In September 2012, the second Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) was convened by the ethnic caucuses of the American Library Association (ALA) in Kansas City, Missouri. This issue of Synergy includes reports from several past ARL diversity and leadership program participants on their roles at the conference, as well as important take-aways from the event.

Alexandra Rivera, LCDP fellow from the “Luminary” class of 2011–2012, discusses recent updates to ALA’s *Diversity Counts* reports and the implications for recruitment and retention within the profession. Rivera calls for stakeholders to act, taking a multi-pronged approach to improve organizational climate, commit to staff development, and establish or improve cultural competencies.

Jade Alburo, 2006 diversity scholar, reflects on her role as a JCLC plenary speaker and panelist. Alburo asserts that people from minority groups are not fully cognizant of the extent to which racial and ethnic minorities are diverse even within their own identifications.

Makiba Foster, 2006 diversity scholar, compares her first JCLC conference, as a student, with her second, as a professional librarian with several years of experience. Foster addresses how both conferences were a source of renewal for her, although in different ways given professional and personal changes that have occurred.

Finally, Lisa Chow, 2007 diversity scholar, and Latanya Jenkins, 2005 diversity scholar, share their experience as conference panelists looking at methodologies, strengths, and challenges associated with diversity recruitment programs. The panel included an interactive session for attendees, who developed strategies for designing and implementing recruitment programs to ensure sustainability and maximum impact.

The second JCLC offered a vital opportunity to discuss principles of diversity and inclusion within the profession. The conference also provided a venue for a reunion of many ARL diversity program participants. These events are as critical to professional renewal and personal and collective recommitment as they are to strengthening and expanding our community of advocates. I know you will enjoy reading about these experiences at the second national JCLC.

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About the ARL Diversity Programs

The ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and ARL member libraries, offers a stipend of up to $10,000 to each ARL Diversity Scholar in support of graduate library and information science education. ARL Diversity Scholars participate in the annual ARL Leadership Symposium, a research library visit hosted by the Purdue University Libraries, and a mentoring relationship with a research library professional. For more information about the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, visit www.arl.org/irdw.

The ARL/Music Library Association (MLA) Diversity and Inclusion Initiative (DII), funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, MLA, and ARL member libraries, seeks to recruit diverse students with advanced degrees in music to careers in academic and research libraries. The program offers tuition support and a paid internship for up to one year in one of five partner music/research libraries. Other components of the ARL/MLA DII include a formal mentor program and support to attend the MLA annual conference where participants will receive specialized instruction in the areas of career development and effective job-search strategies. More information about the program can be found at: www.arl.org/arl-mla-dii.

The ARL Career Enhancement Program (CEP), funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and ARL member libraries, offers MLIS graduate students from underrepresented groups an opportunity to jump-start their careers in research libraries by providing a robust internship experience in an ARL member library. Each CEP fellow participates in a six- to twelve-week paid internship in an ARL library, a mentoring relationship with a professional librarian while on campus for the internship, and an opportunity to attend the annual ARL Leadership Symposium during the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting. There is also potential for academic credit for the practical intern. For more information about the ARL Career Enhancement Program, visit www.arl.org/cep.

The ARL Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP) is an 18-month program to prepare midcareer librarians from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to take on increasingly demanding leadership roles in ARL libraries. The LCDP design includes: two LCDP Institutes, an opening and closing event held in conjunction with national professional meetings, a career-coaching relationship with an ARL library director or staff member, and a personalized visit to an ARL member library. For more information about the LCDP, visit www.arl.org/lcdp.

Mark A. Puente is the director of diversity and leadership programs for ARL, a position he has held since March 2009. Mark came to ARL from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he was coordinator of digital projects and special/gift collections for the Music and Performing Arts Library.
Alexandra Rivera is the University of Michigan (UM) Library’s student enrichment and community outreach librarian charged with cultivating partnerships between the library, university, and broader community. Key areas of focus include library liaison to the UM’s Detroit Center and coordinating the library’s Peer Information Counseling Program and K-12 Initiatives.

Alexandra is chair of ALA’s Committee on Diversity and was co-chair of the ACRL University Libraries Section’s Academic Outreach Committee, and REFORMA’s representative on the Executive Steering Committee for the 2012 Joint Conference of Librarians of Color.

