



Leading Ideas 15 (July 2000)

DIVERSITY: Where We Are and Where We Came From

[Leading Ideas Home](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[About Leading Ideas](#)

[Diversity Program](#)

[ARL Home](#)

Editor's Note

Diversity, as a national social and political issue, is a recent phenomenon but its very presence has been part of the fabric of the United States since the country's beginnings. In fact, diversity is a prominent thread throughout U.S. history-the introduction of the Spanish explorers to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the influx of European immigrants through Ellis Island, the forced migration of Africans to the Caribbean Islands and southern United States, and the dense settlement of the west coast by Asian immigrants. It is these types of recognizable historical occurrences that have laid the foundation for introducing laws and legal challenges, among other milestones, that have influenced the current state of diversity in the U.S. This article explores how the concept of diversity has been shaped over time-namely through legislative action-and how ARL libraries are responding to changing societal and political pressures.

Sincerely,

DeEtta Jones
Editor

[\(Featured Article\)](#) [\(Top of Page\)](#)

©ARL. Maintained by [ARL Web Administrator](#). Last modified: 26 July 2000.



Diversity: Where We Are and Where We Came From

by DeEtta Jones, Director of ARL Diversity Initiatives
deetta@arl.org | <http://www.arl.org/diversity/>

Leading Ideas
Home

Past Issues

About
Leading
Ideas

Diversity
Program

ARL Home

Diversity: Where We Are and Where We Came From

An exploration of social, legal, and organizational shifts around the subjects of diversity and affirmative action creates a context in which to understand diversity initiatives in libraries. More importantly, a timeline designates familiar touchstones by drawing a more comprehensive picture, composed of individual, manageable parts. The following timeline highlights major occurrences that have determined the current state of affirmative action and other diversity issues in the United States. It, however, includes events that occurred long before the term "affirmative action" was introduced as well as the recent legal rulings and ramifications. These legal actions laid the groundwork for our current engagement of diversity as a broader societal and organizational goal. The programmatic approach to diversity in North American research libraries, which began less than 10 years ago, is discussed following the timeline.

Contents

[Historical Overview](#)

[Diversity in ARL Libraries](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Historical Overview

1863

President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves held in the states that had seceded from the Union. This freedom is dependent upon the Union's victory in the Civil War, which will come two years later, and the Proclamation accepts African American men into the Union Army and Navy, so they can essentially fight for their freedom.

1868

The 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution is enacted. It includes a requirement that in all states there shall be "equal protection of the laws" to all citizens.

1896

The period following emancipation of slaves is filled with conflict.

Ex-slaves, in their quest to establish themselves in freedom, are often met with hostility by whites with no intention of integrating or sharing what was believed to be "theirs." One such instance leads to the court case known as Plessy v. Ferguson, where the Supreme Court interprets the 14th amendment as requiring only "separate but equal" public accommodations. In this case, the separate but equal concept is used to maintain complete racial segregation in public transportation, restaurants, hospitals, schools, and other public facilities.

1941

The United States defense industry grows in preparation for WWII. The leader of the Porters Union, a labor union for railroad porters, A. Phillip Randolph, threatens a "million man march" on Washington, D.C., unless African American men are allowed to work in the defense industry. This threat prompts President Franklin Roosevelt to issue an executive order prohibiting discrimination in hiring in the defense industry. This is the first official government action regarding discrimination in the workplace. At the same time, women are entering the workforce, in support of the defense effort, in record numbers, significantly broadening their role in society.

1945

The United States Armed Services issues an affirmative action policy, the G.I. Bill, which ensures that, upon discharge from the armed services, ex-soldiers have access to educational and career opportunities that many of them would not have had otherwise.

1954

In Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court overrules the "separate but equal" doctrine of 1896, declaring racially segregated schools unconstitutional.

1961

President John F. Kennedy issues Executive Order 10,925, prohibiting federal employment discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, or national origin. The order requires the government to "take affirmative steps to realize more fully the national policy of nondiscrimination," and establishes the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to oversee the adherence to this standard in government agencies.

1964

Congress passes the Civil Rights Act. Titles VI, VII, and IX expand guidelines for nondiscrimination in the workplace to include sex and to encompass the nongovernmental sector as well.

1965

President Lyndon B. Johnson issues Executive Order 11,246, requiring federal contractors to "take affirmative action" toward

prospective minority employees in all aspects of hiring and employment. Contractors must take specific measures to ensure equality in hiring and must document these efforts. On 13 October 1967, the order was amended to cover discrimination on the basis of gender.

