do was open your eyes. It should not have been a secret to anybody. In Tremè, considered the oldest continuous black community in the U.S.—Rampart Street divides it from the French Quarter—I lived in this wonderful Creole cottage built in 1830. It had gleaming wood floors, a courtyard, just beautiful. Just doors down from me there was a guy who was using his car battery to keep the lights going in his house. It's like that all over the city. Since the days of mansions and slave quarters, the people who lived in the most opulent houses have wanted their help living nearby, within shouting distance. So wealth and poverty have always intimately coexisted in this city. And though they often do, the have and have-not categories don't always strictly adhere to black or white. The guy with the car battery was white.

**Alma Dawson:** Pre-Katrina census figures showed that 23.7 percent of all New Orleans residents lived below the poverty line. A study by David Rusk, the former mayor of Albuquerque, indicated that of New Orleans' 67.3 percent African American population, 49 percent lived in high poverty communities where literacy levels were low, the schools were overcrowded, the streets unsafe and the tax base eroded, neighborhoods where many people were unable to read a basic newspaper. The educational system was such that the State of Louisiana had just taken over the public schools' Orleans Parish. One hundred and seven of 117 of the parish's schools were considered underperforming. What happens to the children in such a cycle?

**Ronald Gauthier:** Another study by the Casey Foundation revealed that Louisiana had the highest number of children in poverty in the United States, with a strong concentration in New Orleans. In New Orleans inadequate schooling has engendered a host of other social problems like teen pregnancy and maddeningly high homicide rates that were spiraling out of control and decimating young African American males, and rendering their children fatherless.

**Robert Skinner:** I don't feel really well qualified to talk about this. But when you look at the history of poverty here, when you see the devastated neighborhoods and you think about what it will take to bring the city back, it is overwhelming. I live in the Lakeview area, which would probably be considered an affluent area of the city, and today it looks like Berlin after the fall. Rebuilding is not going to be easy. And the fact that so much of the city is dependent on tourism and low-wage labor is another part of the reason why the economy has historically been so fragile. There is this cycle that occurs when people do not have the education to get higher-paying jobs or when the higher-paying jobs are just not there and people cannot afford to buy homes which helps to stabilize the economy.

**Versed:** We know that the disparities that we have witnessed in New Orleans exist all over the nation. How can librar-

ies better reach out to those beyond the magic circle? And is that part of our charge?

**DeBerry:** In New Orleans we need libraries to be open. And I am not just talking about post-Katrina. Some of the libraries, often the ones in neighborhoods with the highest need, have limited hours on Friday and Saturday, or hours that were just plain inconvenient to working people. Some of the buildings looked neglected, and I know that money is always an issue especially for libraries, and especially in New Orleans. But it is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. The library is economically neglected, so it's physically neglected, and because it looks neglected it is underused and neglected by the people. This is disappointing to me because as a writer libraries are so significant. The Marshall County Library in Holly Springs, Mississippi, where I grew up was pivotal in my self-education. And there was a school librarian, Mary Ollie, at Holly Springs Intermediate School where my mother taught, who would loan me books even before I was student there. Reading opened up the world to me. Every week I wanted to be something new. And even though these libraries may not have been on the cutting edge of technology, they had so many resources. When I moved to New Orleans in 1997 I frankly found it a little shocking that some of the libraries had such reduced hours because I know how important libraries can be.

**Sams-Abiodun:** I grew up in New Orleans and am a product of both the city's public housing and public schools. As a child I remember that there was a mobile library that would visit our neighborhood and we could go inside and get books. The library came to us. It is one thing to talk about how valuable books and information are today, and another thing to actually break down those barriers and bring the books to the people. In a city like New Orleans where 70 percent of adults read below an eighth-grade level, and 40 percent below a sixth-grade level, libraries have to be proactive or they'll be irrelevant.

**Skinner:** It's a complex issue when you talk about reaching out to people who may not find the library relevant at all, who don't use it, or may not be able to use it because of low literacy. It may not seem so relevant for an academic library like Xavier, but yet it is because we are part of a larger community.

**Gauthier:** Libraries everywhere have to be willing to design and customize specific educational, cultural, and literary programs to meet their communities' needs. The collections have to be reflective, there have to be appropriate user-education services to help patrons use and process information. There are already some very successful programs out there we have to actively seek them out, duplicate, enhance, and implement them in other communities where they may be useful.

**Dawson:** Libraries must be a part of the community and not an institution apart. Libraries can reach out to people outside of that magic circle by really allowing people to express their needs and then planning accordingly. After Katrina we saw many fine examples of libraries making those connections. People were rushing to libraries for assistance and basic services. We saw libraries revising policies to get rid of restrictions that would prevent them from meeting patron needs. But what else can we do to reach out? Public libraries without them should add literacy programs to their offerings. Schools of library and information science and local libraries should partner to provide library school students and new staff with the educational and practical experiences necessary for providing the high levels of service. Library schools should be adding not only information literacy instruction, but also basic literacy components to their curriculum for people interested in public and school libraries.

**Versed:** ALA decided to keep its conference in New Orleans this year. And while some have championed this decision there are others who have made the personal decision not to attend, specifically because of their trepidation about post-Katrina New Orleans or because they can't see coming to New Orleans in the wake of the wide scale displacement of its former residents. What is your take on ALA's decision to keep the conference in New Orleans?

**Skinner:** One, libraries were among the first to come back online after Katrina because we knew that people needed that connectivity. And some of us as soon as we knew that the doors could be safely opened, opened our libraries to the public. At Xavier we not only responded to the needs of our students, but to students

**Our true nationality  
is mankind.**

—H.G. Wells

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# Academic Residency Programs

## The Cohort Experience

*Shantel Agnew, LaVerne Gray and Mark A. Puente*

Shantel Agnew, LaVerne Gray, and Mark A. Puente are Minority Resident Librarians, University of Tennessee.

There are a number of minority residency programs in academic librarianship, each with unique structures, emphases, and expectations. While literature can be found regarding these programs in print and online resources, little discussion has occurred about the number of residents hired and the advantages for a resident when hired as the sole incumbent as opposed to with a cohort. The University of Delaware's Pauline Young Residency Program hires one professional resident for a two-year appointment. The University of Iowa does likewise, but the tenure of one resident overlaps for one year with the residency of the subsequent appointee. The University of Tennessee's Minority Residency Program hires three professional librarians who embark upon their first professional academic library experience as a cohort.

The pros and cons of a cohort experience will differ greatly depending upon

There are notable advantages to the cohort experience at the University of Tennessee (UT). One is the built-in accountability and support network that is created by this model. The UT residents remind each other of deadlines, meetings or tasks, take notes if one misses a meeting, and are each other's best advocates in the workplace. This support is a result of having two colleagues with whom to navigate through the complexities of one's first professional position. For example, one resident from the UT cohort is a graduate of that school's School of Information Sciences. On the first day of orientation, she was able to assist the other residents with transportation and navigating the UT campus, thus setting the stage for the teamwork that has become part of everyday activities for the group.

Another feature that is unique to the program at UT is that the cohort of residents is expected to develop and execute

In addition to the joint project, each resident is responsible for developing individual projects specific to his or her rotation. Frequently, impromptu meetings or brainstorming sessions are held in order to communicate with one another about respective projects and to solicit suggestions and advice. In this way, the cohort experience has a built-in mechanism for peer mentoring, commiseration, and information exchange.

Another clear advantage of the cohort experience is diversity within the group. At UT, the three residents come from differing geographical locations and educational backgrounds. These differences impact one's point of view and styles of learning and communicating. One resident at UT, for example, holds a baccalaureate degree in media and film studies. She is always looking for ways to integrate media into projects and presentations, and serves as the residents' expert in use of specific software. The residents have come to respect and depend upon each others' expertise.

