# Diversity initiatives
# vs. residency programs

## Agents of change?

by Rebecca Hankins, Michele Saunders, and Ping Situ

According to Webster's New College Dictionary (1995) rhetoric is defined as "the art of effective expression and the persuasive use of language." A quick survey of diversity statements on many of our university campuses will show that they have mastered this art form. One finds a variety of initiatives, committees, statements, reports, and projects. Unfortunately, too often these efforts become a study in academic exercises. Implementation, follow-up, and results are where many of these, admittedly, good faith proposals fall short.

Are we concerned only about reporting statistics that continue to perpetuate the revolving door of diversity hiring or are we committed to the idea of an inclusive, pluralistic academic environment that values the contributions and experiences of all members within the larger community? What is the library's role in this endeavor?

Libraries are often the largest staffed units on academic campuses, and unofficial studies have shown that those students who visit the library frequently during their education experience tend to make better grades and are more successful. Having a multicultural and diverse staff encourages use of library resources and provides a welcoming environment for minority students, who often are feeling a sense of isolation and loneliness. Seeing someone who "looks like you" can help a reluctant minority student approach a librarian for assistance. Diversity initiatives, diversity programming, and minority residency programs that purport to "even the playing field" or "foster new leaders" are held up as examples of what can be done to ensure more diversity but often fall short in sustaining the momentum. This article focuses on the initiatives/statements of three universities in the Association of Research Libraries (Texas A&M, University of Delaware, and Cornell University) and the variety of solutions they are using to address issues of diversity.

### Diversity initiatives

We must first establish that there is a difference between diversity initiatives and residency programs. Diversity initiatives address systemic problems within the university as a whole and often each department or school is encouraged to draft individual statements that involve long-term solutions, including defining the problems, offering concrete steps to resolving barriers, devising a plan of action, follow-up, and accountability.

What we need are diversity initiatives that are not about counting the numbers or tokenism but that are concerned with bringing people of diverse backgrounds into the academic community and providing them inclusive space. Inclusive space that involves not only diversifying librarians, the

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library administration, and staff, but also diversifying the collections, resources, and the ways in which we provide services. What distinguishes these initiatives from residency programs are the long-term, strategic framing and multilevel elements of these programs.

## Minority residency programs

Minority residency programs, in contrast to diversity initiatives, are short-term and quota-driven to raise affirmative action statistics and are often in response to accreditation threats. They take newly graduated students, insert them into often hostile environments, and expect them to address all the problems of diversity that continue to simmer and stew among faculty.

Far too often these kinds of programs become examples of what not to do. They start off on the wrong foot by targeting relatively few schools rather than performing a national search, reinforcing the notion that the participants could not compete on a national level and handicapping the candidates from the beginning.

The programs should be structured with someone designated as a coordinator of activities and also charged with handling any problems that may arise. Often many of these programs do not have a system in place for evaluation. If you are advertising a program, have the mechanisms in place for achieving what you promise or it can leave your participants frustrated and disillusioned. Issues of funding should be in place and made clear to candidates. Residency programs that contain many of these elements can and are successful, but is it enough? As we look at what universities are doing to diversify their staffs and the library profession, we will provide our take on what we see as positive agents for change.

### Texas A&M University (TAMU)—College Station, Texas

TAMU's diversity statement is linked to its homepage and reflects a campus-wide initiative. The strategic placement of this diversity link reinforces its priority status. The statement specifically addresses a need for diverse people and diverse views and ties this to excellence: "Texas A&M University has both an extraordinary opportunity and a special responsibility to create and maintain a climate that affirms diversity of person as well as diversity of views. Diversity is an indispensable component of academic excellence." Each university unit is encouraged to make the entire campus a welcoming environ-

ment. Tangible progress has to be made, and people are held accountable for their behavior and actions.

The university and the library define diversity in terms of people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and differing points of views. The library has a diversity programs coordinator who also serves as a facilitator for the entire university community and has an aggressive outreach program that targets the hiring of diverse people. The library does not have a residency program, but it does publish a cultural awareness newsletter and creates rotating exhibits on the minority communities on campus.

### University of Delaware—Newark, Delaware

The campus diversity links of the University of Delaware are a little hidden, compared to Texas A&M University. The diversity statement from University President David P. Roselle addresses not only the need for creating a diverse learning and working community for people of all races, but also invites people to join the university's commitment to make their institution a place where "difference is a source of education, enlightenment and friendship."