She is an ARL LCDP Fellow 2011–12, ALA Spectrum Scholar 2001, and alum of the Minnesota Leadership Institute 2006. She has a BS degree in communications from Northern Arizona University and an MLS from the University of Michigan.

Diversity Counts Report 2012: A Renewed Call to Action

With the release of Diversity Counts (2012), the American Library Association (ALA) updated its 2007 comprehensive study of gender, race, and age in the library workforce. The 2007 report served as a critical tool that provided urgently needed data illustrating the lack of diversity within the library profession. A simple search of “Diversity Counts” in Google Scholar shows this title included in “about 76 results.” The number of publications citing Diversity Counts demonstrates the need for these data in support of research and subsequent recruitment and retention activities within the profession. Likewise, the new Diversity Counts report is necessary to gauge the progress of our many initiatives and to serve as a guide for rethinking current practices and re-dedicating ourselves to diversity within our ranks.

In 2005, the US Census Bureau adopted the American Community Census survey to replace the decennial Census long-form questionnaire, which had served as the basis for the 2007 Diversity Counts. As a result, it is not feasible to do a precise comparison of the two Diversity Counts studies. This new report may seem less comprehensive because the data have not been interpreted with the specificity of the 2007 report. Instead, a general description of how the data were compiled along with the actual 2009–2010 and 2000 data tables are provided for analysis and use. For greater detail regarding the compilation of this report, please visit the ALA website to view the Diversity Counts 2009–2010 Update1. This report underscores the need for all librarians to take greater responsibility for the interpretation of the data and, more importantly, for all stakeholders to both independently and collaboratively act on what is learned.

It is known that diversity benefits organizations, individuals, and, specifically, libraries in numerous ways. Fostering diversity in the world around and within communities is a challenge reliant on both large- and small-scale initiatives. The Diversity Counts has been used extensively by “many researchers, program managers, and advocates as a tool to demonstrate the need for increased diversity recruitment within the profession”.2 The 2012 study underscores the need for additional research, greater recruitment efforts, and, most critically, a focus on retention throughout the profession.

There are many programs designed to build a diverse workforce. Recruitment to library schools has been greatly assisted by large programs such as ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program and smaller initiatives like the University of Arizona’s Knowledge River Program that have meticulously prepared minorities to enter and, more importantly, contribute to the profession.

Additional efforts are needed; an expansion of library school curriculum to incorporate cultural competencies to train all students to more effectively collaborate in a global environment and improve workplace climate is but one example. And retention of this burgeoning workforce should be of primary concern. Tracie Hall speaks about minority librarians choosing to leave the profession in much greater percentages than their white colleagues.3 There seems to be a revolving door with almost as many minority librarians leaving as are entering the profession. While additional research is required in the area of diverse workforce persistence, organizational development research supports the premise that organizational climate that fosters a culture of diversity is the key to retaining a diverse workforce. Improving organizational climate will successfully ensure that not only culturally diverse librarians but also all employees within the organization persist, thrive, and contribute to the betterment of the organization and the profession.

Organizational climate is informed by both macro and micro practice within that organization. There are many tools
designed to improve organizational culture and climate that can be implemented by organizations/institutions as well as individuals. A well-defined and publicly articulated value of diversity should serve as the backbone for an organizational climate that respects diversity. This value should be manifested in a strong human resources department, optimally with organizational development expertise that instills trust throughout the organization. Among the many tools for improving organizational culture are:

1. Appointing or utilizing an ombudsman to serve as an intermediary to help address conflict within an organization and foster an environment of trust
2. Engaging in a climate assessment such as the Association of Research Libraries ClimateQUAL survey that allows institutions to gauge their own climate-related issues and identify root causes and tailored solutions
3. Implementing a 360° performance-assessment process for management, enabling staff to provide feedback about how to improve their own organizational practices
4. Establishing a diversity committee to advise administration on issues of diversity and climate, help with the development of a culturally competent library staff, and develop programming that links cultural competencies to organizational priorities
5. Investing in the professional development of new and culturally diverse employees as an element of succession planning. This also a means to diversify leadership at all levels of the organization through participation of librarians of color in leadership development initiatives like those offered by the Association of Research Libraries.
6. Utilizing cultural competencies such as those developed by the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee of the Association of College and Research Libraries which are easily adapted for use by all library types and organizations. These competencies should be equally valued as other work competencies, utilized in recruitment efforts and as a basis for promotion.

