



# SPEC Kit 319

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Diversity Plans and Programs

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## **SURVEY RESULTS**





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Introduction

In 1990, ARL published SPEC Kit 165 *Cultural Diversity Programming in ARL Libraries* and SPEC Kit 167 *Minority Recruitment and Retention in ARL Libraries*. Both of these documents provided a wealth of information about library programs and services that addressed the needs of a diverse user group, minority staff recruitment and retention strategies, and approaches to managing an ethnically/culturally diverse workforce. While survey results in those SPEC Kits indicated that progress had been made since the 1960s, respondents indicated they thought there was much more to do to ensure that academic and research library staff are representative of all cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial groups, as well as those who have been discriminated against for their gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

Over the past ten years, several libraries have obtained funding to support recruitment strategies aimed at increasing the number of librarians from ethnically/culturally underrepresented groups in academic and research libraries, as well as promoting advancement within the organization. Libraries have also begun to put into practice policies and procedures to create more inclusive workplaces incorporating diverse staff, programs, and services. National recruitment initiatives, such as the ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce and the Leadership & Career Development Program, have been created to address the need to recruit minority librarians to the profession and advance them into leadership positions in ARL member libraries. During that time, the number of diversity or multicultural groups at the

local, state, and national levels also appears to have increased.

The main purpose of this survey was to explore what other progress has been made in ARL member libraries to recruit and retain a diverse workforce and to identify the existence and content of diversity plan documents; the strategies they use to increase the number of ethnically/culturally diverse librarians in the profession and in their libraries; the elements of programs that successfully support an inclusive workplace; the people, groups, and/or committees responsible for overseeing the programs; and how libraries are assessing the effectiveness and success of such programs. The survey was conducted between March 15 and April 28, 2010. Forty-nine of the 124 ARL member institutions completed the survey for a response rate of 40%. All but one of the respondents is from an academic library.

### Diversity Plans

A diversity plan may include a statement of diversity values or goals for the library, a description of strategies for recruiting ethnically/culturally diverse staff to the library and retaining them once they are hired, an outline of programs that promote ethnic/cultural sensitivity in the workplace, results from a work climate assessment, and other similar elements. It may be a stand-alone document or part of a broader document, such as a library strategic plan or an institution-wide diversity document. Thirty-six of the responding libraries (73%) stated they have a diversity plan as described above. Some of these documents pull to-

gether all of the activities related to diversity into one strategic plan.

Of these 36 respondents, 13 reported that their parent institutions were responsible for initiating the development of the plan. In 11 cases, the parent institution and the library were jointly responsible. At the other 12 institutions, the library administration and/or human resources unit initiated plan development. In addition, two libraries identified the initiators as the parent institution affirmative action office/department and a system-wide request originating with central university administration. Other comments suggest the initiative came from a staff committee within the library.

Slightly more than a third of the diversity plans (13 or 37%) are stand-alone documents. Almost an equal number (12 or 34%) are part of a broader parent institution document such as a strategic plan, annual report, or an affirmative action or equal employment opportunity (EEO) report. Four are part of a library strategic plan. Based on the comments, a few library plans are stand-alone but are based on an institution-wide document.

The components of diversity plans vary among the responding organizations, but the majority of the plans contain

- Goals and strategies
- Mission or values statements
- Definition of diversity
- Organizational responsibility/accountability

Some diversity plans include a diversity-related committee charge (34%), a description of diversity programs (29%), and other elements such as assessment strategies, and policies and procedures (i.e., EEO, affirmative action) related to search committees.

Clearly, research institutions have been working to create a more culturally diverse organization, but apparently few have had a plan that guided their activities. Prior to 1990, only two of the 30 responding libraries had a diversity plan. Within the ten-year span 1990 to 1999, only four others developed a document. The rate of development has begun to change, though. Between 2000 and 2004, six more libraries developed a plan. Since 2005, seventeen libraries (57%) have

developed a diversity plan; six of those within the last year. The creation of such a plan indicates a strong commitment to diversity within the organization.

A major factor in the success of a diversity plan is its implementation. Survey results show that responsibility for implementation is often shared by human resources officers and a diversity committee or a related group (16 responses or 44%). In several cases, they are joined by a diversity officer, staff development officer, or multicultural librarian. At ten libraries, the human resources officer has primary responsibility, but works with other administrators and various library committees. At four others, the diversity committee takes charge of implementation. In a few cases, implementation is at the campus level, such as the vice provost for equal opportunity, president's office, campus human resources, and search committees.

Implementing a diversity plan sets the course for progress, but may be inadequate without a process to review its effectiveness and update its contents as goals and strategies change. Eighty-one percent of the survey respondents periodically review their plans, typically on an annual cycle. A few report a review cycle between two and five years. Some libraries indicated that their reviews were on hold and are currently waiting for more information from the parent institution.