The University of Delaware Library has the two-year Pauline A. Young Residency program, whose purpose is to increase the diversity of professional staff at the library and to encourage the involvement of underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities in academic librarianship. The residents will hone their leadership skills, develop an individualized plan, receive structured and informal mentoring, be involved in library committee service, have access and support to specialized training/workshops, attend professional conferences, and experience the latest in information technologies.

Applicants must be recent graduates from an ALA-accredited program, and the program is a nonrenewable two-year appointment at the level of assistant librarian rank. There is no indication of any retention process for this residency program. The diversity statement of the residency program is not very consistent with its real process. On one hand it says that the program intends to increase the diversity of the professional library staff and encourages the involvement of the underrepresented racial/ethnic group, but on the other hand, it says that "members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups are encouraged to apply,"

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which is a standard job advertisement tag. Hence, the recruitment of people from underrepresented backgrounds is not guaranteed. Can the diversity of the library staff be increased if the residents only stay for a two-year period (and happen to be from one of the minority groups)?

### Cornell University—Ithaca, New York

Cornell University's statement on diversity and inclusiveness "Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds" speaks of "inclusion and opportunity rooted in democratic values." It states that "Cornell stands for civil discourse, reasoned thought, sustained discussion and constructive engagement without degrading, abusing, harassing or silencing others."

Cornell University Library has created a "grow their own" program that attempts to provide inclusion and opportunity. The library has taken a grassroots approach to recruiting for diversity in the academic library profession as illustrated in the design of its Summer Jr. Library Fellows Program, which targets high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors and provides them with an introduction into academic librarianship. The multiphase program consists of outreach to the community, the introduction of students, parents and school personnel to the program, and information literacy and technology training for participating students. The student experience includes job shadowing, mentoring, instruction, and completion of a project.

This initiative introduces students to the profession early in their academic careers and serves to influence their perception of academic librarianship so it will be seen as an inclusive space in which they will be welcomed and challenged. It also challenges library staff and the library's partners in the project to create an inclusive space. It provides the students

with skills that are valuable in many venues and that will be useful throughout their academic careers. The outreach component of the initiative raises awareness of the profession not just with the students but with the parents, school personnel, and the community. The library's partners in the initiative include community centers, high school officials, and a vice provost's office. Here we have the library, a community organization, high school administration, and university administration all engaged in constructive action to increase diversity in academic librarianship.

### From our perspective

Can elements of Cornell's grassroots approach be applied to residency programs to allow them to better address systemic issues? Residency programs as currently implemented have little ability to raise awareness of academic librarianship outside of the profession. As stated previously, residents are often thrown into an environment under a marginalized status as short-term employees and it is expected that their presence will somehow alter the environment toward a more inclusive space. The mere presence of residents can not achieve this goal. The constructive engagement of multiple partners, library staff, library administration, university administration, university and community organizations and library schools, as seen in the Jr. Fellows Program, could both raise awareness outside of academic librarianship and spread out the responsibility for creating an inclusive space. Introducing potential recruitees to academic librarianship earlier rather than later is another element of the grassroots approach. Why not have programs that begin while an individual is still in library school that guide and mentor him or her through the transition into the workplace?

This is the goal of the University of Arizona's Knowledge River program, another grassroots approach, which brings Hispanics and American Indians into its graduate library program. It is succeeding by building coalitions between the library, library school, academic departments on campus and the surrounding community, and serves as a model of how it can be done.

Students in Knowledge River must meet all qualifications for graduate work, similar to other graduate students, thus they are not handicapped by an assumption of preferential treatment or special considerations. Students are mentored and supported throughout the program and provided

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FROM

# ARL & SPARC

## Events at the ALA Annual Conference in Toronto

### *Creating Change in Scholarly Communication:*
### *Best Practices in Campus Advocacy*
Saturday, June 21, 4:30 p.m.–6 p.m.

In this lively forum presented by SPARC and ACRL, librarians and faculty will discuss their experiences in deploying campus advocacy initiatives to create change in scholarly communication. Join us and gather practical ideas on how to launch your own successful program. Register at <http://www.arl.org/sparc/>.

### *LibQUAL+™ Process Management Workshop*
Two sessions on Friday, June 20: 9 a.m.–noon OR 1 p.m.–4 p.m.

Thinking of participating in the 2004 ARL LibQUAL+™ survey? Interested in hearing more? This workshop is for those who want to learn about the LibQUAL+™ survey process. Register at <http://www.libqual.org/events/>.

