

**WHERE ARE ALL THE
LIBRARIANS OF COLOR?
THE EXPERIENCES OF
PEOPLE OF COLOR
IN ACADEMIA**

**Coedited by
Rebecca Hankins, CA, MLS and
Miguel Juárez, MLS, MA**

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Contents

Preface – Lorieene Roy	vii
Introduction – <i>Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juárez</i>	1
Section One: Setting the Stage for Diversity in the Profession	
1. Discovering Librarianship: Personalizing the Recruitment Process for Underrepresented Students – <i>Emily K. Chan, Giovanni Lota, Holly A. Smith and Steven D. Booth</i>	11
2. Establishing a Communal Network for Professional Advancement among Librarians of Color – <i>Tarida Anantachai, Latrice Booker, Althea Lazzaro, and Martha Parker</i>	31
3. Mentoring and Retention of Minority Librarians – <i>Melody Royster, David Schwieder, Ava Iuliano Brillat, and Lori Driver</i>	55
4. Interns or Professionals? A Common Misnomer Applied to Diversity Resident Librarians Can Potentially Degrade and Divide – <i>Jason K. Alston</i>	71
5. Strengthening the Pipeline—Talent Management for Libraries: A Human Resources Perspective – <i>Agnes K. Bradshaw</i>	95
Section Two: How Diversity Benefits the Profession	
6. Critical Race Theory and Recruitment, Retention and Promotion of a Librarian of Color: A Counter-Story – <i>Shaundra Walker</i>	135

7. Serving with a Sense of Purpose: A Black Woman Librarian in Rural New Mexico— <i>Akilab Shukura Nosakhere</i>	161
8. Like a Fish Out of Water, but Forging My Own Path – <i>Vince Lee</i>	187
9. Racial Realism or Foolish Optimism: An African American Muslim Woman in the Field – <i>Rebecca Hankins</i>	209
Section Three: Personal Diversity Stories	
10. The Veteran and the Rookie: Our Story, Our Experience – <i>Rhonda E. Fowler and Karen Rogers-Collins</i>	223
11. DiVeRsItY at Miami University Libraries: Four Unique and Similar Experiences – <i>Stacy Brinkman, Jacqueline Johnson, Kwabena Sekyere, and Elias Tzoc</i>	241
12. Building Dialogic Bridges to Diversity: Are We There Yet? – <i>Roland Barksdale-Hall</i>	265
13. Making Diversity Work in Academic Libraries – <i>Miguel Juárez</i>	299
About the Contributors	317
Index	333

PREFACE

Loriene Roy, Ph.D.

Librarians are concerned with reflecting diversity in their professional education and their workplaces—from library collections to services and outreach—and in the make-up of library staff. Highly visible efforts, such as the Spectrum Initiative Scholarships, were established to increase enrollment of students from underrepresented groups in master's programs accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) or in school library certification programs accredited by NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (now part of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP]). Yet although librarians acknowledge a strong belief that library staff should reflect the diverse communities that they serve, the demographics of library employees remain relatively stable. The average library worker today is still a white woman in her mid-fifties. Much work therefore remains to be accomplished in achieving the goal of diversity. There is no single route to changing the characteristics of the workforce, and even scholarship support only produces results over much time. Meanwhile, the few current librarians of color are in need of support and attention.

Despite overt attention to diversity in the recruitment of prospective librarians into graduate programs, little attention is given to the experiences of librarians of color as they transition from student to information professional, particularly after they enter the workplace.

As a librarian of color and current faculty member of color helping graduate students prepare for their careers in information studies, I know how intimidating the process of seeking, accepting, and stepping into employment can be. A library and information science student may eventually find herself/himself hired as the sole person of color in a work environment that, while potentially satisfying, does not reflect her/his own culture—much less that of the communities of color in the prospective patron audience. In my case, the isolation is magnified: Indigenous librarians are even more marginalized because reporting and writing on diversity issues less frequently discusses librarians who are American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nation, or affiliated with another indigenous community than it does Black, Latino/a or Spanish Speaking, or Asian librarians.

