



SYNERGY

NEWS FROM ARL® DIVERSITY PROGRAMS

IN THIS ISSUE

The current research library employment market is challenging for those preparing to enter the workforce, as well as for experienced professionals contemplating career transitions. This 12th issue of Synergy contains three articles on the topic of career placement and advancement. Four former ARL diversity and leadership program participants offer advice on how to prepare for those transitions and, in one case, considerations for institutions developing and managing diversity residency programs to ensure the most welcoming and successful experiences.

Lisa Shiota, former ARL Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP) fellow, describes what led her to pursue a certification in digital libraries. Shiota urges her readers to consider the challenges as well as the benefits associated with pursuing formal coursework and credentialing as a professional development opportunity, while one is a full-time professional.

Prior to graduation from her master of library and information science program at the University of British Columbia, former ARL diversity scholar Mayu Ishida participated in a number of practical field experiences in preparation for starting her job search. These experiences, along with her educational background, rendered her more competitive as she pursued employment opportunities upon completion of her studies. Ishida outlines some of her thought process as she developed a strategy for developing skills and gaining experience prior to completing her LIS studies.

Finally, Madeline Sheldon and Jason Alston, alumni of the ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, both entered the professional workforce through residency programs—temporary appointments in academic libraries—designed to increase diversity within the profession. The authors survey the literature and describe some of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of residency programs, as well as offer suggestions for how an institution might better support such a program. The essay offers practical advice to new professionals who are contemplating beginning their careers in one of a growing number of academic library residency programs.

These three essays present a variety of perspectives and strategies for career entry as well as professional development and advancement. The authors provide guidance and pose several things to consider when one is preparing to make important career advancements within the library and information science profession.

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About the ARL Diversity Programs

THE ARL INITIATIVE TO RECRUIT A DIVERSE WORKFORCE, 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 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 (IMLS), 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 a partner music/research library. 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. For more information about the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative, visit: 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 more information about the CEP, 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.

THE ARL/SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS (SAA) MOSAIC PROGRAM, funded by IMLS, promotes much-needed diversification of the archives and special collections professional workforce by providing financial support, a paid internship in a partner library or archives, mentoring, career placement assistance, and leadership development to emerging professionals from underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups. An important objective of the program is to attract and retain individuals who demonstrate excellent potential for scholastic and personal achievement and who manifest a commitment both to the archives and special collections profession and to advancing diversity concerns within it. For more information about the Mosaic Program, visit www.arl.org/mosaic.



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.

Synergy: News from ARL Diversity Programs is a forum in which to share information about programs and opportunities centered on increasing the diversity of staff in research libraries.



Lisa Shiota, a member of the Luminary Class (2011–2012) of the ARL Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP), received her MS-LIS degree from Drexel University. She is currently a reference specialist in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, and on the Board of Directors for the

Music Library Association.

Continuing Career Development: A Digital Library Certificate Program

I was three years into my position as a reference librarian at the Library of Congress and I felt the need for a change. I wanted to step away from the familiar reference desk and learn something new. I have always been interested in the intersection of libraries and technology and particularly wanted to learn more about digital librarianship.

In 2012, I enrolled in the Post-Master's Specialist Certificate Program in Digital Libraries at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.¹ I chose this program because it is offered by my library school alma mater, which offers a tuition discount to alumni, and the program is available asynchronously online. The online program was convenient for me as I could login on my own schedule—usually at home in the evening after work.

The certificate program provided a broad overview of skills and issues in digital libraries and consisted of five classes: three required introductory courses on digital library technologies and two electives. I took one class per quarter (except for the summer) and finished the program in two years.

Benefits

After completing five classes, I felt I gained a solid, basic understanding of the history and technologies behind digital libraries. I learned a lot about the federal Digital Libraries Initiative of the 1990s² and how those early projects shaped our understanding of creating digital collections today. I gained hands-on experience in creating a rudimentary website by working with HTML and CSS, as well as experimenting with digital library systems such as Fedora and Greenstone. I was introduced to thesaurus building, image indexing, and vari-

ous metadata standards. I was also able to sample how to do usability testing by performing a heuristic evaluation of a website in a group project.

