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ARL Recruits Minority Undergraduates to Research Librarianship

by Jerome Offord, Jr., Program Officer for Training and Diversity, ARL

To recruit minorities into careers as research librarians, ARL is launching an outreach program focused on minority undergraduates. This new program includes building linkages with minority-serving institutions (MSIs) and pilot-testing a research library internship and mentoring program that encourages minority undergraduates to pursue graduate library education and prepares them for roles in research libraries.

The U.S. academic and research library workforce has not kept pace with the nation's changing demographics. In spite of institutional and national recruitment efforts to build diversity within research library staff, the *ARL Annual Salary Survey 2003-2004* reports that minorities comprise only 12.8% of the professional staffs in major U.S. academic libraries (Asian/Pacific Islanders 5.8%, African Americans 4.3%, Hispanics 2.5%, and American Indian/Native Alaskan 0.3%).¹ Combined with the low numbers of minority librarians, librarianship is facing an aging workforce that will shrink due to retirements unless new librarians continue to be recruited into the profession. According to a report prepared for ARL by Stanley Wilder, 25 percent of the professional staff working in ARL libraries in 2000 was age 55 and over.² And Wilder notes that "new professionals should be the population's primary source of young people...but the increased age of library school students led to a comparable increase in the age of new professionals in the ARL population. From 1986 to 2000, the percentage of new professionals age 45 and over rose from 9 percent to 16 percent."³

This new initiative will allow ARL member libraries to aggressively and strategically address minority recruitment and retention. By attracting undergraduate minority students into librarianship, this approach will allow young librarians to impact the library community not only as minority librarians but also by expanding the age range of M.L.S. students. As the target population will most likely complete their M.L.S. by the age of 23, this model will have an impact on the overall age of the profession and will expand the years of their service to the profession.

The foundation for this new effort involves building relationships between the ARL Diversity program and MSIs to raise awareness of librarianship as a career at these institutions. In *Stop Talking and Start Doing: Attracting People of Color to the Library Profession*, authors Reese and Hawkins state, "If your goal is to successfully provide a service or deliver a message to [a minority] community, you must go to and become involved in [that] community. You must take time to learn the culture and lifestyle of the minority population with which you are attempting to make contact."⁴ Acting in this spirit, ARL is developing a targeted marketing program that will include face-to-face visits and one-on-one conversations with students at MSIs as well as professionals in the campus career centers and libraries of those institutions. The agenda for the visits includes an introduction to what it means to be a research librarian and the resources available to those pursuing this as a career, including those resources available from ARL.

A New, Expanded Model for Minority Recruitment and Retention

Adding this focus to recruit from undergraduate age groups complements and extends the ARL Diversity program's current portfolio of offering stipends to minority students for library graduate education and offering leadership training for those who successfully demonstrate potential during their first five professional years. This new model for minority recruitment and retention provides for [five stages](#) when ARL and/or one of its participating member libraries will have structured contact with an actual or potential candidate. The initial contact begins as early as a candidate's junior year and extends through their graduate education and well into their years as a professional in an ARL library.

Stage I: Librarian Internship Program

ARL will pilot a Librarian Internship Program at Washington University in St. Louis in June 2004. The Librarian Internship Program is a 10-week comprehensive internship for minority undergraduates from Lincoln University--an 1890 land-grant historically black university in Missouri--who are interested in pursuing careers in research libraries. Interns will learn about the day-to-day responsibilities of a librarian, which will include working in public and technical services, and include such duties as planning and executing the move of a collection. Librarians at Washington University will mentor this pilot group of students during the internship program.

ARL is proposing to add a leadership component to the internship program in future years. This leadership component will take place during the summer, when the interns will attend an ARL-sponsored National Leadership Summit (NLS), held in conjunction with the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference, where students will experience librarianship at the national level. They will have an opportunity to meet library leaders, attend minority caucuses and meetings, and meet a mentor. Mentors will be drawn from previous classes of the ARL Leadership and Career Development Program and from pools of other interested ARL librarians who can commit to the program and offer students a genuine mentoring relationship.

Students and mentors will develop a detailed one-year plan, which will document a timeline to guide the students through the selection of graduate schools, including the application process. At the conclusion of their summer internship experience, students will return to their home institutions for their senior year and work as library aides in their campus libraries. The internship will give each student an opportunity to work in two different academic libraries, exposure to librarianship on a national level, and a mentor to help navigate the options available for a graduate degree in library science.

