
Minority recruitment: A success story

By Tami Echavarria

Reference/Instruction Librarian, Undergraduate Library
University of California, San Diego

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The demographics of the United States population are changing as we move toward the 21st century. Our society is becoming more culturally diverse with greater minority composition. "Demographic projections of the year 2000 indicate that nearly one-third of the U.S. population will be black, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, or native American."¹ As this transformation in our society occurs, education and librarianship have recognized that as professions we need to respond to these changing demographics.

Currently the library profession is predominantly white in character, lacking in sufficient minority representation to respond to these changes. Only about one in nine librarians is a member of a minority group.² Many efforts are being made to recruit minority group members to librarianship and to hire and retain minority librarians in order to remedy this imbalance. Scholar-

ships, mentoring programs, postgraduate internships, and affirmative action hiring practices are among the techniques that are being effectively utilized to increase the number of minority librarians and promote a culturally diverse workforce.

However, the pool of minority librarians remains small. There is a very real need to funnel more minority students into the pipeline of graduate school programs in library science in order to produce more minority librarians. Minorities, immigrants, and women make up more than half of the U.S. workforce and "white males will make up only 15% of the increase in the workforce over the next ten years."³ As the ethnic composition of the available workforce changes, we must discern ways to attract members of this available workforce into librarianship as a career. But the pool of minority college graduates from which graduate programs in various professions recruit still remains small. Salaries in librarianship do not compete well against many other professions offering more remuneration. What factors are there, then, that positively influence those ethnically diverse students who do enter library schools to make this career choice? "Numerous studies of librarians

¹William E. Moen and Kathleen M. Heim, "The Class of 1988: Librarians for the New Millennium," Editor's Note, *American Libraries* 19 (November 1988): 860.

²Ann Knight Randall, "Minority Recruitment in Librarianship" in William E. Moen and Kathleen M. Heim, eds., *Librarians for the New Millennium* (Chicago: American Library Association, Office for Library Personnel Resources, 1988), 18.

³R. Roosevelt Thomas Jr., "From Affirmative Action to Affirming Diversity," *Harvard Business Review* 68 (March-April 1990): 107.

have suggested that we choose the profession because of significant role models—people we know and respect who are librarians.”⁴ Another important factor in this decision appears to be that the experience of working in a library environment has a stronger positive influence on members of minority groups than on white employees to make a career choice in library science.⁵

The University of California, San Diego, has begun a program which uses these influences to attract ethnically diverse undergraduate students to select librarianship as their career choice. Unlike mentoring internship programs or other recruitment efforts that compete for a limited number of new or experienced minority librarians, the Undergraduate Student Internship Program (USIP) brings minority students into the pipeline of training to become professional MLS-degreed librarians, thereby increasing the future minority candidate pool from which libraries will be able to recruit. It is not a replacement for institutional recruitment nor graduate school recruitment, but offers another avenue to increase future minority representation in the profession.

Undergraduate Student Internship Program

This program is a work of many hands that arose out of a general concern at the University of California, San Diego, for increasing minority representation among its professional staff. While engaging in active recruitment efforts for minority librarians, the need for greater minority candidate pools remained evident. Some members of the UCSD Undergraduate Library staff contributed to the inception and early development of the idea into a program, which has been brought to fruition under the direction of the coordinator for USIP. With the encouragement and support of Administration and the advice of the library's Affirmative Action Committee, the Undergraduate Student Internship Program has achieved excellent results in its first year.

USIP focuses on some of the key areas of concern articulated by the 1988 Library and Information Science Student Attitudes, Demographics, and Aspirations (LISSADA) study, conducted by the Louisiana State University School of Library Science. According to the study, larger libraries need to be concerned because 1) very few new

library school graduates prefer to seek working situations in large library systems defined as employing more than 51 librarians, 2) minority students still comprise a very small percentage of future librarians, and 3) technical services work receives scant consideration among graduates and is not viewed as a very desirable specialization within the field.⁶ These concerns are of vital interest to large academic and research libraries.

USIP provides an opportunity for minority student library employees to examine the field of librarianship on a close-up and personal basis, observe professional functions, and discuss librarianship as a potential career choice. A broad overview of libraries and the role of librarians is presented to provide an understanding of the different aspects of the profession and to lay a foundation for future library and information science study as well as professional practice. Although all types of libraries and positions are covered, career opportunities in academic libraries and in technical services are emphasized in an effort to guide students toward the areas where there is greatest need in the profession for minority librarians.