Creating a diversity plan implies an intention to distribute it to stakeholders. Survey results indicate diversity plans are disseminated to library staff and the university community in a multitude of ways. At least half of the responding libraries share their plan through the library Web site and/or include it in a university document. Twenty-five percent discuss the library's vision for diversity during new employee orientation. Three libraries (8%) incorporate this information into the library staff handbook. Other methods include posting the diversity plan or vision on an internal staff webpage or wiki. Diversity forums and discussions are also used to disseminate information. In contrast, one library only submits their diversity document to the library administration. Some libraries submit their information as a report to the parent institution's EEO or affirmation action policy office and rely on that office to inform employees through

presentations, internal brochures and memorandums, and posters.

### **Diversity Librarian**

Twenty years after the creation of positions focused on fostering diversity in libraries, one would expect the number of these types of positions to have increased. In 1990, SPEC Kit 165 included six position descriptions that contained diversity-related duties and expectations. Responses to the current survey show only a slight increase: three multicultural librarians and seven diversity officers were reported. These results are supported by Lori Mestre's recent research into positions that primarily focus on diversity and multicultural issues in academic libraries. She found there were "only 14 out of 107 ARL libraries in the US" that had a full-time dedicated diversity librarian, even when she expanded her search for job titles to include "diversity librarians, multicultural librarians, outreach librarian for multicultural services, Ethnic Studies librarian, and similar titles." (Mestre, 2010, p. xiv)

### **Diversity Committees**

While there are few "diversity librarians," the survey results indicate that more than half of the responding libraries have a diversity-related committee. These committees provide library staff an opportunity to work towards creating a more inclusive workplace. Human resources officers often lead or are at least an ex-officio member of the committee. At the majority of libraries, the committee and HR officer share the responsibility for developing and implementing the diversity plan, and planning and delivering ongoing programs to promote an inclusive work environment. It became apparent when reviewing the documents submitted by survey respondents that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the role of diversity committees has moved beyond these original roles to advising library and university administration on diversity issues, creating recruitment plans, and assisting with training of search committees.

### **Programs to Promote an Inclusive Workplace**

Approximately half of the responding libraries have ongoing presentations and/or workshops on issues relevant to promoting an inclusive workplace. Another

seven (14%) have had at least one-time presentations and eight plan to develop programs. Ten others (20%) have not developed any workshops or programming, yet. The number of programs ranges from 1 to 20 a year with an average of four per year. In some cases, library programs are open to the campus community.

Topics addressed during these programs and/or workshops include race and ethnicity (78%), physical disabilities (66%), sexual orientation (53%), language barriers (50%), and gender and/or age discrimination (47%). Other topics that have been addressed either within the library or through the university system are cross- or inter-cultural communication, cultural competencies, religion, affirmative action or equal opportunity, and social economics issues. Examples of large events that libraries have initiated include a sign language forum and an international party.

In addition to HR officers and diversity committees, staff development officers, diversity officers, and multicultural librarians are also involved with planning and delivering programs for library staff. Libraries also utilize the resources of the parent institution, taking advantage of programs that are open to all staff at the institution. Individuals and departments involved in planning and delivering diversity programming at the campus level include administrators, LGBTQA centers, offices of disability services, and social justice programs.

### **Diversity Web Sites**

Library Web sites are the face of the organization. This is the entryway for individuals to see what is important to the organization. It was refreshing to see the number of Web sites submitted for the survey that have information about diversity values and initiatives. A review of several sites revealed a wealth of information about diversity-related committees, goals and objectives, diversity plans, and resources that support multicultural research.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

In 1990, SPEC Kit 167 asked recruitment questions about hiring activities, advertising available positions, and barriers to recruitment. At that time, active recruitment and rewriting job descriptions "so that minority applicants will not be discouraged" were

identified as specific strategies to increase the diversity of job applicant pools.

Today, there are a wider variety of strategies. Of the libraries responding to this survey, 82% have employed strategies to specifically increase the pool of ethnically/culturally diverse job applicants. The top three most frequently reported strategies are targeting job ads to participants in ALA and ARL diversity recruitment programs (68%), supporting ARL diversity initiatives (60%), and training search committees to develop a diverse candidate pool (60%). Although 40 of the responding libraries have used a range of strategies to specifically increase the diversity of job applicant pools, only 21 found any of them particularly successful. Offering post-MLIS residency opportunities and recruiting from the five ALA ethnic caucuses are among the effective strategies. Other specific ways libraries are recruiting minority librarians include building alliances with the University of Arizona's Knowledge River Program, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and LIS Access Midwest Program (LAMP), and attending local career fairs.

Eleven libraries identified particularly successful job advertising venues to increase the diversity of the applicant pool. Among the most effective and widely used method is advertising in publications and on electronic discussion lists targeted to ethnically and culturally diverse individuals, including the ALA ethnic caucus lists.

Along with successful strategies for the recruitment process, 44% of respondents identified recruitment barriers. The library's geographic location was the most common barrier to attracting a diverse pool of candidates, as were lack of qualified applicants and a general perception of a lack of diversity in the profession. Other barriers include obtaining racial and ethnic information from applicants and the lack of diverse students in MLIS programs interested in academic library positions.