The advantages of the cohort experience extend beyond the workplace. For each resident, networking opportunities have been expanded as each has introduced the others to professional contacts and colleagues. This is especially true when the residents have attended conferences together. This is a great bonus that has led to additional opportunities to present, serve, and publish for all three residents.

One possible disadvantage of the cohort experience is that individual strengths may not be recognized if the cohort is perceived as a unit. This perception is changing as time moves forward and as the residents set themselves apart through individual performances.

Through the cohort experience at the University of Tennessee, we have been able to build relationships with each other that enhance daily work experiences and that create an infrastructure of professional and personal support. We feel truly fortunate to be in a residency program which is strengthened and enhanced by the cohort experience and urge those who are interested in applying for residency programs to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the cohort experience. 

**We need at last to form a circle that includes us all,  
in which all of us are seen as equal . . . we do not  
belong to the other, but our lives are linked;  
we belong in a circle of others.**

—Barbara Deming

the approach taken by each institution. Additionally, the advantages may depend on variables such as the personality type and working style of the employee. In addition to factors such as location, salary, and benefits, whether one will be working with others or as a single resident employee may be a key issue in evaluating the desirability of residency programs.

a research project by the end of their tenure. In this context, each resident brings something unique to the table and these varying perspectives enhance the collaborative environment. On the negative side, if the cohorts did not get along, or had incompatible research or communication styles, it would take time to understand these differences and to discern a path for effective collaboration.

## DIVERSITY TOOLCHEST

## Doing Things Differently

### Two Library Leaders Partner to Provide a How-To Manual for Achieving Diversity

Tarshel Beards

Tarshel Beards is Program Coordinator for the American Library Association Office for Diversity

Most diversity-related library literature provides theoretical analyses that underscore why libraries should strive to mirror the communities they serve. Although this literature is sorely needed, it sometimes stops short of giving practical and sound advice. Now there is a new edition added to the growing body of diversity related scholarship whose title says it all: *Achieving Diversity: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. Edited by Barbara I. Dewey and Loretta Parham, this volume is a roadmap, full of practical strategies designed to help librarians achieve real results.

Inspired by the presentations and ideas exchanged at the 2004 National Diversity In Libraries Conference held in Atlanta and co-hosted by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Library Alliance and the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), the two-fold goal of this book is to add to the growing body of diversity related scholarship and to document the stories, ideas, and achievements of librarians working toward diversity and inclusion nationwide. Dewey, dean of libraries at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, states, "We heard wonderful presentations at the conference and felt that the ideas and solutions should be documented and shared more broadly." Noted for her own efforts to attract and retain diverse personnel to her institution, Dewey stresses that while the book is geared towards librarians, it makes an important contribution to literature on diversity across disciplines, adding "librarians should be a part of the wider discussion and our voices documented in the literature."

In the book's closing chapter, Parham, director of the Woodruff Library at the Atlanta University Center, writes "Enough

with the thinking on this topic and onward with the plan of action."

"Diversity as an issue has not arrested itself. It is a lifelong effort for librarians to continue to advocate and enrich our landscape," Parham observes. "Barbara, Neal-Schuman (Publishers), and I wanted to create a book that would provide very practical examples, so we can do things differently in our libraries."

Both editors agree that the first step to doing things differently is to start with the definition of diversity. In this work, that definition is made more expansive and inclusive of various modes of difference as well as recognizing that diversity is not just about adding new faces to an unchanged workplace, but about understanding and preparing for the very

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#### Endowments for Diversity—A Simple Way to Make a Difference

W. Michael Havener, Director  
University of Rhode Island  
Graduate School of Library and Information Studies

Why should we be thinking about endowments? Let me answer that question with another question. Do you agree with these statements?

"We aren't recruiting enough new librarians." "We need more librarians of color." "Librarians should reflect the diversity of the communities that they serve."

Those of us who want to promote the recruitment and retention of talented, committed, and diverse new librarians must work actively to bring more students of color into our MLIS programs. One of the biggest barriers to recruitment is money. Many potentially outstanding librarians never enter our ranks because they cannot afford tuition and the other costs connected with getting a master's degree.

Programs like the Spectrum Scholarship Program are helping to bring new leaders of color into our profession, but the sustainability of scholarship and fellowship programs on a national, regional, or state level depends on a steady flow of monetary support over time. Endowments provide a continuing income to guarantee that scholarship support will be there when future students need it.

A gift to an endowment is a gift that generates additional funds each year. Consider the possibility of supporting an endowment at your alma mater or a MLIS graduate program near you. If there is not already an endowment to support LIS students of color, you can start one. Graduate programs welcome individuals who want to support them and will work with you to establish endowments.

As director of the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Rhode Island (URI), I have given the first \$5,000 to establish the GSLIS Prism Scholarship Fund, a fund at the URI Foundation that will provide scholarships to LIS students of color. URI GSLIS has been able to support previous Prism Fellows through multiple sources of funding including an IMLS grant, a one-time \$20,000 gift from an individual, and support from the URI Library and the Providence Public Library. However, building an endowment is a way of ensuring that monetary support will continue to be there for future students.

Don't be afraid to start small; you can build over time and others will give if you ask for help. I have just added another \$1,000 to my original gift, and others are starting to contribute. I'm not asking you to give to the University of Rhode Island (although I won't turn away your gifts!), but I am asking you to find a program that is important to you and to give to an endowment to support it. Our actions today will create the librarians of tomorrow.

# Mark Your Calendar

Join us at ALA Annual Conference for the following events!

**FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2006**

## Spectrum Advisory Council Business Meeting

3:30–5:30 P.M.

Monteleone, Royal Room

## Diversity Council Business Meeting

3:30–5:30 P.M.

Royal Sonesta, Bienville Room

## Many Voices, One Nation: New Orleans

7:30–11:00 P.M.

Hilton, Napoleon Ballroom

Don't miss this amazing program celebrating the literary diversity and creativity that enriches our nation. On this special night commemorating the tragedy and the courage witnessed in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, some of our most talented authors join voices to weave a rich, literary tapestry bearing testimony to the resilience of the human spirit. If you experienced MVON: Chicago, you already know that this is an unforgettable way to kick off conference. This event requires registration. Please see registration form for details. Featuring: Martin Pousson, Kalamu Ya Salaam, Jose Torres Tama, Etan Thomas, and many others.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2006**

## Committee on Diversity Business Meeting

8 A.M.–12:30 P.M.

Sheraton, Edgewood Room

## Serving the Underserved—Distance Education & the LIS Degree

10:30 A.M.–NOON

Convention Center, Room 342

Social and technological changes in recent years have created a virtual revolution in the field of LIS education. Currently there are twelve institutions that offer ALA accredited degrees that can be completed entirely online. Many others have extensive distance education components. Four Spectrum Scholars and an LIS professor will discuss the advantages, challenges, and unique "classroom" dynamics that this phenomenon creates, particularly for students from underrepresented groups. Moderated by Mark Puente, 2003 Spectrum Scholar. Speakers: Ofilia Barrera, Student, Texas Woman's University; Patrice Johnson, Student, University of Illinois LEEP; Cecilia Barber, Librarian, Shiprock Alternative Schools, Inc.; Amy Gonzales Ferguson, Librarian, Richland College Library; Bharat Mehra, Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee SIS

## Outside the Magic Circle:

### Library Services & Underserved Users

1:30–3:30 P.M.