1969

President Richard Nixon sets goals for hiring racial minority contractors, pushing federal and state governments to negotiate with and hire minority-owned contracting companies, instead of all white-owned contracting companies. His administration later presses colleges to set goals for increasing the numbers of racial minority students and faculty at their institutions. This is the first use of targeted numeric goals for increasing minority representation.

1972

Congress passes the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, allowing civil lawsuits against companies for discriminatory employment practices. The fear of legal recourse caused by the passage of this Act forces companies to more advanced levels of nondiscrimination-beyond a mere statement and into documented, consistent workplace practices. Congress also passes the Educational Amendments Act of 1972. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded educational institutions, requiring such institutions to take specific steps to encourage individuals of the previously excluded sex to apply for admission. These "specific steps" are the groundwork for more comprehensive affirmative action programs. At this stage, however, they only take sex into consideration.

1978

In *Regents of California v. Bakke*, the U.S. Supreme Court issues a landmark decision on affirmative action, allowing race to be considered among the many factors affecting university admissions. This decision set the precedent for university admissions standards across the U.S. Currently, it is this decision that is being called into question, specifically as California and Texas struggle with using race as a factor in university admissions.

1989

Richmond v. Croson represents the Supreme Court's first application of the "strict scrutiny" standard, ruling that city and state officials may not steer contractors toward minorities, except to make up for a clear history of discrimination and to advance a compelling state interest. This decision is an example of the pressure to contextually define affirmative action.

1990

In *Metro Broadcasting v. F.C.C.*, the Supreme Court reaffirms the

constitutionality of congressionally adopted race-conscious remedies that achieve important governmental diversity objectives.

1991

Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1991 in response to *Wards Cove Packing Co. v. Atonio* (1989) and similar employment discrimination cases. This revised Act reinstates the legitimacy of using statistical disparity to show the occurrence of discrimination and places the burden of proof back on employers. It further recognizes the discrepancy in requiring employees to investigate their own claims of discrimination against an employer.

1992

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 takes effect, prohibiting employers with 15 or more employees from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures and in hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

1993

Upon election, President Clinton institutes the controversial "don't ask, don't tell" policy allowing homosexuals to serve in the armed forces on the condition of silence about their sexual orientation. This policy is a compromise on his earlier campaign promise to entirely lift the ban on gays in the military.

1995

The federally appointed Glass Ceiling Commission confirms the existence of a "glass ceiling" that effectively excludes the advancement of women and minorities, and finds that white men occupy 95-97% of senior management positions in the United States.

1995

What *Croson* was to state- and locally run affirmative action programs, *Adarand Constructors, Inc., v. Peña* is to federal programs. The Court again calls for "strict scrutiny" in determining whether discrimination exists before implementing a federal affirmative action program. "Strict scrutiny" means that affirmative action programs fulfill a "compelling governmental interest," and are "narrowly tailored" to fit the particular situation.

1995 The White House issues guidelines on affirmative action. President Clinton calls for the elimination of any program that "(a) creates a quota; (b) creates preferences for unqualified individuals; (c) creates reverse discrimination; or (d) continues even after its equal opportunity purposes have been achieved."

1996

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reverses and remands the decision of the district court in the Hopwood v. University of Texas (1994/1996) law school case. It challenges that taking race into consideration regarding university admissions, as is the precedence set by Bakke, is a violation of the 14th amendment right to equal protection under the law because additional "points" are given to minority candidates.

1997

A federal appeals courts upholds California's controversial Proposition 209, the first state law to bar affirmative action programs, which had a 30-year history in California.

1998

Initiative 200 is enacted in Washington State. Washington becomes the second state to abolish state affirmative action measures when it passed "I 200," which is similar to California's Proposition 209.

1998

Two white students who were denied admission filed a class-action lawsuit against the University of Michigan, saying it had discriminated against them by using different standards to admit students of different races. The Michigan lawsuit, which is based on the 14th amendment to the Constitution and on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, differs from earlier university suits in key ways. First, it is aimed at an undergraduate admissions policy rather than one at a law school. Second, the lawsuit would hold individual college administrators personally liable for the alleged civil rights violations.

2000

Florida Governor Jeb Bush introduces "One Florida," a plan that replaces current affirmative action programs with a system that bans consideration of race and gender in admissions to the state's 10 public universities. In exchange, it guarantees admission to a state university for the top 20 percent of each high school graduating class-provided the student has taken the necessary college preparatory courses.