### **Mentoring Programs**

Though many ARL member libraries have mentoring programs, only four reported having a program that is specifically intended to help ethnically/culturally

diverse librarians to attain advancement or tenure. Another five (10%) are planning to develop such a program. Mentoring within the ARL diversity initiatives and other leadership programs also provides support for these librarians outside their current positions.

### **Evaluation & Assessment**

Only 11 respondents (22%) have developed any measures to evaluate the success of their efforts to recruit an ethnically/culturally diverse workforce, though nine (18%) plan to develop such measures in the future. Only three respondents have any measures to evaluate the success of retention efforts, but 11 intend to develop such measures.

To assess their recruitment efforts, some of the libraries are using the information in the affirmative action or EEO plan reports. At least one library is involved in a multi-year longitudinal study to investigate the efficacy of the current recruitment sponsored by ARL. Another library is targeting their recruitment efforts to MLIS programs with larger graduation rates by underrepresented students. An increase in the number of applicants from targeted schools will be the measure of success.

### **Workplace Climate**

Just under half of the responding institutions have completed an assessment of the library climate; an additional eight (17%) are planning a climate assessment in the future. Most often, the assessment instrument was a survey developed by the library. Other surveys were developed by the parent institution or by outside vendors such as Gallup, ClimateQUAL™, and Towers Watson International Survey Research.

When asked if the assessment information was used to change the diversity plan or programs, 14 respondents (32%) reported they have used this information to provide guidance in their planning, though the majority (22 or 50%) has not used the information in this fashion. Two report that the university implements the survey and it is not library specific.

### **Conclusion**

Successful diversity management requires a variety of tactics and strategies. Patricia Kreitz's research on diversity "best practices" centered on discovering

organizations that have been working to define and assess progress. She found that the more levels of commitment within the organization, the stronger the commitment is to change the organization and to recognize the benefits. According to her findings, successful diversity initiatives require both top management leadership and employee commitment. The responses to this survey show there is strong support for diversity by both library and university administration at ARL member institutions. This inspires confidence that there will be a change in the workplace dynamics.

Lori Mestre argues there is a gap of services and responsibility without a full-time individual to oversee diversity outreach, collection development, reference and instruction, programming, and liaison responsibilities. However, many other levels of support and commitment are necessary to carry out the diversity plan and a committed leadership team at the institution level and within the library guarantees a strong, effective plan for diversity.

This survey indicates there has been a significant increase in the number of groups and committees formed to address diversity or inclusive workplace goals in the past ten years. Human resource officers share the responsibility of leading these committees and implementing diversity plans with diversity officers, staff development officers, multicultural librarians, and other library staff. Even without the presence of a primary, full-time individual responsible for diversity and multicultural activities, these endeavors are achieved when the library administration makes diversity everyone's responsibility.

In 2006, Courtney Young explored the presence of diversity Web information in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a small subset of large academic research libraries. Her research also looked at whether diversity information was located on top- or lower-level pages. Because only two of 13 libraries had top-level links to the diversity-related pages and very few had information about the diversity collections, she made several recommendations for libraries, including: place a link for diversity or multicultural topics in the top level page, provide contact information for the diversity individual or group, publicize diversity programs, and highlight information for persons with disabilities. While there

is evidence that libraries are moving in this direction, more libraries should follow this advice since the willingness to publicly share their diversity plan and strategies via the Web site suggests a welcoming, inclusive environment in which to work, study, and be successful.

Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce continues to be a challenge for libraries. It is evident that research libraries are committed to actively recruit librarians from underrepresented ethnic/racial groups and have employed specific strategies to increase the diversity of applicant pools. What is not known is how many of the open searches have resulted in new hires of minority librarians. At this point, it is difficult to acknowledge strides that might have been made because of the lack of recruitment assessment tools.

Very few libraries are designing mentoring programs specifically for librarians from underrepresented ethnic or cultural groups. Many of the libraries responding to this survey have informal or formal mentoring programs for all librarians but rely on external professional development programs, such as those sponsored by the ALA ethnic caucuses, to provide mentoring opportunities for librarians from underrepresented groups. They also turn to skill building opportunities offered by the University of Minnesota Training Institute for Early Career Librarians and ARL's Leadership & Career Development Program for training to advance these librarians to leadership positions.

As libraries continue to move forward in diversity activities, more statistics need to be mined from reports such as the *ARL Annual Salary Survey* and *ALA Diversity Counts* to actually validate the efforts of the recruiting and hiring of staff and librarians from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The development of more assessment tools will be crucial to provide supporting evidence of change. Academic libraries are also looking forward to the development of guidelines for cultural competencies by the Association of College and Research Libraries Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee. These guidelines will extend the inclusion of skills and behaviors necessary to support a working environment that acknowledges the strength in having multicultural and diverse individuals in the organization.

