



## Leading Ideas:

### *Implementing Post-Master's Residency Programs*

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- [\*Implementing Post-Master's Residency Programs\*](#)  
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#### *Editor's Note*

Libraries are competing to recruit talented individuals to their organizations who represent the dynamism and diversity of the profession and its customer base. Library administrators want to develop mechanisms that ensure the availability of a sufficient pool of talent for future hiring needs. Of particular concern for administrators of academic and research libraries is recruiting to and placement of entry-level minority librarians when recent trends show that the greater proportion of minority MLS graduates chose careers, at least initially, in public and special libraries rather than in academic and research libraries.

Some libraries are developing, implementing, and recommending programs to recruit librarians from underrepresented groups specifically to ARL libraries. One programmatic suggestion is the investigation and development of a Librarians-in-Residence program. Residency programs provide invaluable career development opportunities to new library professionals as well as innovative means for libraries to achieve organizational objectives. Several ARL libraries have implemented residency programs in the past few decades. The programs attract highly-talented and motivated new professionals who are committed to continuing professional development. In return, residency programs enhance libraries' flexibility to experiment with new approaches to project and position development. In many cases, residents assist libraries to pursue emerging trends and the latest technology applications.

Residency programs are also attractive in this current environment when libraries are undergoing great change due to evolving organizational structures, impact of technology, and resource reallocation. Although not solely geared toward minority librarian recruitment, at this juncture Post-Master's Residency Programs are an increasingly attractive and successful method for academic and research libraries to introduce opportunities for careers to entry-level minority librarians.

Sincerely,  
[DeEtta Jones](#), Editor  
ARL Program Officer For Diversity

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## *Leading Ideas:*

# **Implementing Post-Master's Residency Programs**

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Residency programs provide invaluable career development opportunities to new library professionals as well as innovative means for libraries to achieve organizational objectives. Several ARL libraries have implemented residency programs in the past few decades. The programs attract highly-talented and highly-motivated new professionals who are committed to continuing professional development. In return, residency programs enhance libraries' flexibility to meet organizational objectives and experimentation with new ideas. In many cases, residents assist libraries pursue emerging trends and the latest technology applications.

This article summarizes the comments and observations of residents and program coordinators who participated in the ARL seminars, "Implementing Post-Master's Residency Programs," on July 9, 1996 and September 26-27, 1998. Seminar participants exchanged many valuable ideas related to recruitment, professional development, and program assessment. Although each of the programs represented at the seminar differed in focus, scale, and structure, the implementation strategies and suggestions were valuable. This information will be of interest to ARL libraries desiring to start new residency programs.

### **Getting Started**

As with any new endeavor, it's important to gather relevant information from a variety of sources. A bibliography of readings and list of web pages related to residency programs is attached. When gathering information, be sure to consider different perspectives, such as those of residents, library educators, and host institutions. Contact program coordinators at other institutions for more specific information. In addition, take time to investigate other professional training programs at your institution. Large institutions such as the Smithsonian have a variety of professional training programs, not just for librarians. Look into fellowship programs on campus or in professional associations such as the American Library Association for ideas related to planning and recruitment.

Second, involve library staff in the planning process. When exploring the feasibility of a residency program, feedback from staff is essential. Successful residency programs require broad support from staff at all levels of the organization. Staff input early in the planning process will help build interest in the program. Take time to communicate how the program will benefit the library, as well as residents and the library profession at large. Discussions with staff often provide some of the most creative ideas and identify some of the less obvious stumbling blocks. It's best not to be too concrete when exploring the idea of a residency program. Administrators sometimes make decisions too early in the planning process before library staff have had a chance to respond. Consider working with a staff organization or library committee in the planning process. Use the names of committee members on the program proposal to document the breadth of input and support.

Third, define the focus, scale, and structure of program. What do you hope to accomplish with the

residency? Is it primarily a training program for specialized professional skills, a generalist position for short-term or experimental assignments, a means of accelerating the acculturation process into a complex organization, a jump-start on the faculty tenure process, a minority recruitment strategy, or a combination of several objectives? Be honest and be specific. Do not start a program if there is confusion or disagreement about the focus.

If minority recruitment is a program objective, be sure it is also an institutional priority. You want to ensure the most supportive environment that enables residents to succeed. If minority issues are tense on campus, perhaps other library diversity initiatives should be addressed first. A minority residency should never be the only element of a library diversity program. When recruiting for a minority resident, define what diversity means at your institution. Is the goal to expand ethnic, gender, or other minority groups' representation? To be successful, minority recruitment programs must be designed with operational priorities in mind. Like any other residency, they must be attached to something vital that needs to be done, such as a new initiative.

The focus of the program affects its scale and structure. How many residents will you hire at one time? Most programs hire one to three residents at a time. A few programs hire groups of five to seven residents per year. When you have a larger residency program, you can achieve group projects and create collaborative learning opportunities. On the other hand, single residents get integrated more quickly into the library staff. Overlapping first-year and second-year residents is an alternative for creating a supportive environment in a smaller program.