Mentorships are often offered as the best answer for facilitating a smooth adjustment into the workplace and for further advancement within the field. Mentoring may be integrated not only directly into accomplishing day-to-day work activities, but also into pursuing continuing education and advancement. Formal mentoring takes many faces and is often an initiative hosted by a professional organization. Informal mentoring can be the process of a professional librarian choosing a likely mentee for long-term contact, or it may be a brief contact between employees, with the senior employee providing advice or assistance whenever possible or needed. Thus, a librarian of color may find one more layer of isolation if he or she is not aware of or is not included in either formal or informal mentoring. Professional organizations—especially the ethnic library organizations affiliated with ALA—can serve as advocates for their members, largely through enlisting them into conducting work for the organization, although not all potential beneficiaries will be able to take advantage of these opportunities. Such involvement is voluntary and both membership and association work are usually dependent upon the individual paying personal dues and creating a plan of involvement—from attending meetings and conferences to serving on committees and/or election to various offices.

Once hired, the new work environment might be particularly foreign and challenging for the first-generation college graduate who may not have family and/or friends to rely upon for discussing options and receiving other support. This challenge is compounded if the position is a tenure-track academic appointment because of the many responsibilities for teaching, research, and service that come with this career path. Thus, employment might be difficult to obtain and then secure, requiring not only years of education and training but also years of developing an academic-centered resume in order to retain the position and, hopefully, eventually be promoted for increased job security.

This publication is critically important for several reasons. First, it illustrates a librarian publisher's commitment to supporting publication and writing in the area of diversity: this volume is published as a monograph in a Library Juice series on Critical Multiculturalism in Information Studies. Second, this volume offers a valuable opportunity for contributors to enrich the published record while expanding their professional experiences and resumes. Third, the editors and contributors have provided readers with several different perspectives on the topic. Some essays are literature reviews and introduce key writings or theory, such as Critical Race Theory. Others present initiatives as case studies or mention efforts such as the Discovering Librarianship Program, Spectrum, ALA's Emerging Leaders program, the Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians, Miami University's Minority Residence Program within the university libraries, and the Association of Research Libraries' Leadership and Career Development Program. Other chapters are autobiographical statements wherein the authors share their personal career choices. In addition, writers employ several methods in presenting their findings, including survey results, narration, and storytelling.

Finally, *Where Are All the Librarians of Color?* is not the final word on this topic. There are still several gaps in relevant content areas, with much work yet to be accomplished before the successful tenured academic librarian is an option for every librarian's career and the librarian

of color is a reality in each college/university student's daily experience. For example, it might be useful to compare how other disciplinary areas, such as social work and education, have responded to the need to increase diversity among their workers. Another contribution could compare diversity initiatives within the existing programs in LIS, providing details on their selection process, amount of support, requirements, and impact. Researchers might additionally consider the potential for creating a retention and promotion initiative that would mirror the Spectrum Initiative in terms of its level of direct support to the selected librarian and in the visibility and formation of a long-standing, supportive peer cohort. This project might be the focus of a grant proposal or be work conducted through a professional organization. Lastly, the life stories of librarians of color might be tracked over time in order to monitor career progression, identify potential critical points where intervention is needed, and highlight career paths.

INTRODUCTION

Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juárez

When we initially started this book we wanted our ideas to be fresh and new, but we began to hear from a number of colleagues that there were already articles and books that addressed these issues. Why write another book on the same subject, we were often asked? We quickly realized there were two important views we needed to keep in mind before we proceeded; one was that yes, a review of the literature was in order and two, no one ever says there are too many books on information literacy, digitization, Shakespeare, or a myriad of other concerns in the field of librarianship, so why should there not be as many books and articles about diversity? There is a stark need for a corpus of research on the subjects of diversity/multiculturalism: the professional, informational, and digital divide within the library/archival profession. These ideas must also be tested, revised, discussed widely, debated often, and made accessible in as many venues and resources as possible. Diversity is not a settled issue that we can move on from to other concerns; diversity and the consequences of it to the profession, and dare we say the world, are the most consequential and important issue of our time. W.E.B. DuBois said “the color-line is the most important issue of the 20th century” and he was dealing with some powerful issues of racism, Jim Crow institutions, American Nativism, and other systemic and racialized policies of the state when he made his statement. In the

21st century there have been some changes, but many of the gains of the 20th century are being systematically eroded in subtle and more sophisticated efforts. So we say a firm “No!”—diversity has not been addressed enough and this tome will tackle some of these serious issues, with the hope that this work will add to the discussion of these challenges facing the informational fields.