Convention Center, Room 294

"It's easy to forget that there are people too poor to have a car, a credit card or a checking account, people stranded outside the magic circle," observed journalist Cynthia Tucker. She was speak-

ing to the situation faced by 2005 hurricane evacuees, and to the realities of all individuals who are poor, isolated, displaced—people locked outside of circles of privilege. This panel brings together LIS, literacy and social services practitioners to share best practices. Featuring Dr. Alma Dawson, Associate Professor, Louisiana State University, Library & Information Sciences; *Times-Picayune* journalist Jarvis DeBerry; Dr. Petrice Sams-Abiodun, Associate Director, Loyola University Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy; Ronald Gauthier, Assistant Manager of the Norcross Branch, Gwinnett County Public Library System, and Former Manager, New Orleans Public Library ML King Branch (Ninth Ward); and Robert Skinner, Director, and Adrienne Webber, Assistant Director, Xavier University Library Resource Center.

## Charting Courses: Diversity Research Grants

4–5:30 P.M.

Convention Center, Room 242

2005 Diversity Research Grant Recipients share findings: Isabel Espinal presents the results of her study "Collaborating with Reforma Librarians to Study Emerging Latin@ Readership"; Dr. Wooseob Jeong looks at expanding access to the blind and visually impaired through the use of an online Braille generator; and Karen J. Underhill discusses her project "Native American Protocols for American Libraries, Archives, and Information Services." These award-winning researchers will be joined by the 2006 Achievement in Diversity honoree. Speakers: Isabel Espinal, Humanities & Anthropology Librarian, University of MA Amherst; Wooseob Jeong, Assistant Professor, University of WI Milwaukee SIS; Karen Underhill, Head, Special Collections & Archives, Northern Arizona University

**SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 2006**

## Religious Diversity @ your library®: Equitable and Respectful Library Services to Users of Diverse Religious Backgrounds

10:30 A.M.–NOON

Convention Center, Room 291

For many, religious faith and practice is a key definer of personal identity. Religious expression and the sharing of mutual values can bring disparate communities together. However, religion has also been seen as a divisive element, alienating communities. This program focuses on religious diversity and the role libraries can play in respecting and advocating for religious freedom; educating communities about religious differences; and reaching out to existing and potential users from various religious backgrounds. Speakers: Barbara Pickell, Director, Clearwater Public Library; J. Douglas Archer, Reference and Peace Studies Librarian, Notre Dame; Jack Montgomery, Collections Coordinator, Western Kentucky University Libraries; Cheryl Aboudola, Director, Tiverton Library Services; and Nathan Parker, Chicago Public Library.

## Writing the Library Diversity Plan

1:30–3:30 P.M.

Convention Center, Room 291

Most libraries and institutions are mandated to have an affirmative action plan, but many AA plans do not enunciate the goals and action steps necessary for the achievement of a diverse and inclusive workplace—while affirmative action is legally driven, the diversity plan is company and productivity driven. During this workshop attendees will gain the tools they need to begin the construction of a diversity plan by viewing various formats and hearing varied

approaches. Speakers: Julie Grob, Digital Projects/Instruction Librarian, University of Houston Libraries; Tracie Hall, Director, ALA Office for Diversity; Valerie Bell, Chief of Branch Services, Ocean County (NJ) Library.

### **I Don't Know Any Gay People!**

#### **GLBT Concerns across Diverse Communities**

1:30–3:30 P.M.

*Convention Center, Room 297*

This session will explore GLBT informational and social concerns which affect the diverse ethnic and cultural communities we serve. Speakers will discuss their outreach efforts to GLBT communities. A discussion will follow which explores prejudice, denial, anger, ignorance, and disservice that can affect collections, services, and interactions in the public spaces we maintain. Sponsored by the Diversity Council and moderated by Michael Miller. Speakers: Mario Ascencio, Visual Arts Liaison Librarian, George Mason University; Rose Jackson, Reference Librarian, Portland State University; Jody Gray, Academic Outreach Librarian, University of Minnesota Libraries

#### **Spectrum Institute Plenary Session**

4–5:30 P.M.

*Sheraton, Ellendale*

#### **Diversity Leadership Institute Plenary Session**

4–5:30 P.M.

*Sheraton, Estherwood*

#### **Spectrum Scholar Interest Group Meeting**

4–5:30 P.M.

*Hilton, Grand Salon 19*

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

4–6 P.M.

*Hilton, Eglington Winton*

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. The Annual Conference 2006 DINE Meeting will focus on religious diversity in communities and on campuses; a

timely issue for discussion in light of the recent controversy over depictions of religious leaders and symbolism. Attendees are invited to report on diversity-related programs, events, or news; to participate in an issue-oriented discussion; and to network with colleagues. Light dessert, coffee, and tea are provided.

**MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2006**

#### **Diversions: Hearts and Hands for New Orleans**

8:30 A.M.–3:30 P.M.

*OFFSITE*

In this special installment of the popular "Diversions" tour, which affords Annual attendees an up-close and personal encounter with a city's diverse cultures, the Office for Diversity invites you to take part in a service opportunity that allows you to experience and contribute to the city of New Orleans in a meaningful way. Diversions tours are always memorable. Don't miss this one! TICKETED EVENT.

#### **Mentoring in the Millennium: New Views, New Climate & New Actions**

1:30–3:30 P.M.

*Convention Center, Room 253*

Take mentoring to a new level! Going beyond basic mentoring is what this session is all about. This program explores the opportunities and pitfalls inherent in the mentoring process and offers practical strategies and resources for creating a climate conducive to successful mentoring and the fostering of diversity. Sponsored by the Spectrum Advisory Council. Speakers: Ling Hwey Jeng, Director, Texas Woman's University; Alanna Aiko Moore, Reference/Instruction Librarian, IIT; Michael Miller, Coordinator of Access Services, Queens College - CUNY

#### **Diversity in Libraries Around the World: Perspectives & Best Practices**

4–5:30 P.M.

*Convention Center, Room 253*

Dramatic increases in immigration and critical demographic shifts have propelled diversity to the forefront of LIS discourse across the world. Following up on last year's popular first installment, this program extends and recasts the conversation on views and best practices for diversity in libraries from an international perspective. Featuring a panel of international librarians.

### **DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY** continued from page 5

real impact that difference can have in the workplace, in social environments and in residential communities.

Parham writes, "Doing things differently, including different people, planning differently, can beautify the landscape of our organizations and make a difference of opinion and viewpoint an important and valuable outcome. It is an assignment for everyone in the organization, from trustee to volunteer."

Both Dewey and Parham stress that diversity is not about separate initiatives and directives, but a synergy of integrated initiatives and strategies that will benefit the twenty-first century library, staff, and

information seekers and cement their relationship to a larger world.

"We are advancing the notions and concepts in everything we do," Dewey adds. "Diversity related literature and discussions make people realize we are a part of a larger community. It's time to think globally, broaden our concepts, and reflect diversity in our staff, services, collections, and physical and virtual spaces."

Published by Neal-Shuman, *Achieving Diversity* concentrates on three broad areas. The first section, "How to Create a Successful Diversity Plan," provides strategies to develop institutional appreciation for differences and determine a method

for change. "How to Recruit and Retain a Diverse Workforce" includes best practices for diversifying library staff. The final section, "How to Improve Diversity through Services, Collections, and Collaborations," highlights ideas and programs implemented to foster diversity at almost every institutional service level.

A formidable contribution to the profession and beyond, *Achieving Diversity* is available online at [www.neal-schuman.com](http://www.neal-schuman.com). 

## FROM THE FIELD

## Working It, Walking It, Living It

### For These Four Librarians Diversity is More than an Institutional Goal, It's a Way of Life

Tracie D. Hall

Tracie D. Hall is Director of the American Library Association Office for Diversity.

Business world guru and author of the much-trumpeted *Good to Great*, Jim Collins defines the pinnacle of performance—something he calls “Level 5 Leadership”—as the building “of enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.” He could easily be describing the librarians profiled below, who despite their common modesty are impacting their communities and the profession at large in ways that command our attention.