## Visit ARL & SPARC at booth 4435 in Toronto!

## A New Development Opportunity from ARL/OLMS

The *Library Leadership for New Managers (LLNM) Program* addresses the complex issue of succession planning in academic and research libraries. Demographic changes and organizational re-design efforts are forcing many library administrators to prepare the new wave of leaders who will shape the future of academic libraries, yet there is no venue devoted to developing this group of professionals for the challenges of quickly assuming leadership in their organizations. The LLNM Program fills this need. In this new program, emerging leaders who have little or no management experience can gain insight and skills for managing the diverse relationships of a leader in the academic library environment. The program creates a learning space in which newer professionals can network, exchange ideas, and gain competencies to help them throughout their careers.

New or potential leaders are encouraged to **apply by July 7, 2003**. The program is limited to 30 participants. For more information, see <http://www.arl.org/training/institutes/managers.html>.

NewCROP provides entries to lesser known plant species of potential economic importance. County- by-county statistics are provided for the United States, and full-text materials are available throughout the site. *Access:* http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/.

• **Missouri Botanical Garden.** Located in Saint Louis, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a delightful place to visit on the Web and in person. In Gardening Help, these areas are especially helpful, Plant Finder with picture and information on over 2700 plants, Vegetables of the World, NurseryTracker, HortLine with articles on over 300 topics, and Integrated Pest Management. *Access:* http://www.mobot.org/.

• **University of Illinois: Horticulture and Home Garden.** Visually appealing, this site has areas for the professional horticulturist and the home gardener. Home gardeners will find useful "Hort Corner," which lists extension Web sites that cover lawn care, fruits and vegetables, insects, and seasonal issues, and "Horticulture Solutions Series," which provides full-text information on varied topics in horticulture. Both home gardeners and professionals will use the "Home Yard and Garden Pest" weekly newsletter and the "Integrated Pest Management" section to identify horticultural pests and control them. "I PLANT" is intended for the use of landscape contractors, commercial nursery and greenhouse operators, and avid plant enthusiasts in the Midwest. Also available for professionals is a section on Pesticide Applicator Training and Pesticide Safety Education. *Access:* http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/home/homelawn.html.

### East

• **New York Botanical Garden.** Two areas on this site provide information on horticulture: "Science" provides searchable databases such as the Virtual Herbarium, and the "Index to American Botanical Literature." "Plant Information" provides a gardening calendar, answers to growing plant and plant information sheets. *Access:* http://www.nybg.org/index.html.

### Canadian

• **ICanGarden.** Canadian gardening is the focus of this site. The articles link provides access to many full-text articles by well-known garden authors. *Access:* http://icangarden.com/.

### Other

• **Tree Care Information Brochures.** From the International Society of Arboriculture, brochures are available for caring for the most valuable part of the landscape—trees. Information ranging from selecting new trees to caring for them properly throughout their long lives is available here. *Access:* http://www.isa-arbor.com/consumer/consumer.html.

• **Flowerweb.** This is a Dutch site that is intended for the commercial florist. The database, FlowerBase, is the most useful, providing photographs of many types of flowers and their scientific names, and common names in English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, French, Swedish, German, and Danish. *Access:* http://www.flowerweb.net/.

• **OrganicGardening.com.** The archives and OG Basics provide many articles on how to grow plants without using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. *Access:* http://www.organicgardening.com/. ■

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with internship experience, introducing them to the academic and professional life of librarians and librarianship.

The success of any particular library residency program in building a diverse staff is debatable, but as an initiative that looks to create diversity within the profession, it has definite merit. It helps those recent graduates who have the academic knowledge, but often have not had much library work experiences and are apprehensive about their practical skills, and provides them with an opportunity to work in a more controlled environment. They have a chance to hone their skills gradually and are under less pressure to perform as permanent employees.

Residency programs also provide new librarians with work experience that many tenure-track jobs for academic library positions require. The residency program does increase diversity, not at the staff level necessarily, but by allowing people with different cultural, educational, and work experiences to start their professional career right after graduate school.

Rather than seeing diversity initiatives and residency programs as competing entities, we must see them and promote them as integral to each other. The combination of diversity initiatives and residency programs commits the entire campus and its surrounding community to work toward a common goal that can cement ties and bridge cultural differences. ■