Diversity in ARL Libraries

These key pieces of legislation and societal movements to recognize historically marginalized groups have led to a more concerted effort to define and promote diversity. The Association of Research Libraries founded its Diversity Program in 1993, as a formal mechanism for assisting member libraries to recruit and retain minority librarians. Early services to libraries included diversity sensitivity training and forums to exchange recruitment tactics. Diversity programs and committees and diversity officer positions were created within ARL institutions. Staffs around the

U.S. were hosting, often for the first time, diversity awareness workshops. This was also the time of the Hopwood v. University of Texas case, which refocused national attention on the use of affirmative action in admissions and hiring decisions. A passionate discussion, often debate, about the concept of diversity erupted and much action was taken to promote diversity.

Since 1993, the library profession has experienced a number of major changes: a surge in technology, major economic growth, market globalization, and significant demographic shifts. Libraries' resources are stretched between any number of significant projects, all considered of primary importance to the operation and the customer base. Library diversity committees and programs born in the early 1990s experienced a lull in the mid-1990s as staff members became increasingly involved with other projects—primarily new buildings and new systems. As the turn of the century approached, and the affirmative action debate became more of an intellectual exchange, libraries refocused on diversity as an organizational priority. Libraries are including diversity efforts in strategic organizational development activities, with specific goals and measurable results. Further, libraries are acting collectively, through associations and consortia, to enhance recruitment pools and share successful internal programs. Some examples of collective action in ARL libraries are the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, the Leadership and Career Development Program, the University of Minnesota Training Institute for Early Career Professionals of Color, and the Big 12+ Libraries Consortium "Diversity Now: People, Collections, and Services in Academic Libraries" conference.

Early affirmative action legislation and policies focused on a narrow set of groups; over time, the discussion has become more inclusive. To endorse a broad definition of diversity, some libraries have created diversity statements. The University of Michigan is among the pioneers in this work and adopted this language:

Diversity is all the characteristics that can be used to describe humans. We are all diverse in many ways. Unique intersections of these characteristics define each individual's diversity. Examples:

<i>age</i>	<i>marital/partnered status</i>
<i>ancestry</i>	<i>nationality</i>
<i>cognitive style</i>	<i>disability (mental, learning, physical)</i>
<i>cultural background</i>	<i>physical appearance</i>
<i>economic background</i>	<i>political affiliation</i>
<i>ethnicity</i>	<i>race</i>
<i>gender</i>	<i>religious beliefs</i>

*geographic
background
language(s) spoken*

sexual orientation

The Association of Research Libraries also reinforces a broad definition of diversity with the belief that diversity awareness and cross-cultural competence is key to the performance of library staff. However, this broad definition should not detract attention and programmatic energy from equity issues.

Considering individual and group equity means understanding and working affirmatively to amend historical and current misrepresentation. Efforts to ensure equity consider laws and social barriers that limit or deny group access to educational and career opportunities. One of the merits of affirmative action, then, is that it focuses most directly on issues of individual and group equity because its very existence stems from the realization that legalized barriers have created disparity among groups. Understanding the need to keep sight of equity issues in their broader diversity efforts, the University of Michigan created this supplementary statement:

Equity

- *Not everyone faces the same consequences for their diversity.*
- *Issues of difference are closely tied to power, preference, privilege, and discrimination.*
- *Issues of equity are inseparable from issues of diversity.*
- *Equity will require effort, resources, and commitment to both change (structural and cultural) and (continuing) education.*

Conclusion

Library diversity programs and practices are about increasing the diverse representation of life experiences, enhancing the pool of resources available to the profession. When writing on the importance of diverse representation, Hortensia Calvo, Interim Ibero-American Bibliographer at Duke University Libraries, notes, "An area specialist who is also attuned to how information is generated, packaged, distributed, marketed, and sold can provide access to differing realities, voices that capture other experiences in the world." The importance of this point cannot be over-emphasized-the changing demographics of the U.S. and the need to collaborate in a global marketplace necessitate diverse library staff representation, which enhances the library's ability to meet the need of diverse customers.

Aggressive engagement of diversity goals does not require quotas nor promote hiring unqualified candidates. It does take into consideration historical misrepresentation in access to higher education, employment, and social opportunities. Diversity

programs are meant to be just one tool among many for transforming the way we conduct "business as usual." This transformation is unleashing forces-economic, religious, ethnic, political, and social-that both offer opportunities and pose challenges for contemporary society and our work force. Those who thrive in the new, multicultural environment will be those who see clearly that they are no longer merely citizens of an individual nation. They will be sensitive to the fact that they live in a complex, interdependent world in which individuals are part of an increasingly global community.

[\(Editor's Note\) \(Top of Page\)](#)

©ARL. Maintained by [ARL Web Administrator](#). Last modified: July 26, 2000.