There have been several recent texts devoted to an examination of people of color in academic professions, most notably Gabriella Gutierrez y Muhs recent text *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012), Brett C. Stockdill’s *Transforming the Ivory Tower: Challenging Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia in the Academy* (2012), Christine Stanley’s *Faculty of Color: Teaching in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities* (2006), as well as a few titles that are more specific to the library profession such as Raquel V. Cogell’s *Diversity in Libraries: Academic Residency Programs* (2001), Barbara I. Dewey’s *Achieving Diversity: a How-to-Do-It Manual for Librarians* (2006) and Gregory L. Reese’s *Stop Talking Start Doing! Attracting People of Color to the Library Profession* (1999). The library-related titles focus on the recruitment of librarians of color rather than their experiences after the hiring is over. There have been journal articles that examine various aspects of the experiences of Black librarians such as Joyce Thornton’s 2000 and 2001 articles that looked at job satisfaction for African American female librarians and librarians of African descent respectively. There have also been a few texts that address diversity in the archives profession with the most recent by Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal titled *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion* (2014) and many others that address issues regarding diversification of the historical records and archives. However, there is no single text that addresses the shared experiences of academic librarians or archivists of color, i.e. Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians. These experiences are very similar and offer a narrative that explains the dearth of librarians of color in academia, especially those librarians who have experienced the daunting academic tenure process.

Drawing on the work of the previously mentioned authors, research in this monograph offers a look at the experiences of people of color after the recruitment is over, the diversity box is checked, and the stats are reported. What *is* the retention, job satisfaction, and tenure experience of these librarians of color? We review the literature and look at the history of librarians of color in academia, as well as the obstacles, roles, leadership opportunities, and tenure process for those who endure. What are the recruitment and retention methods employed to create a diverse workforce, and what are the successes and failures? How do we incorporate Critical Race Theory, racial realism, and intersectionality in the experiences of librarians and archivists of color? How does one's performance of their identity and all of its multiple ways, impact their experiences in the information world? These are often difficult concepts to express or explain, but we wanted to address a wide spectrum of experiences for an expected audience that includes public and private academic librarians and archivists, as well as the larger academic community. We see this monograph as an important addition to the scholarship on the experiences of people of color in and outside of the academy.

We chose to divide this book into three sections. In Section One: Setting the Stage for Diversity in the Profession, these crucial essays explore the fundamental issues that must be addressed when we speak about diversity. These essays take a real world approach to resolving issues related to recruitment and retention, mentoring, and strengthening the pipeline. In their essay "Discovering Librarianship: Personalizing the Recruitment Process for Underrepresented Students," **Emily K. Chan, Jovanni Lota, Holly A. Smith** and **Steven D. Booth** focus on four professionals' experiences in an ALA Office for Diversity IMLS funded Discovering Librarianship Program as it relates to strengthening the pipeline, mentoring others, and dealing with community expectations for librarians of color. **Tarida Anantachai, Latrice Booker, Althea Lazzaro** and **Martha Parker's** essay, "Establishing a Communal Network for Professional Advancement among Librarians of Color," examines the ways in which collaborative partnerships among librarians of color,

within and even across institutions, can greatly assist in job satisfaction, retention of professionals, and bolstering librarians' sense of support throughout their careers. The essay also provides specific examples and models in which these collaborations have occurred, including those that the authors have experienced and, in many cases, initiated. **Melody Royster, David Schwieder, Ava Iuliano Brillat, and Lori Driver's** essay, "Mentoring and Retention of Minority Librarians," uses qualitative and quantitative data to explore the ways in which mentoring programs succeed and fail minority librarians, in order to uncover potential strategies for more effective mentorship. By sharing and analyzing the impact that mentoring or the lack thereof has on minority librarians, the authors hope that readers will be more informed and empowered to create and improve mentoring programs to truly support the librarians they seek to serve. **Jason Kelly Alston's** insightful essay looks at how the use of the term *interns* for diversity resident librarians affects their treatment within host institutions. His essay resonates very strongly with our experiences as library residents, as well as with the experiences of a number of our colleagues of color. We conclude Section One with **Agnes Bradshaw's** essay "Strengthening the Pipeline—Talent Management for Libraries: A Human Resources Perspective," which addresses the concept of talent management practices for developing the people who will be needed by the profession, to ensure that the profession is seen as desirable for those from all groups, not just those from one group. Her essay further examines the representation of people of color within the profession and assesses how talent management strategies can be utilized to ensure that librarians of color are included, while ensuring that all groups of the user population are represented in the professional ranks.