#### Elvia Tuttle: Un Cuento Hermoso

It's the stories that are important to Colombian born Elvia Tuttle, branch manager of the Public Library of Cincinnati Hamilton (PLCH) County's Price-Hill Branch. Located in what was formerly a German-Catholic turned Appalachian enclave, Price-Hill now serves a largely African American community that over the last five years has seen an upsurge in Latino residents, many from Guatemala.



Elvia Tuttle

Like many urban neighborhoods struggling against the backdrop of high crime and low incomes, the library has had to go beyond just opening its doors to meet the needs of the public. “You have to be willing to go out there and say, ‘wait a minute, we are here and we’re important!’” says Tuttle.

To get that message out she has joined forces with some of the community-based organizations providing social services to community residents, including the Price-Hill Will Community Organization and the Santa Maria Center which both happen to be conveniently positioned across the street from the library. “At first it was me running across the street to give them flyers about a library program, or them coming here to publicize a service they were offering. I guess I embraced them and they embraced me too,” says Tuttle.

Tuttle has also worked to build a “holistic partnership” with other community organizations to build support for the LSTA grant-funded, *Me Encanta Cuando Me Lees/I Love it When You Read to Me* program launched by PLCH late last year to expand services to the burgeoning Latino community. In addition to neighboring organizations, the library has partnered with the Academy of Multilingual Immersion Studies, a local magnet school and Su Casa, a Latino advocacy organization to reach out to Spanish speakers who may not know that they can access library services and information in their native language.

“Many of the people that are moving here are coming from poor countries. They’re ‘campesinos,’ people from rural areas, who may not know the first thing about libraries,” Tuttle says. And though

she says she originally conceived of the program because of her own cultural and linguistic background, she acknowledges that it is her belief in the centrality of storytelling to the forming personal identity that drives her work. “I don’t care if it’s English, or Spanish, or French, when someone reads a story that they can relate to, that is about their lives, you see the light go on in their eyes.”

Tuttle considers her love of books an inheritance from her parents. First coming to the United States in 1976 to study English at Xavier University, Tuttle decided to apply to the University of Cincinnati for a BA and was teaching Spanish to adults when an acquaintance suggested that she could combine her love of books and teaching by looking for work at a library. Convinced that she had found the right fit, she went on to graduate from Indiana University’s library school.

Crediting Keith Kuhn and Kathleen Scahill, PLCH’s director of library services and literacy coordinator, respectively, as being co-visionaries and ardent supporters of *Me Encanta Cuando Me Lees* which has already reached out to over two hundred families with children ages 2–5, Tuttle is quick to admit that managing such an outreach intensive program requires the buy-in of the entire library staff. “This is hard work,” she admits, “Some of the people we are trying to reach are not literate in Spanish, let alone English. I am out there saying we have books for you, we have programs for you, and we can help you get e-mail accounts. But what we don’t have are enough Spanish-speaking librarians, so it helps that my staff is behind me. Everyone who works here has to have their heart in the program. They have to have that welcoming attitude toward diversity.”

Passionate about the program and about bringing library services to diverse users, Tuttle says, “You have to have something within that drives you or else you’ll be worn out.” The Echevarrias are one family who both reflect and fuel Tuttle’s zeal. A recent immigrant from Guatemala, Mrs. Echevarria attended the first *Me Encanta Cuando Me Lees* with her four children in November 2005 and according to Tuttle hasn’t missed a session since. “It’s incredible,” Tuttle remarks, “This woman has built her family’s routine around the bilingual story hour. At first she was timid. Now she is so confident with using the library that she is going around to other branches

asking to see the bilingual books in their collections. Like a lot of our parents, she just feels happy to be able to interact with her children through reading, even while they are learning English in school. Isn't that a beautiful story?" Indeed.

## Anwar Ahmad: *Taking It to the Streets*

If most inspired people have a muse, Hartford Public Library (HPL) Associate Librarian for Neighborhood Library Services Anwar Ahmad's would be Caroline Hewins. Children's library services pioneer and Hartford's chief librarian from 1875–1926, Hewins has not only left her mark on HPL's online catalog, but her legendary outreach to the city's children serves as a model for Ahmad's own tireless work with-at risk teens.

In a city like Hartford where brick Victorians—such as the 1893 two-story Ahmad is patiently restoring using bits and pieces salvaged from alleys and refuse piles—are fading reminders of a once wealthy past; encouraging young people to ignore the lure of street life in favor of a long-term investment in their education means putting your money where your mouth is. Literally.

While Ahmad is known for his willingness to go the extra mile for almost anyone he encounters, he feels especially obliged to reach out to young adults. "In our city the youth are the most in need. And you have to be prepared for that day when that young person who has heard you talk about all the opportunities that are available to them, comes to you looking for help in getting to the places *you* said they could go," Ahmad asserts, continuing, "We have some talented young people in Hartford. In some of the toughest neighborhoods you find young people who have big dreams and just need that extra push. When I meet young people and their families I try to position myself to connect them with the resources that

will let them realize those dreams. I try to offer the same help that I was provided."

A graduate of what is now the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, Ahmad acknowledges that his leaning towards bridging traditional library services with community advocacy blossomed under the influence of Louise Blalock, Hartford city librarian since 1994, and 2001 *Library Journal* Librarian of the Year. "Louise redefined the relationship between the library and the community. She brought this expectation that librarians would get out from behind the desk and start sitting in on community meetings where people were talking about the services they really needed. I remember one meeting we attended together and when we introduced ourselves, every head turned. There were people from the police department and community organizations talking about public safety concerns, and it was like 'What's the library doing here?'"

Both new to HPL, the heightened community orientation would prompt Blalock and Ahmad to institute a title change for their library branch managers. Ahmad recounts, "I think it was 1995, we were walking down the hall at the library brainstorming about how to reflect the idea that our branch heads weren't just there to manage the library but to manage the community's information needs, to be a community resource. I said something to the effect that if we're going to be driven by the community's needs, then we have to change the name to 'community librarian.' Louise took that vision and extended it. And so with the next round of business cards printed for staff, the title officially changed."

Motivated to pursue a library science degree because of the potential for community building inherent in librarianship, Ahmad is adamant about the expansive role that librarians can and do play in their community. "Because of our multidisciplinary approach there is no subject that is foreign to us. There is nothing that is 'out of bounds.' So when I decided to go to library school I felt my degree would be just as important as those of my friends' getting MBAs or law degrees. Librarians shouldn't take a backseat to any profession. Our work spans disciplines and types of settings. We can be everywhere the people are."

For aspiring veterinarian Nikia Meade, Ahmad was definitely in the right place when she walked into the Ropkins

Branch, where he was community librarian in August 2002. Ahmad met Meade's request for college financial-aid resources with a pile of scholarship books and instructions for using electronic databases. When she approached him twenty minutes later he was surprised. "I thought I'd done my job and there she was calling me over saying, 'This information is good. But I'm going to college in three weeks and I need to know how I am going to pay for it.' So I'm like *three weeks?* You better put those books down. We've got to hit the streets."

And hit the streets they did. With support from community organizations and individuals who allowed Ahmad to "call in some favors," Meade would not only raise the \$15,000 needed to attend the private New England college to which she had been accepted, she would also graduate on time. "She even made the dean's list a couple of times," Ahmad offers proudly. Like two of his other heroes, Palmer Institute founder Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, Ahmad sees his work with Meade and other young people as his way of passing on the community advocacy torch. "I look at Nikia and I can verify that she started with nothing. Now she's working with animals in Massachusetts and looking to start a master's program. If you were to ask me if I think she'll pass that tradition along to the next generation, I'd answer 'absolutely!'"