Stage II: Applying to Graduate School

During their senior year, students will continue to be in contact with their mentors, who will guide them through their structured plans created during the internship. Mentors will encourage students to apply to a minimum of two ALA-accredited M.L.S. programs.

Stage III: Funding and Mentoring during Graduate School

Upon being accepted into an M.L.S. program, mentors and ARL will encourage these students to participate in ARL's Initiative to Recruit A Diverse Workforce, which offers stipends to minority students to help them attend ALA-accredited M.L.S. programs. ARL and mentors will continue to work with students and encourage them to apply to other professional leadership and/or scholarship programs for minorities. Students will be encouraged to participate in student chapters of library associations while in library school. ARL will encourage participants to submit their résumés to the ARL M.L.S. Graduate Student Résumé Database and to search for positions on the ARL Career Resources Web site.⁵ More importantly, mentors will advise the students in their search for their first professional jobs in research libraries.

Stage IV: Developing a Career Plan

After earning the M.L.S., new professionals and mentors will continue their relationship to develop career plans and discuss opportunities for publishing, professional development, and participation in professional associations. Mentors could promote involvement in new leadership and development programs for minorities. Also, new professionals are encouraged to mentor undergraduate students entering at Stages I and II. During Stage IV, new professionals will discuss their careers with their mentors and map out career plans covering the first five years of their professional experience. These conversations should include post-M.L.S. training, certificate programs, and being a generalist vs. a subject specialist. Mentors will stress the importance of new professionals finding ways and time to stay in tune with the current trends, issues, and needs of the profession.

Stage V: Leadership and Career Development Program

After their first five years in the profession, ARL will encourage professionals who demonstrate aptitude to apply to the Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP), which prepares midcareer minority librarians for leadership roles. LCDP participants will

receive a new mentor at the director's level, and begin to develop ideas and concepts around leadership, management skills, upward mobility, scholarly publishing, and career development. Upon completion of the LCDP, professionals will begin mentoring graduate students and new professionals by teaching them the very skills they learned from their own ARL mentoring experiences.

Ultimately this minority recruitment and retention model will enhance the success of research libraries. As Reese and Hawkins note, "Combining mentoring with the issue of increasing diversity in a profession only makes good sense....The properly mentored employee is able to make the transition from outsider to insider more easily, to become initiated into his or her job more quickly, to establish new interpersonal skills more effortlessly, to discover his or her role in the organization more clearly, to find congruence between self-evaluation and organizational evaluation of his or her work performance more accurately, and to resolve conflicts more readily."⁶ The success of this program will depend on volunteer mentors from many levels within research libraries. ARL will offer resources to help prepare librarians to develop these mentoring relationships. Some stages of this expanded model for minority recruitment and retention are still in the early phase of design. While each stage will develop further with experience, the foundations are being built for an outreach program with significant long-term potential for increasing the number of young minorities pursuing careers in research libraries.

To learn how you or your library can participate in any of these programs, please contact Jerome Offord, Jr., at <jerome@arl.org> or (202) 296-2296.

Footnotes

1. Martha Kyrillidou and Mark Young, *ARL Annual Salary Survey 2003-2004* (Washington, D.C.: ARL, 2004): 8. [back to text](#)
2. Stanley J. Wilder, *Demographic Change in Academic Librarianship* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2003): xiv. [back to text](#)
3. Ibid., xv. [back to text](#)
4. Gregory L. Reese and Ernestine L. Hawkins, *Stop Talking and Start Doing: Attracting People of Color to the Library Profession* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1999): 37. [back to text](#)
5. See the ARL Graduate Student Résumé Database <<https://db.arl.org/careers/res/submit.html>> and ARL Career Resources Web site <<https://db.arl.org/careers/>>. [back to text](#)
6. Reese and Hawkins, *Stop Talking and Start Doing*, 23 and 26. [back to text](#)

Faces of a Profession @ Your Library

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and ARL joined forces to create a recruitment video to promote research librarianship. The ACRL/ARL video, "Faces of a Profession @ Your Library," can be used as a recruitment tool and is available as a video stream and/or downloadable file. This video is a product of the ACRL and ARL Joint Task Force for Recruitment into the Profession. For more information about ACRL and ARL's recruitment and outreach efforts, please visit their respective Web sites at

<http://www.acrl.org/>> and <http://www.arl.org/careers/>>.

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Offord, Jerome, Jr. "ARL Recruits Minority Undergraduates to Research Librarianship." *ARL*, no. 233 (April 2004): 4-6. <http://www.arl.org/newsltr/233/recruit.html>.

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