The structure of many residencies started as a rotation model. Residents rotated through many different areas of the library, gaining exposure to a breadth of professional activities. However, without significant work applications, some libraries found this model did not provide enough substantial experience for the resident or benefit to the organization. The purpose of a residency program is to help the library move ahead. Many resident programs now provide a "portfolio of assignments": the resident is assigned to a number of complementary areas and provides leadership on inter-departmental projects. This model is more reflective of the nature of work in large academic libraries. The National Library of Medicine's residency program is structured as a "scholar" model. The NLM Associates focuses exclusively on training new graduates for careers in medical librarianship.

The final step in planning is to identify funding and other resources. Funding new programs can often be a barrier. Some institutions set aside specific budget lines for the residency program, whereas others may get matching funds from the parent organization. When planning, be sure to consider indirect costs as well as how the program will tie into other library initiatives, such as professional development, recruitment, and diversity education programs.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

In general, the recruitment process for resident positions should mirror that of other professional searches. Additional steps may be needed to specifically target new graduates. Sending information about the program to ALA and SLA student chapters is one strategy. Also, distribute brochures along with job announcements to admission/placement officers in library schools. Brochures often get posted on bulletin boards and help educate faculty and students about residency programs. Send separate letters to deans of library schools soliciting nominations. This practice often yields applications from some of the best students. Contact former residents to assist with recruitment. Former residents are the best-informed and most enthusiastic recruiters; be sure they have current information about the program. Minority residencies require more active recruitment strategies. Target caucus newsletters. Take time at ALA to network and communicate information about the program.

When writing an advertisement for a resident position, be sure to clarify whether or not it is a minority recruitment program. Provide a clear description of the program, including the focus, size, and structure of the residency, as well as the library's training commitment. Clarify what you are looking for in a successful candidate. Remember, job qualifications should match program design and structure. For example, if the purpose of the program is to assist new librarians in the tenure process, candidates must

demonstrate interest in research and publication. Since residencies are entry-level positions, be flexible with requirements and avoid unnecessary preferences. Candidates with previous ARL experience are often given preference. Consider residents with previous work experience in public, school, or special libraries. Older graduates with previous paraprofessional experience in other library settings have a lot to offer.

Give information on what to include in the application packet and cover letter. Some residencies require short essays and transcripts. Offer to send an information packet or brochure to interested applicants upon request. Information describing the community, campus, and quality of life is always of interest. Also, communicate information about the recruitment process. For example, let candidates know if there will be a telephone interview followed by an on-site interview.

If you plan to conduct telephone interviews, be sure to schedule them in advance. This gives the candidate opportunity to self-eliminate before visit. Provide some structure to the conference call if more than one person is on each end. Identify all participants in the telephone interview. Arrange for one person to take primary responsibility for note-taking while the other asks questions. Be sure to notify candidates of their status following a telephone interview.

When arranging interviews, be sure to clarify how expenses will be handled. If candidates must retain receipts for later reimbursement be sure to tell them in advance. Follow up travel arrangements with a confirming letter and interview schedule. Help candidates understand which periods of the interview are informational, which are formal, and which are social.

On-site interviews for most residency searches typically last one or one-and-a-half days. Be sure to include other new librarians and minorities in the search process. Identify an escort for the candidate to take care of personal needs during the interview day. Communicate information about the institution and organizational culture to candidates. Inform candidates of the factors that will be considered in making assignments. Before candidates leave, let them know what to expect next in the search process.

### **Creating Learning Opportunities**

Individual job assignments provide the most valuable learning opportunities for residents. Evaluate job assignments for the type of skills and experiences they provide residents, as well as how they contribute to the library. Residents should feel they have increased their professional abilities and made a contribution to the library. When arranging resident assignments, be sure the staff they will be working with can provide appropriate time and support. Poorly planned resident assignments can be a disaster.

Staff who work with residents need to be aware of the special stresses and conflicts inherent in residency positions. If your library does not typically hire entry-level librarians, take time to work with supervisors so they are prepared to supervise beginning librarians. Assisting staff and supervisors to develop effective mentoring skills will enhance the quality of the learning opportunities available in the residency program. Mentoring needs to be an organizational value--build mentoring training into supervisory and leadership development programs. Mentoring and good supervision go hand in hand.

Residents have a primary responsibility in creating and taking advantage of learning opportunities. They may also need assistance in identifying and developing mentoring relationships. Residents will encounter different models of supervision and management in different units, so they need to know what they want and how to develop effective relationships. One program requires residents and mentors to develop career plans together. Another program solicits staff volunteers who are willing to be shadowed in their jobs. Remind residents that people often have multiple formal and informal mentors.

Performance appraisals are a traditional means of assessing and documenting professional growth. One program requires residents to write a brief summary and comment on each of the first year assignments. After reviewing the resident's summary, supervisors attach their own written comments. In the second year, residents participate in the same annual review process as other librarians.