## Tiffeni Fontno: *Librarianship in the Age of Hip-Hop*

If Tiffeni Fontno, self-described "eighties baby" and business and management librarian at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), has her way, libraries and librarians will be one of the first resources hip-hop scholars and "heads" turn to when they want to compare Tupac's social commentary to Notorious B.I.G.'s legendary lyricism. And with her 2005 ALA Carnegie-Whitney-award-winning database project, The Hip-Hop Research Portal ([www.hiphopportal.net](http://www.hiphopportal.net)), she's well on the road to reaching that goal.

With one thousand entries in the database already, Fontno is excited by the international usership the database

[continued on next page](#)

**Trouble with you is the  
trouble with me.  
Got two good eyes, but  
still we don't see.**

—Grateful Dead

WORKING IT *continued from page 9*

is attracting and its accompanying list ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hiphop\\_rands](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/hiphop_rands)) practically buzzing with theory-laden questions and lively debate; it's working alongside Cleveland-area high school students to gather content for the portal that really charges her. As part of the University Circles Initiative, CWRU along with the Cleveland Museum of Art and other formidable organizations have joined together in support of the Future Connections program which introduces young people to institutions they may not otherwise have access to.

Working closely with high-schoolers gave Fontno the opportunity to not only share her enthusiasm for hip-hop, but also share information about the socio-political background of the musical form. Fontno reflects, "We take for granted that young people today know about hip-hop. But kids nowadays are not always connected to hip-hop's roots. Hip-hop is music that came out of poverty, creating it's own style of poetry, its own style of dance. It is basically the artistic expression of underrepresented people. I'm lucky to have grown up with hip-hop and to have followed its development. It's had a tremendous influence on me."

For Fontno the database project is more than a labor of love, it represents her desire to cement the connection between new generations of information seekers and scholars with libraries. In fact, libraries would play a prominent role in the development of Fontno's personal identity and academic interest during her undergraduate days. "I was a history major wanting to learn more about black history and about myself. Looking at primary documents and older materials brought history alive for me. And that was what originally led me to library school at Kent State University, the desire to work in archives."

Though her career in libraries may have taken another route, Fontno an active member of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), seems to be coming full circle through her commitment to locate and make primary sources and general research materials accessible to hip-hop lovers and academics from Pittsburgh to Poland. And she has even bigger plans. In partnership with a national hip-hop association, Fontno intends to hold national workshops and seminars for

researchers designed to introduce them to relevant library collections, resources, and tools. "The beautiful thing," Fontno says, "is that hip-hop is still so young. We can still collect primary documents. Some of the most important artists are still around and we can ask them for help in building archival collections."

Not content with just a heavily utilized portal and a list serve, Fontno looks forward to adding in blogs, wikis, and podcasting features, enthusing, "I am excited about all the utilities that are out there today. As an academic librarian, you can create entire communities around research topics."

Asked to identify her own favorite rapper, Fontno quickly replies "Nas." Nas (Nasir Jones) is heralded by hip-hop connoisseurs for his ability to combine gritty street commentary with astute social observation. For Fontno some of the rapper's philosophies reflect her own effort to carve a niche for hip-hop in the world of academic librarianship. "Nas is always acknowledging that there is this underlying struggle, a push and pull between the goals we are trying to reach and the political or social structures in place that can make that goal seem unattainable."

Like the much-admired Nas, Fontno has learned to use the friction between internal goals and outside forces to set herself in motion. "To me hip-hop music and culture is about not waiting for justification or for someone else to validate your culture. If someone tells you no, that is just that one person's no. Keep going. Find a way to bring the ideas that really interest you into the world, because there is someone out there who is waiting."

### *Gary Colmenar: Librarian by Accident, Activist by Choice*

University of California at Santa Barbara Asian American Studies Librarian Gerardo (Gary) Colmenar may have accidentally stumbled into the profession, and there is good reason to be glad he did. Though he received the MLIS from UCLA in 1998, where he counts professor Clara Chu as a key influence, Colmenar has wasted no time in applying his vision for social justice and change to librarianship. As former president and acting executive director of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) Colmenar has been instrumental in creating a forum both for



Gary Colmenar

networking among Asian-Pacific American librarians and for improving library services to Asian-Pacific library users.

But it wasn't always such an obvious fit. Colmenar admits that before he became a librarian, "I didn't know how library school would fit into my activism. In college and for a couple years afterward, I worked at Groundwork Books, a political collective bookstore in San Diego that's run on a consensus decision-making model. So that really influenced me," adding the decision to pursue library and information studies "was more of a reaction to not wanting to be a part of the corporate environment." It was a program run by Tami Echavarria Robinson (then librarian at UC San Diego where Colmenar was an undergraduate) that helped him see the possibilities.

Under Robinson's oversight students of color were recruited to work in campus libraries where they learned more about the profession while earning small stipends. "Unfortunately the program has been eliminated by the Proposition 209 ban on race-based initiatives in California," Colmenar laments, "but I gained a lot from working with Tami. I was in my senior year and started to think of the library as a viable place of employment where you had the opportunity to challenge people's consciousness. And so it really appealed to me." With assistance from Robinson, Colmenar made the decision to apply to library school, recalling, "Tami was there to guide me through the whole application process. I finally decided on UCLA."

After UCLA, Colmenar was accepted into UC Santa Barbara's highly regarded Library Fellowship Program, launched in 1985 by Joseph Boisse the institution's former university librarian with the intent of serving as a recruitment tool for newly graduated librarians from underrepre-

sented groups. The residency program provided an excellent training ground and, after completion, Colmenar was offered and accepted his current tenure-track position.

Though the institution may have a way to go before achieving reflective campus diversity, it is home to some of the nation's oldest ethnic studies departments, something that attracted Colmenar to the institution in the first place. "Part of the reason I came here was because this school had the first Asian American studies department in the UC system. That was important to me, being an ethnic studies major. It says a lot that we have full fledged Asian, black, and Chicano studies departments, when many other schools still have only ethnic studies divisions or concentrations."

Being at UCSB has afforded Colmenar the opportunity to work on building collections critical to Asian-Pacific scholarship. One such project is his work with the Nellie Wong papers, part of the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives (CEMA) housed at UCSB under the directorship of librarian and researcher Salvador Güereña. What interests Colmenar most about the archives is its

focus on thinkers and scholars who are still alive and actively producing work. Something that makes building the collection with Wong, the San Francisco-area poet, activist, and public intellectual, very much a collaborative process. Colmenar notes, "I find Nellie's paper so special because she has this ability to express powerful political ideas so artistically. It's interesting to see how her ideas are still developing."

Undoubtedly Colmenar's own ideas of the kinds of connections that can be made between librarianship and social justice have developed as well. He explains, "I now see the role of the librarian as that of providing the information necessary to help communities participate in and think critically about the world around them. The librarian must see himself or herself as being part of a larger international community. Because I was born in the Philippines working with APALA allows me to connect to my heritage. Being active with SRRT (ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table) speaks to issues important to me: anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and other forms of oppression. I'm beginning to understand how important the roles of librarians are

in a civil society. Bibliographic instruction, reference services, collection development, even talking about the politics of information—all of these are importantly roles, not passive duties. They call for librarians to be completely engaged."

Adding that his politicization as a librarian took hold when he was still in graduate school, Colmenar uses his own experience joining with other UCLA LIS students to demand courses that engaged concepts like diversity and social justice, to forecast how the profession's educational orientation may have to shift. "The role of library educators is also critical in making change. Look at the kinds of issues that we are debating today, things like immigration. Immigration impacts everyone and it has a definite impact on libraries. As librarians we have to see its interrelatedness to race, ethnicity, class, and gender issues. If we don't and we don't help others make those connections then there will be this growing division that will make groups antagonistic rather than empathetic towards each other. New librarians want to be involved in this kind of mediation. The new generation wants their work to reflect their political and social views." 