Individuals have equal responsibility to assist in improving organizational climate. It is important as professionals that we take advantage of organizational opportunities and engage within institutions and the broader profession to raise awareness of issues of equity and diversity. This includes lifelong learning through professional development experiences to improve individuals and the profession. Librarians should commit to making use of available networks and tools and, of course, acquiring and developing individual cultural competencies. State-wide or regional activities, such as a regional Joint Conference of Librarians of Color organized by consortia, state library associations, ethnic caucus chapters or even a group of interested and motivated individuals, would make opportunities for professional engagement more easily available to individuals who may be experiencing financial or other constraints. Let’s utilize the ARL Diversity network to mobilize for this important work and provide support for and collaboration with one another’s initiatives.

As library professionals and future leaders, we need to review, analyze, and interpret the new *Diversity Counts* report for ourselves and then we need to act! Working within our organizations and as individuals, we can shift the profession to reflect local, regional, national and global diversity in order to remain relevant and integral to the communities we serve.

**Endnotes**

2. Ibid.
Recommended Reading


Jade Alburo is the librarian for Southeast Asian studies, Pacific Islands studies, and religion at UCLA’s Young Research Library and is currently the president of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA). Prior to joining UCLA, she was a reference librarian in the Humanities and Social Sciences Division of the Library of Congress and a Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance (CIRLA) fellow at the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. She holds an MLS from the University of Maryland, College Park, an MA in folklore from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and a BA in English and religious studies from the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to APALA, Jade is active in ALA and ACRL, is an ARL Diversity Scholar, an ALA Emerging Leader, and an ALA Spectrum Scholar.

Celebrating Diversity and Embracing Community at JCLC 2

When the first Joint of Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) took place in 2006, I was still a student. Although I wanted to attend, finishing the last semester of library school and limited funds meant that I was not able to travel to Dallas, Texas, the site of the conference. Afterwards, I heard such good things about the meeting that I had been looking forward to the next JCLC ever since.

When the dates for the second JCLC were announced, I made certain I could attend. Not only was I able to attend, but I played a very active role. I organized and presented on a panel, entitled “Beyond the Mainland: Serving Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders” (NHPIs), that focused on the information needs of NHPIs and some of the efforts to address these needs. I was also part of “Librarian Involvement in Diversity: Community Building, Outreach and Student Success”, a lightning-round panel on library and outreach programs to underrepresented students.

My most important role at JCLC, however, was as president of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA). As JCLC is sponsored by the five American Library Association (ALA) ethnic caucuses, I almost felt like this was our very own party, and I was one of the hostesses. And I actually did play hostess—during the APALA reception—where I greeted and mingled with old and new APALA members, as well as non-members. It was a wonderful opportunity to talk to veteran librarians, new librarians, library students, and authors. It was especially nice to put faces to those whose names I had only heard of or seen in print.

As with most conferences, I find these kinds of informal gatherings to be the best part. Events such as these are where we can truly share our stories and create and embrace community. For a student or new librarian, the main library conferences are overwhelming, even intimidating. The comparatively intimate size of JCLC makes it more manageable and welcoming. And I hope that, even if in a very small way, the APALA reception provided an open and friendly environment for everyone, especially for our younger or newer colleagues.

Although there were certainly plenty of celebratory and fun programs and activities, JCLC was not a party. It was a serious conference that focused on the experiences of underrepresented information professionals, as well as on programs and services specifically geared towards diverse populations. Unlike other conferences where diversity is a peripheral issue, this is one conference where diversity is central. None of us had to explain the need for reaching out to minority populations or for supporting librarians of color—everyone understood that. Instead, Not only could we discuss diversity issues openly, but we were also able to concentrate on learning from one another about our various efforts and successes.