An unexpected outcome from my studies was a deeper understanding of my own institution as a major player in digital libraries. In the past, the Library of Congress was one of the sponsors for projects during Phase 2 of the Digital Libraries Initiative, including one of its own projects, the American Memory Collection.³ More recently, the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) has been creating standards for digital stewardship. A conversation with a colleague from NDIIPP led me to try Viewshare, an open source, interactive platform for digital collections.⁴ For one of my class projects, I used this application to create a digital library prototype for a small collection of opera scores.

Another immediate benefit happened while I was still taking classes. After writing an analysis paper on a digital collection, I gained the confidence to approach the digital media review editor for *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* to ask if I could submit a review. This resulted in my first published piece, a review of the New York Philharmonic Digital Archives in the December 2013 issue of the journal. I was thrilled to be able to use my recently acquired skills in a professional context.

Challenges

The biggest challenge, of course, was taking the classes while holding down a full-time job. Every week there were journal articles to read, an online discussion to prepare for and participate in, a paper due, or a group project to work on. My weekday schedule consisted of going to my office during the day and doing schoolwork at night without pause. Household chores and spending time with friends fell by the wayside. Because the program ran on a quarter system, it felt like the assignments were nonstop, and there was only a weeklong break before the next class started. I admit that I felt burned out by the time I was in my last class.

I was hoping to be able to further apply what I had learned from this certificate program to my current job, but I have not yet found a way to do so. I have been looking into other positions, but without on-the-job experience, it may be challenging to work elsewhere. I may need to find projects where I can volunteer on the side and gain the experience that way.



Conclusion

Overall, I felt it was worthwhile to pursue the digital libraries certificate. Although it was a challenge to complete the program while working full-time, taking five classes in two years was manageable. I believe I now have a good foundation in digital library issues, and I feel empowered to keep learning more as the field continues to evolve.

For those who also want to develop more skills, going through a certificate program or even taking a single class at a college or university as a nonmatriculated student would be useful. There are also workshops and webinars that are offered through professional library, archives, and information science organizations. For example, the Society of American Archivists offers a Digital Archives Specialist program in which one can take individual classes or work toward a certificate.⁵

Continuing education, for better or for worse, is a necessity to keep current in our profession. Although it can be a challenge fitting classes into an already busy schedule, it can be done, and is ultimately worth the effort.

Endnotes

1. Drexel University, College of Computing & Informatics, Post-Master's Specialist Program, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://drexel.edu/cci/programs/professional-development-programs/post-masters-specialist-program/>.
2. For an overview of the Digital Libraries Initiative, see Edward A. Fox, ed., "The Digital Libraries Initiative: Update and Discussion," *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science* 26, no. 1 (October–November 1999), <https://www.asis.org/Bulletin/Oct-99/index.html>.
3. Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>.
4. Viewshare, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://viewshare.org/>.
5. Society of American Archivists, Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Curriculum and Certificate Program, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://archivists.org/prof-education/das/>.



Photo by: Michael Latschislaw

Mayu Ishida, ARL IRDW diversity scholar (2010–2012), joined the University of Manitoba in March 2014 as the research services librarian. She completed her master's degree in library and information studies at the University of British Columbia, and worked on the Canadian International Polar Year data curation project at the University of Alberta Libraries. Ishida facilitates the University of Manitoba Libraries' scholarly communication initiatives, such as the institutional repository MSpace and the implementation of data management services.

Career Opportunities for Library School Students

Career opportunity and development is a topic library/information science students can and should consider long before graduation. During the MLIS program, most students are encouraged to build foundations for professional positions through coursework as well as such opportunities as internships, practicums, and volunteer positions. As a relatively recent graduate (class of 2013), I would like to share how such opportunities helped me transition from school into my current academic librarian position. Adding yet another example to a variety of career paths and approaches in librarianship, I hope that some of my story will resonate with others and provide ideas for transitioning into the profession and developing a career.