We titled Section Two: How Diversity Benefits the Profession because we have all heard the statement, "diversity promotes excellence." These essays seek to address these ideals by detailing tangible ways that statement is proven, but also how, despite tremendous odds, the library and archival professions fall short of acknowledging those benefits. **Shaundra Walker's** essay titled "Critical Race Theory and the Recruitment and Retention of a Librarian of Color: A Counterstory" uses

Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework for recruitment and retention experience of academic librarians of color. She examines the themes of white privilege, interest convergence, and counter-stories to understand the issues of library education for people of color and the history of higher education in America. In **Akilah Nosakhere's** essay "Serving with a Sense of Purpose: A Black Woman Librarian in Rural New Mexico" we learn how an African American woman is able to overcome the reality of deep seated racial and gender biases to create a learning center for students, faculty, and the Carlsbad community at large. She writes about the challenges of being one of very few Black professionals in a predominantly white academic environment and what her presence says about her commitment to the philosophy of service to others. **Vince Lee's** essay, titled "Like a Fish Out of Water, but Forging My Own Path," is one of two essays by archivists. Lee's essay discusses his career from a unique perspective as a Chinese American man who has worked with African American and now women's collections. Lee discusses how working in these two environments gave him an opportunity to reflect not only on preconceived notions and stereotypes of what archivists should serve in which institutions and roles, but also the self-imposed biases and discrimination we have in regards to how we see ourselves and how we fit in to the profession. The last essay in this section is by the co-editor **Rebecca Hankins** and is titled "Racial Realism or Foolish Optimism: An African American Muslim Woman in the Field." It discusses a number of identity issues related to what people of color experience in American society, with a particular focus on Derrick Bell's concept of racial realism. Although this concept could be considered very pessimistic, the author discusses how it really permits people of color the freedom to work from a platform of self-empowerment.

The final section, Section Three: Diverse Personal Stories explores how people have used their diverse experiences to push back against the system, work to build bridges, seek to find equity within their spaces, and tackle the need to go beyond our understanding of diversity. The first essay, titled "The Veteran and the Rookie: Our Story, Our Experience"

written by **Rhonda E. Fowler** and **Karen Rogers-Collins**, is the shared experiences of two African American librarians at a mid-size Midwestern university; one who has spent her career working primarily in academia, the other who has spent her career working in special libraries and is new to academic libraries. **Stacy Brinkman, Jacqueline Johnson, Kwabena Sekyere,** and **Elías Tzoc**'s essay, "DiVeRsItY at Miami University Libraries: Four Unique and Similar Experiences," relates the experiences of five librarians recruited via Miami University Libraries' Minority Residency program in order to increase diversity among its staff and to encourage librarians of color to enter the profession. This essay traces their experiences through this residency program and what has occurred since, including their experiences of moving into permanent positions within the library, receiving promotion and tenure, and one who has moved into the position of Dean and University Librarian. "Building Dialogic Bridges to Diversity: Are We There Yet?" by **Roland Barksdale-Hall** is written from the perspective of an African American culture keeper, library educator, and academic library administrator. He looks at the professional literature, oral histories of African Americans in academia, librarian practitioner journals, case studies, and leadership theory. And if the struggles, trials and tribulations are not enough to dampen the spirit, sometimes librarians need to change direction and do something else, while not totally giving up on the profession. Our final essay, "Making Diversity Work in Academic Libraries" by co-editor **Miguel Juárez**, furthers the dialogue about diversity by focusing on what is not being discussed and how we can broaden the conversation.

The voices presented here expand the dialogue of diversity in academic and public libraries to places diversity has not ventured before. We encourage you to read and re-read these essays and sections; we hope to hear from you as you ponder, analyze, and engage with our stories.

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