Though JCLC attendees are all diversity advocates, it is often easy to forget that not everyone knows about your specific aspect(s) of diversity. This was brought home to me after the Caucus Presidents Plenary Session, where I spoke about the sheer diversity within the Asian/Pacific American (APA) category. I talked about how the Asia-Pacific designation not only covers a huge swath of the world, but it includes multitudes of nationalities, ethnicities, religions, languages, and histories. In addition, there are those with multiple identities, e.g., APAs who are LGBTQ, hapa or mixed race, refugees, adoptees, etc. The reaction I got from this speech floored me. Veteran APALA leaders congratulated me and told me how spot on I was. Some members of other caucuses expressed that they had never really thought about it in this way or how they learned something from the presentation. I must have had at least 50 people praise that speech. This goes to show how something so simple—a knowledge that I took for granted—could leave such an impression.
In essence, I think that this was ultimately what JCLC was about. It was about speaking our truths and people actually hearing them and learning from them. It was about letting our experiences and efforts take center stage so that we could continue to help the populations that are often overlooked. It was about sharing our stories and being embraced by a community so that we could continue to have the strength and passion to fight the good fight. Thank you, JCLC!

Makiba Foster is a subject librarian for American history and women, gender, and sexuality studies at Washington University in St. Louis. In addition to her subject librarian duties, she also leads the library’s team that provides training and instruction related to social media technology. While earning her MLIS. degree at the University of Alabama, Makiba was an ARL IRDW diversity scholar and an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) fellow. She has also earned an MA in American studies, with a concentration in African American popular culture. Makiba is active professionally in ALA and BCALA.

**Reflection on JCLC**

During the past five years, I have been very fortunate to attend and work at institutions that have invested in my professional development. I’ve had the opportunity to travel to many conferences and to learn from many thought-leaders in the library and information science profession. However, no other conference experience has been similar to either Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) experience. JCLC 2006 was the very first library conference I attended and, although I have since transitioned from student to practitioner, over the years I have often wondered what made that conference experience so enjoyable and memorable. Was it because I was a new student in a new field with, what I perceived were, limitless possibilities? Or was it something different regarding the spirit and intent behind bringing all of the diverse voices of the American Library Association’s (ALA) ethnic caucuses together at JCLC?

With these questions in mind, I want to evaluate consider why both of my conference experiences at the first and second JCLC resonated with me so much more than any of my other conferences.

To many, I am still considered a “new” librarian, having logged only five years in the profession. In those years I have seen technological advancements within our field that have resulted in both good and bad outcomes. I observed an economic downturn that rocked libraries to the core in terms of human resources, services, and collections. Although I am no longer a bright-eyed student but, rather, a professional with notable experience, I feel I am not jaded. I am still excited by the enormous opportunities for libraries and the communities they serve. Thus my expectations for the 2012 JCLC were just as high as they had been in 2006. Although professional rejuvenation can be an outcome of attending almost any conference, the renewal that I experienced at the JCLC is not something I’ve experienced at other meetings. It is, perhaps, what makes this experience unique and special for all attendees.

Even the title for both JCLC conferences, “Gathering at the Waters”, is a metaphor with many levels of meaning that carries both cultural and spiritual significance within different communities. Water being elemental and essential to all living things, “Gathering at the Waters” was, for me, a metaphorical drink of refreshing professional rejuvenation. I believe the reason both of my JCLC experiences have stayed with me is because the conferences surpassed my professional needs and engaged me holistically: spirit, mind, body, and culture.

During the opening reception of the second JCLC conference, musician and actor Mo’ Brings Plenty of the Lakota Nation, reminded attendees of our spiritual connection to one another and opened the celebration with a traditional native song. Also during the opening general session JCLC co-chair, Janice Rice, talked about the tree of humanity and the unity and connectedness it represents. This type of acknowledgment of a higher level of purpose and existence was present throughout the conference. I believe this awareness helped to shift the dynamic and atmosphere of the conference because it allowed many of us to focus on our role as librarian servant/service leaders. This helped us to realize that it is our duty to learn and to engage with our peers so that we could return to our communities recharged and repurposed.

When I think about the my two JCLC experiences, I gratefully recognize that I have been exposed to this type of professional development from my early years in library school.
through the present. Standards of cultural acceptance and professional excellence that ARL and the Institute to Recruit a Diverse Workforce (IRDW) brought to our profession are important factors in why a conference like JCLC is able to showcase diverse and dynamic talent and content. It was with some of my IRDW cohort members that I was able to share my JCLC experiences. It was wonderful to reconnect with the people, the energy, and the passion that made me excited about my career choice six years ago!