While I was a student at the University of British Columbia (UBC) iSchool, I completed two full-time internships in digital initiatives at academic libraries through the school's co-operative education program, UBC Arts Co-op Program.¹ The first was an eight-month internship at the University of Alberta Libraries where I worked on an inter-institutional data curation project that involved liaising with research groups in diverse subject areas. The second internship was a four-month placement at the University of British Columbia Library. There I assisted with multiple digitization projects and used new tools in digital preservation. This experiential learning proved invaluable. Through the two internships, I was able to become familiar with trends and developments in academic librarian-

ship, build on knowledge and skills I learned in class, and gain professional contacts.

At each of the internships I faced a steep learning curve in a new environment and with new colleagues. Nonetheless, I am glad that I had this opportunity. I experienced both successes and failures, which allowed me to improve my ability to:

1. work independently as well as collaboratively;
2. manage time and projects; and
3. take initiative.

Experiences with (1) and (2) are crucial when working in an academic library context where professionals are often asked to manage multiple projects simultaneously. These projects can involve several stakeholders. As for (3), my supervisors advised that it is possible to lead and take initiative from within an organizational hierarchy, and I demonstrated this by suggesting and applying ways to improve existing workflows. Independent work, collaboration with others, time/project management, and initiative—it turned out that these are the traits I was asked to elaborate on in academic library job interviews in the form of behavioral questions, and I was able to draw on my internship experiences for my responses.

Eventually, I took on student opportunities in digital initiatives because I was particularly interested in this area. When I began seeking a professional position after graduation, there were few postings in digital initiatives. I knew that there were not many academic librarian positions to start with, and I would have a difficult time finding such a job. Nevertheless, I wondered if I had focused on one area too much and should have built a more rounded portfolio at library school. Since I did not have much experience in public services, I tried to fill this gap by volunteering as a library assistant at St. Mark's College. My supervisor at the college library was very supportive and became one of my employment references. My job hunt lasted for eight months after graduation and, to be honest, it was a long, hard time for me. Fortunately, I received an offer for my current position, the research services librarian at the University of Manitoba. In this role, I support researchers in scholarly communications with a focus on open access, and facilitate the development of research data services. Although I am still uncertain about my stance in the specialist vs. generalist discussion,² I believe I was able to secure this position because I pursued my interests as my mentors encouraged me to.

Experiential learning is crucial in a professional degree program like an MLIS. Although not every library school may

offer a co-operative education program and internships, it is possible to create experiential learning opportunities by undertaking individual or collaborative projects in professional associations and volunteer work. For instance, a student could join a library association and help plan a conference. This would help the student learn how to organize an event, extend her/his professional network, and learn about emerging trends in librarianship. A student could also propose a project that would help her/him gain knowledge and skills in a particular interest area (e.g., website redesign for a library student association). Regardless of where we are in our careers, this profession continually challenges us to explore new areas and to grow. It is possible to meet this challenge according to our individual interests and approaches.

Endnotes

1. UBC Arts Co-op Program, accessed June 24, 2015, <http://artscoop.ubc.ca/>.
2. Helen Crane, "Specialists or Generalists: What Do Employers Really Want?" *The Guardian*, November 5, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/careers/careers-blog/specialist-generalist-what-do-employers-want>.





Photo by: Jay Jackson

Madeline Sheldon, ARL IRDW diversity scholar (2013–2015), is the second library fellow & visiting assistant professor at Valparaiso University. She currently manages the digitization lab and all digital projects for the Valparaiso University Archives & Special Collections department. Prior to Valparaiso University, Madeline

worked in a number of academic libraries, and the Library of Congress selected her for a prestigious internship focused on digital stewardship research. She received her MSI from the University of Michigan School of Information.