### MAGIC CIRCLE *continued from page 3*

of other schools whose facilities were damaged. And we have been serving as the main library facility for both Dillard and Southern University-New Orleans, the two other historically black colleges and universities in the city. In choosing to stay in New Orleans, ALA is showing support for the efforts of libraries and contributing economic support to the city as a whole.

**Gauthier:** I am pleased that ALA decided to keep the conference in New Orleans. Most of the area where the conference will be held—downtown, the French Quarter, the Convention Center, etc.—is really up and running with little vestiges of Hurricane Katrina. I've been back to New Orleans several times and I think those attending conference will be surprised. I am really excited that librarians from all over the country will do service work in the city and that some of that work will be done in support of the New Orleans Public Library. For almost five years I was branch manager of the Alvar Branch which was hit hard in the floods. Before Katrina, that

community was one of the most diverse in New Orleans. At the time of the storm I had become branch manager of the Martin Luther King Branch in the Ninth Ward. I was actually working there just before the storm struck and forced to evacuate to the Hyatt Regency Hotel, so I experienced it all. I finally evacuated to Atlanta. Afterwards I found out that my home had been destroyed and that I had lost my job of eleven years at the New Orleans Public Library as part of a massive layoff of city employees. Displacement and unemployment were emotionally tumultuous, but I eventually got back on track. I am at Gwinnett County now and moving forward. But still, I am excited to be back in New Orleans during ALA and to do whatever I can to revitalize the libraries there.

**Dawson:** I think that ALA's decision to keep the conference in New Orleans really reflects the dedication and commitment of the thousands of librarians across the country that have stepped forward to offer assistance to evacuees and to libraries affected by the hurricanes. And most importantly,

the Annual Conference will have a positive impact in a city struggling to survive.

**DeBerry:** ALA coming is a great decision. It is not too soon to come here. People who are concerned about it need to understand that New Orleans's dependence on conventions and tourism is greater now than ever. It's sad that tourism means as much here as it does, but it's a reality. Conventions that pull out of coming to the city because they think they will be jeopardizing or displacing residents actually do a disservice to the recovery process. People who say, "I'm not coming because the city is hurting" are actually hurting it even more.

**Sams-Abiodun:** It's important for people to come here, because you have to see it to believe it. When people see what has happened here, and what is still happening here—how people are in spite of everything trying to go on with their lives, it's incredible. Nothing you have seen on television, nothing you have read could prepare you for it. 

## FROM THE FIELD

# The Concern of All

## Finding Common Ground in New Orleans

Gwendolyn Prellwitz

Gwendolyn Prellwitz is Program Officer, American Library Association Office for Diversity.

*Sometimes at midnight, in the great silence of the sleeping town, the doctor turned on the radio before going to bed for the few hours' sleep he allowed himself. And from the ends of the earth, across thousands of miles of land and sea, kindly, well-meaning speakers tried to voice their fellow-feeling, and indeed did so, but at the same time proved the utter incapacity of every man truly to share in the suffering that he cannot see. "Oran! Oran!" In vain the call rang over the oceans, in vain Rieux listened hopefully; always the tide of eloquence began to flow, bringing home still more the unbridgeable gulf. . . . "Oran, we're with you!" they called emotionally. But not, the doctor told himself, to love or to die together—"and that's the only way. They're too remote." (Camus, 131)*

Albert Camus's *The Plague* explores the collective response to catastrophe through the story of a large city, Oran, isolated by an outbreak of bubonic plague. The novel details the efforts of various central characters to alleviate and end human suffering in the face of ongoing tragedy. One such character, Tarrou, volunteers to organize crews of sanitary workers to assist the overburdened doctors and government employees managing the situation. In response to Tarrou's efforts, the narrator remarks:

*Doubtless today many of our fellow citizens are apt to yield to the temptation of exaggerating the services they rendered. But this is narrator is inclined to think that by attributing overimportance to praiseworthy actions one may, by implication, be paying indirect but potent homage*

*to the worse side of human nature. For this attitude implies that such actions shine out as rare exceptions, while callousness and apathy are the general rule. The narrator does not share that view.*

*Those who enrolled in the "sanitary squads," . . . had no such great merit in doing as they did, since they knew it was the only thing to do, and the unthinkable thing would then have been not to have brought themselves to do it. Since plague became in this way some men's duty, it revealed itself as what it really was; that is, the concern of all.*

*But we do not congratulate a schoolmaster on teaching that two and two make four, though we may perhaps, congratulate him on having chosen his laudable vocation. Let us then say it was praiseworthy that Tarrou and so many others should have elected to prove that two and two make four rather than the contrary; but let us add that this good will of theirs was one that is shared by the schoolmaster and by all who have the same feelings as the schoolmaster, and be it said to the credit of mankind, they are more numerous than one would think. (Camus, 124)*

I've been reading these words as I prepare for Annual. And, as I sat down to write about what it means for the profession, for the association, for our office and for myself as an individual coming to this conference in this city, I struggled with relating New Orleans to a town besieged by plague but I could not skirt the resonance and the relevance of these words.

The conditions in New Orleans, washed into light by wind and flood but existent long before hurricanes hit, reveal

a plight in this city—one shared by many other cities—that is catastrophic.

I have always considered librarianship a laudable profession, a profession that knows that two and two equals four. Even though I thought this before we made the decision to keep conference in New Orleans and before an encouraging number of individuals registered, the very act of bridging the gap between ourselves and this city, our willingness to see firsthand both the suffering and the perseverance of its residents, pays homage to the best side of human nature.

But I also agree with Camus's narrator that we do a discredit to ourselves by thinking such behavior is an exception. For this reason I know that as we meet, work, and volunteer in New Orleans, we will be anything but mere sightseers. When we see that nearly 40 percent of the community in New Orleans Parish earns under \$20,000 per year and that the literacy rate is roughly 39 percent, we will understand the long-standing injustices faced by the residents of the lower income, African American communities. When we see the over 275,000 housing units that were destroyed and the slowness of efforts to clean up, repair, and open livable housing, we will know that the only thing to do is to ensure that both the immediate needs of the community are being met and that long-term strategies to stabilize the community are initiated ("common ground").

Moreover, as information professionals, after we leave we will know how better to banish ignorance and provide understanding, to reach out to all that share the same feeling, and to make sure that the inequalities and injustices—which lay a foundation shaky enough for disaster to turn swiftly and fatally into catastrophe—are the concern of all. 

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## DIVERSITY TOOLCHEST

# "I" on the Prize

Veronda J. Pitchford and Alanna Aiko Moore

**Veronda J. Pitchford** is a Program Officer for the Urban Libraries Council and **Alanna Aiko Moore** is a Sociology, Ethnic Studies, and Gender Studies Librarian at University of California, San Diego, Social Sciences and Humanities Library.

*Question:* Help! I'm graduating from library school this spring with what feels like a million other people! How can I kick off my library career and stand out as an interview candidate? And how do I find out about an organization's commitment to diversity in the interview process to find an organization that is the best fit for me?

*Answer:* Job searching is more than just looking for open positions, it requires selling your most important asset—yourself—as the best candidate for the job.

The competition is fierce. Here are a few strategies that will bring out the best in new library professionals to help you stand heads above the competition when it comes time for that crucial interview.

## Inventory

It is imperative to take an inventory of your current skill set. Be sure to include skills learned in the library school classroom and showcase the multitasking ability you acquired as a waitress, the leadership you display chairing a volunteer committee, or the grace under pressure you exhibited working as a customer service representative. You need to be able to clearly articulate and translate your skill set to a library environment at all times.