Seminar series are key components of many larger residency programs. Seminar topics often address current issues and emerging trends in academic libraries. Navigating ALA, interviewing skills, and résumé writing are common seminar topics. Speakers may include library staff, administrators, and guests. Some programs include field trips to the Library of Congress and other research libraries. In smaller programs, residents are encouraged to network with residents in other programs. Meetings at ALA, BCALA, and the University of Minnesota Training Institute for Library Science Interns and Residents facilitate these learning opportunities. In addition, one program requires residents to keep a journal of their experiences during the two years. Although they are not required to turn them in, journals serve as valuable learning tools.

As a note of caution, be careful not to make too many special exceptions for residents. Several program coordinators extend learning opportunities originally designed for residents to other librarians, especially other entry-level librarians, whenever possible. This reduces unnecessary differences and possible resentment. It also enhances the library's training and development program. Providing residents equivalent travel support with other librarians is also important.

### **Program Assessment**

What is the value of the residency program? How has the library better achieved its mission as a result of the residency program? Assessment is essential to understanding whether a program is achieving its objectives. The assessment process begins with a review of the program goals. Each component of the program--such as the interview process, the seminar series, and placement assistance--should be evaluated. It is also important to itemize costs. In addition to the resident's salary and travel allotments, be sure to include staff time--for all staff who contribute to the program--as well as equipment, supplies, and other indirect costs.

One measure of success is how many residents are placed in appropriate positions at the end of the program. To ensure successful placement, program coordinators must understand what skills and experiences are needed by future employers. What does the library community need? What does the library profession need in the next five years? As new graduates, residents often focus on short-term skills. Program coordinators need to assist residents in recognizing the broader skills and experiences they are developing that will transfer to other positions and serve them throughout their careers.

Exit interviews are one strategy for assessing the program from the resident's perspective. Did residents achieve the goals they set out at the beginning of the program? Do they feel they had sufficient input in the design of their residency? Asking residents to write a brief summary of their residency experience is another strategy for documenting the history of the program for future assessments. Longitudinal reviews of former residents five and ten years after leaving the program are done much less frequently, but provide valuable information. Contacting employers of former residents would create the most complete picture of the impact of the residency experience. It would be ideal to also measure the career paths of candidates who interviewed for the residency, but instead took traditional entry-level positions elsewhere.

Involving staff in program assessment is also important. Continuing staff interest and support for the residency program is one indicator of success. The level of staff knowledge of the program and the distribution of staff participation in the program are other indicators. Is it always the same people or departments creating learning opportunities? Do new library staff receive an orientation to the residency program? The process of conducting a staff assessment may further the goal of keeping a program current and viable.

Assessing the program from the program coordinator's perspective should be an ongoing process. The program coordinator's experiences and lessons learned must be captured. This information is especially important when program coordinators change. Limiting how long one person coordinates a program may be a positive outcome of an assessment.

### **Summary**

Academic libraries have a variety of strategies and choices in implementing residency programs to meet their specific organizational needs. The key to designing a successful residency program is knowing the culture and priorities of your organization. Successful programs enable both the resident and the library to achieve their goals. Post-master's residency programs provide opportunities for new graduates to gain substantial professional experience and accelerated training at the beginning of their careers that are not generally available in traditional entry-level positions. Academic and research libraries benefit from residency programs by having available to them a continuous pool of talented, well-prepared, new professionals. Given the highly specialized nature of positions in academic and research libraries, access to and recruitment for careers in these areas will always be difficult. Residency programs address both these concerns as well as attract minority librarians to careers in academic and research libraries. Finally, residency programs may offer a new flexibility to large academic and research libraries. The availability of temporary, new professionals allows large organizations the opportunity to respond to quickly shifting priorities. Some libraries use residency assignments as opportunities to experiment with the design of new positions and services. These positions can be used to address emerging human resource needs, allowing for flexibility in rapidly changing organizations.

Having unique residency programs in different ARL libraries is a benefit to the academic library community. Resident programs do not need to mirror each other. Residents and libraries benefit from all types of post-master's residency programs.

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### **Planning Questions**

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How will the program help the library move ahead?
- How will the resident benefit from the program?
- How will it contribute to the academic library community?
- What type of resources are available (financial, staff time, space, equipment, etc.)?
- Who will coordinate the program?
- How many residents will be hired at one time?
- How will resident assignments be designed?
- Is mentoring an organizational value?
- What is the level of staff interest and support?
- How will the program be evaluated?

### *For Minority Recruitment Programs:*

- Is minority recruitment an institutional priority?
- What is the climate for race relations on campus?

- How does it fit in the overall library diversity program?

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## Related Web Pages

National Library of Medicine Associate Fellowship Program

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/about/training/associate/>

University of Delaware Library, Pauline A. Young Residency

<http://www2.lib.udel.edu/personnel/brochure.htm>

University of Illinois at Chicago Academic Resident Librarian Program

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/admin/residents>

University of Massachusetts Amherst Research Library Residency Program

<http://www.library.umass.edu/residency/>

University of Minnesota Libraries Training Institute for Library Science Interns and Residents

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/about/institute.html> (*page no longer available*)

University of Pittsburgh School of Information Sciences and University Library System, Minority Librarian Fellowship and Residency Program

<http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~lsdept/fellowship.html>

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