Targeting the student employees already working within the UC-San Diego Library, a call was put out in the spring of 1989 to all librarians asking whether any of the minority student employees working in their units enjoyed working in the library, and either had no specific career goals in mind or were already interested in librarianship. The librarians talked with the students to see if any were interested in pursuing a program in which they would have the opportunity to learn more about librarianship and determine if it was a viable career option for them. It was important to assure the students that the workload of this program would not interfere or cause a burden on their academic studies. Four students were recruited.

During the 1989-90 academic year, a librarian met with the students as a group once a week for two hours in addition to their normal work hours. The students were paid at their regular hourly rate as if they were working at their assigned job in the library. Each week different aspects of the profession were emphasized with several librarians participating to share their areas of expertise. Sessions included an overview of the field, discussion of opportunities in the field in a variety of traditional and non-traditional settings, explanation of the MLS and schools that offer it, hands-on experience in reference and technical services, readings, and field trips to other types of libraries.

Since the number of students in the initial group was small, mentoring was a strong factor in the program. As the year progressed, and the students

⁴Moen, 860.

⁵Kathleen M. Heim and William E. Moen, *Occupational Entry: Library and Information Science Students' Attitudes, Demographics and Aspirations Survey* (Chicago: American Library Association, Office for Library Personnel Resources, 1989), 116.

⁶Moen, 885.

learned more about librarianship as a profession, they became interested in how it might fit into their own lives, interests, and plans. In this respect the guidance of a minority librarian was most advantageous. Time was spent with each student, as they requested it, talking about how making it in a mainstream culture differed from the environments and cultures in which they had been raised. A minority librarian was a role model to which the students could relate and they were able to see that they could accomplish a satisfying career along a similar track.

This program is effective at a small cost to the institution. The cost for the first year was about \$850, based on the attendance of the four students for two quarters and three students for one quarter. One student did not participate Winter Quarter. A few brochures were purchased from the American Library Association which are included in this figure; however, the librarians' time is not computed in this cost. In addition to the two hours per week, about thirty hours of preparation time is required in the first year to create the program.

The success of the program is measured by the number of students who saw librarianship as a viable career option. Of the original four students, three decided to choose librarianship as their career choice. The fourth student remains undecided, and has chosen to take a paraprofessional library position before going on to a graduate program. The first of the students graduated at the end of the 1989-90 academic year and has been accepted into a library school. Of the other three students who have not yet graduated, one is preparing to apply to library schools, one has accepted a paraprofessional position, and the third plans to apply to library schools in her senior year. One of the students has selected technical services as her

specific area of interest in librarianship. In the evaluations of USIP, the students remarked that they would not have known how to acquire this information any other way. The Undergraduate Student Internship Program has definitely made a difference in the lives of these students. Further evidence of the success of this program is the number of new students who have expressed interest in participating in this program. To date, one month prior to the start of the next cycle, eight students have committed to participate for the 1990-91 academic year.

Conclusions

Although not an immediate solution to the shortage of minority librarians, the Undergraduate Student Internship Program makes a significant contribution to the problem, and does so in a relatively expeditious and cost-effective manner. It is one among many solutions which will add minority students to the pool of students going on to library schools and emerging as librarians within a very few years. The continuation of this program will continue to increase directly the number of minority librarians.

USIP is very easily managed and contributes to the profession as a whole, rather than to any particular institution or type of library. Costs, both monetary and personal, are low. The chief requirement is a librarian with a genuine interest in the career plans of minority students to act as a role model, the reward for which is tremendous personal gratification. And most importantly, the impact of this type of program on the profession can easily be compounded if replicated in other academic institutions. ■ ■

Harvard's Tozzer Library hosts special exhibit

Harvard University's Tozzer Library, formerly the library of the Peabody Museum and one of the best anthropological collections in the United States, is hosting a special exhibit, "Cayoni: Traditional Creek Woodcarving," through January 27, 1991.

Cayoni, known to many by his English name Joseph Johns, has been artist-in-residence at the Peabody Museum for the past 15 years and was the first recipient of the Massachusetts Arts Council's Native American Artist fellowship. A Creek Indian from the Althamaha River/Okefenokee area of Georgia, Cayoni began his apprenticeship with his grandfather, a locally renowned Creek carver, when he was eight years

old. Today, Cayoni is the sole surviving traditional Creek woodcarver.

The display was created and mounted by the staff of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, Massachusetts. For information, contact Fred J. Hay, Tozzer Library, (617) 495-2253.



*Woodcarving by Cayoni
entitled Altamaha.*