Taking an inventory is also an opportunity to determine what skills you need to acquire to advance and build your professional life. Job ads provide a great starting point for identifying skills employers in the current the job market are seeking in candidates and to help you develop your goals and career path.

## Information Interviews

Identify professionals in library land who are doing the work that you want to do. Take the first step and contact them. If they are local, invite them to coffee or ask for an hour of their time to get feedback regarding your career aspirations. Most likely they will be happy to share their knowledge and insights with a new colleague. This is also a great time to request specific feedback on your resume from a more senior professional. You'll begin to organically connect with potential mentors and grow your network as well.

Be professional with your request but do not get discouraged if you encounter people who may be too busy to meet with you. Ask if there is a better time to reach them or if communication via e-mail or telephone is a better fit for them. If this isn't an option, then keep looking and you will find someone who is a good match in terms of time, interest, and information. Always follow up with everyone who is gracious enough to give you their time: send thank-you notes or e-cards to let people know you appreciate their efforts.

## Involvement

Getting involved is another great way to build your skill set and network outside of the workplace. Most committees and organizations welcome new blood and fresh ideas.

Don't limit yourself—seek national, regional, and local possibilities. Electronic discussion lists are an ideal way to do this. Committee internships are also a way to transition into volunteer involvement as a new professional. If you are not sure where to begin, seek out the recommendations of a more senior col-

**The principles you live by create the world you live in. If you change the principles you live by, you will change your world.**

—Blaine Lee

league for advice on committees that will be the best fit for the skill set you are interested in developing. Get involved by presenting innovations you have initiated in your library at conferences, through poster sessions or by writing an article for publication about research interests or work projects.

Once you get involved, it snowballs—suddenly everyone wants you to sit on a committee, or to moderate a panel. Each volunteer opportunity leads to another, and people begin to recognize your name and skills. Getting involved is a great way to learn skills you can apply at your current job, to meet people outside of your work environment that can help build your network of colleagues and to learn what new trends and services are happening in other libraries and the industry overall.

## Initiatives and Impressions

One of the most important things you can do is begin to formulate a balanced impression of an organization in which you are interested in working. Gauge if the organization is the kind you want to work for as a person of color. What is the culture of the organization, and do they support diversity? Are they taking steps to becoming interculturally proficient and informed about diversity, race, and ethnicity issues? Are they actively involved in new diversity scholarships and programs? What steps do they take to retain, develop, and promote current talent? Employers that focus on promoting a diverse workforce have good retention rates because all employees feel included and valued. An understanding of diversity is essential to effective work in today's library environment.

*continued on next page*

"I ON THE PRIZE" continued from page 13

Now that you have done all you can to sell yourself as the best candidate with the best skills for that perfect job, you need to become a library sleuth and ask some crucial questions about the organizations in which you might interview.

### *Inquire and Investigate*

The library world is smaller than you think. Utilize the professional network you are growing and ask about impressions of the organization. Inquire as to how diversity and cultural sensitivity are incorporated into the new employee orientation and continuing education for staff.

In addition, conduct a reference interview about the organizational culture in relation to diversity. Research or ask about the organization's commitment to diversity. Do they incorporate diversity in the organization's strategic planning process? Have they undertaken any needs assessment either internally and externally to determine next steps? Ideally, the organization's diversity commitment should be infused throughout the organization and not only limited to the diversity committee's role in the organization.

Take the time to observe how the organization is demonstrating their *walk* and not just *talking* about their commitment to diversity. Are there people of color in management positions or are they limited to lower-level functions? If you have a chance to interact with other people of color that work in the organization, ask how long they have been with the organization and to whom they report. If the organization has a diversity committee, it should include a wide range of professionals representing staff members at every level of the organization including management and other influential decision-makers in the organization.

Above all, the most valuable asset is you. Let your personality shine through. Distinguish yourself from the crowd with your individuality. Be yourself. Let your passion and enthusiasm for libraries guide you. This will be remembered far more than anything else. Recognize the valuable individual contribution you will bring to the organization and make that your best selling point. 

## BOOKLOOK

# *Maizon's Affirmative Blues*

## *Jacqueline Woodson's YA Novel Confronts Affirmative Action*

*Review by Michael C. Baradi*

Michael C. Baradi is a student at UCLA GSLIS.

*Maizon at Blue Hill* by Jacqueline Woodson. Format: Paperback, 160p. Pub. Date: September 2002. Publisher: Penguin Young Readers Group. \$5.99, ISBN 0-698-11957-6.

I believe, to readily accept that the details of American daily life are color blind is, of course, politically naive and unrealistically optimistic. On the other hand, it would be grossly incorrect to assume that the Civil Rights Movement was a complete failure in current, twenty-first-century daily negotiations. And it's between these two complex and crucial poles that current American race relations—within its borders—can be cautiously gauged and viewed, a gray area filled with all complicated shades of optimism and pessimism about race, working for and against each other, perceived within the context of public and private political identity.

Jacqueline Woodson's Coretta-Scott-King Award-winner, *Maizon at Blue Hill*, cautiously and subtly explores this particular gray area, using a particular young girl's (Maizon Singh) experience, uprooted from her Brooklyn milieu to a predominantly white, all-girls boarding school (Blue Hill) and then back to her Brooklyn neighborhood. It has become a conventional perception to say that in a metropolis such as New York, most racial barriers melt through an artificial but necessary and quick process of dissolution that prevents unnecessary friction. The novel's suburban Connecticut setting, on the other hand, finds it traditional to maintain the tightness and perhaps "rightness" of racial barriers in social relations and carefully guards the probable dissolution of any such barriers. This sense of conservatism becomes much more pronounced in a boarding school environment, Blue

Hill, somewhat pastoral, quite perfectly conducive to quiet, intellectual pursuits, not to mention the small, uncrowded classes and teachers passionate about the subjects they teach and concerned about their students' welfare, is training ground for future professionals and leaders in America and the world. But then what is that kind of future world?

Blue Hill, too, is aware of the progressive developments of that future world: culturally and ethnically diverse. A bright African American from an inner-city public school, Maizon's membership to this exclusive school is a product of this knowledge. The boarding school needs to diversify its student body and has to aggressively recruit promising, non-white students, especially African Americans, from any economic background. Blue Hill students predominantly come from well-off and privileged backgrounds. Maizon does not. Thus, her Blue Hill admittance is supported by a scholarship, a diversity fund, that perhaps elevates the school's reputation as racially-inclusive. Maizon quite subtly feels that her presence at Blue Hill is not so much an honor but a necessity to meet a diversity quota. But then, of course, Maizon shouldn't be too prickly about this, because her roommate, who is white, is not particularly as bright, academically, and is also on scholarship: sports. If, in the context of race, Maizon is an affirmative-action baby, her roommate, too, is on some form of affirmative-action hiring process that can elevate the school's status through sports.

Sadness pervades in the novel, the sort of necessary melancholy produced by the consciousness of racial difference. Woodson perhaps intends this necessity to be the driving ethos of her protagonist's internal life, in order to unconsciously

## BOOKLOOK

# Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries

Review by Karen J. Underhill

Karen J. Underhill is Head, Special Collections and Archives, at Northern Arizona University Cline Library.

*Edited by Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton. Canberra, Australia: Australian Academic & Research Libraries, 2005. (Co-published as Australian Academic & Research Libraries, vol. 36, no. 2, June 2005). 216 p. Available from the Australian Library and Information Association, \$29.95 AUD or the University of Technology, Sydney ePress home page: <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/> (summer 2006). ISBN 0-86804-563-2.*

Since the early 1990s, issues surrounding indigenous culture have generated global discussion and recognition of different approaches to the management, preservation, and dissemination of intangible and tangible heritage. As Professor Martin Nakata—director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney—notes, these complex issues have profound implications for libraries and archives as stewards of Indigenous knowledge. He believes the information professions have “responded with great goodwill.” In the words of anthropologist Michael F. Brown (*Who Owns Native Culture?*), how should we promote “respectful treatment of native cultures and indigenous forms of self-expression within mass societies?”