Lisa Chow is half of People Interact, a consultancy that empowers libraries and other organizations to be people-centered through usability and user experience assessments, unconferences for organizational development, and leadership and career development. She is an information professional with a few “library ribbons” including Special Libraries Association (SLA) rising star, Library Journal (LJ) mover & shaker, American Library Association (ALA) emerging leader, ARL diversity scholar, and Public Urban Library Service Education (PULSE) trainee. Find out more at http://bit.ly/lisachow.

Latanya Jenkins is an academic librarian who also was an American Library Association (ALA) emerging leader sponsored by the Reference & User Services Association (RUSA). She is a past Association of Research Libraries (ARL) diversity scholar and mentor as well as a past fellow and visiting assistant professor at Purdue University Libraries. Latanya was a recent participant in the Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians from Traditionally Underrepresented Groups. She works as a reference librarian & government documents, head at Morgan State University’s Earl S. Richardson Library in Baltimore. Latanya is the liaison to the School of Architecture + Planning.

Getting Together to Go Forward: Past Diversity Scholars Present at JCLC 2012

The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) 2012 took place in Kansas City, Missouri, September 19–23. The conference theme was “Celebrating Stories, Embracing Communities.” JCLC 2012 brought together attendees to explore, to learn, and to share experiences and stories about library diversity. In this article, we will provide highlights of our conference presentation and discuss ways to continue support of library diversity activities.

At JCLC 2012, we presented on a panel entitled “Getting Together to Go Forward: The Lessons of Diversity Initiatives and How to Implement Them at Your Library.” Along with Edwin M. Maxwell, and Louis Muñoz Jr., we spoke about experiences as participants in library diversity programming. We and our fellow panelists came from various library diversity initiatives such as: Public Urban Library Service Education (PULSE), IRDW, Purdue University Libraries Fellowship, American Library Association’s (ALA) Spectrum Program, and the Multicultural Internship Program (MIP).

The first part of the session entailed giving the audience a summary of the mission and goals of our respective programs. We spoke about the components of each program, such as mentoring activities, funding, and other program activities. Each presenter gave a brief historical synopsis that included program start date, program duration, development and administration, and program persistence. We addressed whether there were challenges within these programs, and provided insight into other program participants’ suggestions for improvement, and what the programs are doing well.

The second part of the session consisted of breakout discussion groups in which panelists and attendees shared ideas and strategies for fostering and promoting library diversity. The session concluded with summary reports from each group and a gallery walk to look at the posted group discussion notes and share any additional thoughts or comments.

The four group discussion topics were:

- Group 1: “Design It.” If you were to design and implement your own library diversity program, what would it encompass?
- Group 2: “Pitch It.” How would you sell your library diversity ideas to management, administration, and potential funders?
• Group 3: “Keep It Going.” What would be the best ways to recruit, develop, and retain diverse librarian staff?
• Group 4: “Grow It.” How do we promote library diversity throughout all job titles and stages of the librarian profession, through legacy building and succession planning?

Presenting at JCLC 2012 afforded the opportunity for the group, not only to share our experiences in diversity programs, but also to embrace new ideas about design, implementation, and promotion of diversity through discussion.

Key points from the session:

• Stay connected
• Network and collaborate with colleagues
• Recruit from the community, schools, and library staff
• Publish and disseminate data and information about library diversity initiatives widely
• Find mentors or serve as a mentor

A diversity wiki was created in order to share and continue the conversation after the session and conference. The presentation slides from the session and discussion notes are available on the library diversity wiki at http://bit.ly/librarydiversity.

The library diversity wiki also contains:

• a library diversity programs survey for those who are or were participants in library diversity initiatives (Share your experiences with us.)
• a growing list of library diversity programs (There are many library diversity programs in the profession. Let’s work together to compile a comprehensive list of library diversity programs. Please contribute to the list.)

We’re not in Kansas City anymore, but let’s keep getting together to go forward and continue the conversations at http://bit.ly/librarydiversity.

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