Celebrating 10 Years of ARL's Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce

Mark A. Puente, Director of Diversity Programs, ARL

In August of 2010, ARL celebrates an important milestone: the 10th anniversary of its long-standing minority recruitment program, the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce (IRDW). For the past 10 years, the IRDW has provided financial support to master of library and information science (MLIS) students from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups. Since 2003, with funding from member libraries and two grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the program has evolved to include a formal mentoring relationship, leadership development, career placement assistance, plus many other benefits. The program aims to encourage these students to pursue careers in major research libraries by providing them with an in-depth view of the operations of ARL libraries and the implications for retention and promotion in those workplace environments.

Although it is difficult to determine an exact starting date for the IRDW, conversations leading up to its creation date back at least 20 years. At the spring 1990 ARL Membership Meeting in New Orleans, one of the programs addressed the need to develop a strategy to recruit more minorities into the research library workforce. ARL began to explore the concept of cultural diversity in the workplace under the leadership of the Association's Office of Management Services (OMS, later renamed the Office of Leadership and Management Services). Three ARL OMS SPEC Kit surveys distributed in 1990 sought to scan the environment and collect data on minority recruitment and retention programs, affirmative action policies and practices, and cultural diversity programming. The year 1990 was also pivotal in that ARL received the first of two grants from the H.W. Wilson Foundation, enabling the Association to launch a project entitled Meeting the Challenges of a Culturally Diverse Work Environment. This seed funding from the Wilson Foundation allowed ARL to hire its first OMS Diversity Consultant on a part-time basis. Kriza Jennings first served in this capacity, offering presentations, seminars, and consulting services

focused primarily on workplace climate, and developing programs that promoted inclusion and fostered an awareness of and respect for human differences in the research library environment.

The demand for the OMS Diversity programs was much higher than anticipated. In 1993 the Diversity position became full-time, and the ARL Board returned in earnest to its discussions about how best to address the problem of low minority representation among the workforce in ARL libraries. These discussions were further guided by input from an outside consultant, Gloria DeSole, who served as Special Assistant to the President for Affirmative Action at SUNY, Albany. During the October 1993 ARL Business Meeting, the members unanimously approved the establishment of a dues-supported Minority Recruitment and Retention capability. On the advisement of a special working group and Ms. DeSole, the ARL Board also endorsed a five-year plan that mandated the creation of a comprehensive minority recruitment plan and allowed for Diversity Consultant Kriza Jennings to be promoted to Program Officer for Diversity and Minority Recruitment. The enabling capability was configured in such a way that Jennings devoted 50% of her time to minority recruitment and retention projects and 50% to the OMS Diversity Programs aimed at improving workplace climate. Initially these workshops were offered to ARL member institutions, other interested academic libraries, and American Library Association (ALA)–accredited library schools. By September of 1994, Jennings had visited 28 ARL libraries offering consultation and workshops. A grant from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation was awarded to ARL in 1995 in support of programmatic activities in the recruitment arena and helped to augment the ARL dues-supported programs.

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In 1996, ARL hired a new Program Officer for Diversity, DeEtta Jones, who would continue to build on her predecessor's successes, but who would also facilitate a new dialogue about how best to address the minority recruitment issue. A defining moment came in 1998 when Sheila Creth, then the University Librarian at the University of Iowa, challenged her colleagues to be more aggressive about addressing the problem of minority recruitment in ARL libraries. Her voice echoed the sentiments of other key players in this discussion, including Jim Williams, Dean of Libraries at University of