In 2004, Nakata and Professor Marcia Langton, Chair of Australian Indigenous

Studies at the University of Melbourne, set out to address the future of Australian indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis libraries. A colloquium, cosponsored with the State Library of New South Wales, formed the basis for this publication, which includes sixteen chapters and nineteen authors—nine of whom are indigenous.

This compilation explores the intersection of indigenous knowledge and the information professions in the broadest sense, from the traditional and cultural to local and contemporary. Human rights themes are echoed throughout the text. The book covers five major areas: indigenous knowledge in Australia and the world; the politics of indigenous knowledge; intellectual and cultural property rights; indigenous knowledge centers; and indigenous knowledge and archives.

The writing styles and content of the chapters are varied. The authors offer a refreshing mix of the theoretical and practical. A strong introduction, cogent first and last chapters which frame the issues, and a thoughtful afterword compensate for the diverse nature of the individual pieces.

The topics can be disquieting. Can libraries and archives entertain differential levels of access to sacred or secret Indigenous knowledge based on age, gender, initiate status, and role? How can extant records be annotated or

modified to reflect Indigenous concerns? How could intellectual property laws be expanded to recognize indigenous communal ownership of knowledge?

Librarians hold dear the concept of intellectual freedom and shy away from the notion that knowledge can be “owned” or that access may be a privilege rather than a right. Dagmar Schmidmaier, state librarian of New South Wales, advises all of us to move beyond our “comfort zones.” Collectively, the authors urge librarians and archivists “to understand the complexities of meeting the needs of indigenous people, but also go further to question assumptions and an ‘unsettling of established practice.’”

Unlike some authors who lament “irreconcilable views of information,” the Australian writers are more optimistic in their attempts to find common ground and, in Langton’s words, to put aside the “absurd presumption of Western supremacy over other societies.” Dr. Alex Byrne observes in his afterword that “we have a shared commitment to the preservation and transmission of knowledge” and points to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to know can be balanced with respect and autonomy.

The groundbreaking work captured in *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries* can serve as a model for comparable dialogue in the United States. Tribal leaders, archivists, and librarians in North America have expressed interest in exploring ways to engage in joint stewardship. There are many opportunities for institutions which hold Native American knowledge to cooperate with communities of origin. As Nakata and Langton write, “Indigenous people are at the heart of this matter. The development of practice in this complex intersection must have *legitimacy* with indigenous people and communities.”

## MAIZON'S AFFIRMATIVE BLUES continued from previous page

explore that gray area in American race relations. Woodson wants her readers to know that, yes, there is still prejudice in American life. But Woodson also understands that American political life is doing what it can about its inevitable relationship with race. Woodson positions her young protagonist as the litmus test to this American struggle. Academically, Maizon is admired by her teachers. But she does not

reciprocate any admiration to the boarding school, as a whole; in fact, the longer she stays at Blue Hill, the deeper she misses her friend, grandmother, her Brooklyn home.

In the end, Maizon makes a personal decision to leave Blue Hill for good. Here, it would be easy to accuse Woodson of being a supporter for segregated schools, of being politically incorrect for allowing

Maizon not to fight against the consciousness of racial difference. To some, Maizon is a weak character. On the other hand, Maizon represents a quiet, romantic triumph, through a very personal decision-making process based on honest instincts and feelings; one can only assume what the nature of her instincts might mean about personal courage when she’s finally thrust into adulthood.

# The Immigration Debate

## Who is the Public the Library is Meant to Serve?

Maria Hudson Carpenter and Gregory Hom

**Maria Hudson Carpenter** is a Library Advancement and Communications Officer for Northeastern University and a 1999 Spectrum Scholar. **Gregory Hom** is a Research Assistant in his first year of graduate school at UCLA and a 2005 Spectrum Scholar.

It has traditionally been the mission of public libraries in the United States to serve users from all walks of life. Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who went on to become the largest benefactor of public libraries in the United States, educated himself and learned about American culture through libraries.<sup>1</sup> One of this nation's first public libraries, the Boston Public Library, was founded as a "palace for the people."<sup>2</sup> While there were gaps between rhetoric and reality as outlined by Eric Novotsky, our nation's libraries have aimed to serve our immigrant communities for over a century.<sup>3</sup> The important tradition continues today with English as a second language programs; literacy programs; tutoring programs; community service referrals; homework assistance; computer labs; tax assistance; panel discussions on culture, politics, and society; and voter registration drives taking place at libraries across the country.

With the immigration debate in full swing, we should ask ourselves who is the public that the library is meant to serve? Where do the more than 31 million foreign-born residents living here fit in to the mix?<sup>4</sup> Should public libraries serve only documented immigrants among this group? Do libraries have a responsibility to tax payers to ensure that services are given only to legal members of society? What about undocumented immigrants who are paying taxes and social security, but will not reap those benefits, or documented visitors from other communities?

Let us consider the potential ramifications of the proposed immigration bills in Congress and how they might affect libraries in the near future. Potentially the worst situation we might find ourselves in is to be criminally charged for performing a charitable act on behalf of an illegal immigrant under the House proposal. On the other hand, under the Senate proposal, libraries may well be partnering with immigrant advocacy groups to help with education and resources to assist new immigrants on the road to becoming citizens.

What about using biometrics such as fingerprints to identify "morally questionable individuals" such as illegal immigrants, criminals, sex offenders, terrorists, drunk drivers, or lost book offenders? A good idea right? Now imagine having to scan people's national ID cards with biometric information that immediately gets sent to a classified federal databank when a library user goes to check out a book. Or having to swipe your card to even enter your community library. Is locking out various persons for the greater good of society? Or not providing morally questionable individuals with

resources to expand their views? Are we not all morally questionable beings as part of the human race? We may very well find ourselves in that category through the use (moral and immoral) of biometrics.

A concern with rhetoric around the immigration debate is equating undocumented immigrants with terrorists. Libraries must continue serving the entire community and we must keep the doors of the library open to all, resisting outside pressures to restrict this access or put conditions upon it. The library must continue its role of providing information, knowledge, access, and an open forum for public debate.

Libraries offer residents a glimpse of the world and a safe place to research topics, read and learn about alternative viewpoints, and debate issues. Library service to all regardless of economic and racial background certainly strengthens our democracy. In the century-long tradition of providing library services to immigrants, rather than asking how we can lock people out of library services, we should be asking, what kind of services we can deliver to meet our community members' needs best and how we can do this better than in the past century? 

### Notes

1. Michael Lorenzen, "Deconstructing the Philanthropic Library: The Sociological Reasons Behind Andrew Carnegie's Millions to Libraries." [www.michaellorenzen.com/carnegie.html](http://www.michaellorenzen.com/carnegie.html) (accessed May 2, 2006).
2. Boston Public Library. "A Brief History and Description." [www.bpl.org/guides/history.htm](http://www.bpl.org/guides/history.htm) (accessed May 2, 2006).
3. Eric Novotsky, "Library Services to Immigrants: The Debate in the Library Literature, 1900–1920, and a Chicago Case Study." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 342 (11).
4. Jeffrey S. Passel and Roberto Suro. "Rise, Peak, and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992–2004." Pew Hispanic Center. (September 27, 2005). <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/53.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2006).

### Additional Resources

House Bill HR 4437 <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/thomas>  
Senate Bill S 2611 <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/thomas>

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