Colorado at Boulder, who has been a consistent advocate for developing a strategy that would help put more minority librarians into the hiring pipeline for research libraries. A year later, in 1999, the ARL Board was approached by Jones and Nancy Baker, University Librarian at University of Iowa and then the Chair of the ARL Diversity Committee, with a proposal to establish a minority recruitment program entitled the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce. The Board approved a motion to establish a "significant fund" to underwrite the annual award of at least 15 stipends to minority students pursuing their MLIS degrees. The momentum continued to grow during the next year, with a major catalyst being the public pledge of $5,000 for this fund made during an ARL Membership Meeting by Carla Stoffle, Dean of Libraries at University of Arizona. Following Stoffle's lead, several other ARL library directors made pledges in support of this fund, including Nancy Cline on behalf of the Harvard College Library, Ken Frazier for the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries, Karin Trainer of Princeton University Library, and Scott Bennett of the Yale University Library. By 2000, 52 ARL member libraries had committed a total of over $500,000 to support the effort. The first awards were made to four MLIS students, the inaugural Diversity Scholars of ARL's fledgling minority recruitment initiative in 2000.

The IRDW continued to gain support and recognition as time progressed. In 2003, directed by the new Program Officer for Diversity, Jerome Offord Jr., ARL received its first major grant from IMLS in support of the IRDW. Two cohorts of scholars were recruited between 2003 and 2007. The IMLS funding also provided support to host the first annual ARL Leadership Symposium (also called "Institutes") during the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston in January 2005. During the symposium, Diversity Scholars attended presentations on topics ranging from residency programs to job search strategies or doctoral programs in LIS education. The scholars also participated in networking events attended by ARL library directors and human resource personnel, as well as other leaders in the academic and research library community. A key strategic partnership for the IRDW was also established in 2005 with the Purdue University Libraries. James Mullins, the Dean of the Purdue Libraries, initiated talks with ARL to establish an opportunity for Diversity Scholars to visit the West Lafayette campus and experience, first hand, the operations of a major research library. These "research library visits" continue today and are a critical component of the IRDW, providing an in-

depth look at the operations at Purdue as well as the professional requirements of working for an institution where librarians maintain faculty status. Similar events have been hosted by the Harvard College Library in 2005 and 2008, the latter visit in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Libraries.

ARL received another IMLS grant in support of the IRDW in 2006, this time with the emphasis on recruiting MLIS students with academic backgrounds in natural and applied sciences, computer information systems, or information technology. In 2006–07, ARL recruited only seven program participants into the IRDW so a decision was made to utilize ARL funds to expand the class of Diversity Scholars into a full cohort of 25 participants. Similar measures were employed in 2007 and 2008 due to limited numbers of applicants with appropriate academic backgrounds. With approval from IMLS, a modification to the program was made in 2009 allowing ARL to accept students into the program with academic backgrounds in the humanities, arts, and other disciplines with the stipulation that these students complete approved coursework in the targeted areas. The final class of Diversity Scholars, funded by the 2006 IMLS grant, was recruited in 2009.

The total number of students supported since the program's inception in 2000 is 126. To date ARL Diversity Scholars have graduated from a total of 34 ALA–accredited MLIS programs and have worked in almost 30 ARL libraries. A study conducted in 2009 of all past program participants indicates that over 37% of all IRDW alumni are currently employed in ARL libraries, while 61% remain employed in academic librarianship. With minority representation among professional staff in US ARL academic libraries at 14% as of 2009,[1] compared to 11% in 2000[2] when the IRDW was founded, it is clear that this program is making a significant impact on the research library workforce.

A new IMLS grant awarded in June of 2010 will ensure that this important minority recruitment program will continue. In the next three years, the IRDW will recruit 30 MLIS students from traditionally underrepresented minority groups into the program. In this iteration of the program, the focus of recruitment will be on undergraduate students with academic backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. ARL hopes that this recruitment focus will not only continue improving upon representation of ethnic and racial minorities in ARL libraries, but also will prove an appropriate response to projected needs in the research library workforce in the decades to come.

For more information about ARL's Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, please visit the program's Web site http://www.arl.org/diversity/init/.

[1] Martha Kyrillidou and Les Bland, comps. and eds., *ARL Annual Salary Survey 2008–2009* (Washington DC: ARL, 2009), 8, http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/ss08.pdf.

[2] Martha Kyrillidou and Michael O'Connor, comps. and eds., *ARL Annual Salary Survey 1999–2000* (Washington DC: ARL, 2000), 13, http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/ss99.pdf.

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