Jason Kelly Alston, ARL IRDW diversity scholar (2007–2009), is a PhD candidate at the University of South Carolina as well as a reference and instruction librarian at Midlands Technical College in Columbia, SC. Alston's first professional librarian appointment was as the first diversity resident

librarian at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Alston is also a life member of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), and co-chairs BCALA's publications committee.

While the goals of diversity residency programs are noble in the most abstract terms, challenges often arise as these programs do not always have complete buy-in from faculty and staff at hosting institutions. In some cases, even support for residencies from the administrations that implement them is lacking. When buy-in is absent, hostilities toward the position and the resident filling it can arise.³ As former diversity resident and co-author of this essay Jason Alston reports in a research piece for an upcoming book on the experiences of librarians of color, negative experiences encountered by novice librarians in residency programs as a result of coworker hostilities stick with these professionals and could adversely impact their attitudes toward the profession going forward.⁴

Challenges for diversity residents related to coworker hostilities and lack of institutional support may come from different sources, and communication has been posed as a recurrent problem. Faculty and staff at hosting institutions who are not properly informed about why a diversity residency program is formed, what the resident's role is, and what potential benefits to the hosting institution are, may view the resident as a pseudo-professional receiving professional pay.⁵ Hu and Patrick explain that residency programs often do not have defined job descriptions, and this can lead to communication burdens being placed on the actual resident; this can also lead to residents being deemed "interns" and asked to perform non-professional tasks while other entry-level librarians are sought to perform professional and substantive duties.⁶ In a recent survey of past and present diversity residents and diversity librarian position holders, only 13 of 37 survey participants (35%) responded that they believed their hosting institutions communicated the relevance of the diversity position to the library faculty and staff.⁷

Alston and Crumpton find that librarians employed in diversity-specific positions, including diversity residencies, often experience discomfort and alienation, including being targets of inappropriate jokes or having to justify to coworkers why they count as diverse hires; it should be noted though that the overwhelming majority of respondents in the Alston/Crumpton study responded that they were included in social events at their host institutions. Residents respond to these feelings of alienation and discomfort differently. In the aforementioned Alston study, yet to be published, some residents reported that these feelings inhibited their productivity, while others

Post-MLS Roadblocks: Removing the Barriers from Diversity Residency Programs

Diversity residency programs¹ are defined by the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) as, "the post-degree work experience designed as an entry-level program for professionals who have recently received the MLS degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association."² These programs are aimed at recruiting newly minted library professionals, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the diversity of library professionals and birthing a library workforce that is more reflective of the diversity in the communities that libraries serve.

reported the opposite and insisted that such feelings motivated them to work harder and exceed institutional expectations.⁸

Hu and Patrick's summary of their personal diversity resident experiences details how failure to explicitly define and plan out the duties and expectations of a resident may adversely affect the resident. Hu and Patrick were at times regarded as interns and pigeonholed into diversity-related tasks that were not, initially, expectations of their positions.⁹ Residency programs have a long history of such pigeonholing.¹⁰ At a 2008 National Diversity in Libraries Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, a session on residency programs included accounts from former residents that they were expected to address and resolve diversity-related issues at the hosting institution while just starting out—an expectation that cannot be met. Also, while allowing leeway in job descriptions and expectations may provide residents with flexibility in choosing their own experiences, residents, who are new to the profession, may be ill-prepared to bear the burden of tailoring positions specifically to their aspirations without professional guidance. The need for additional guidance may not be evident to the library faculty and staff managing the program.

While challenges such as ineffective planning, lack of faculty/staff buy-in, workplace hostility, lack of communication, and resident isolation, alienation, and preparedness exist, host institutions should anticipate these obstacles and proactively adopt the following strategies to alleviate possible barriers to diversity residency program success.¹¹

Cultural Climate Assessment

Mestre suggests gathering pre-existing climate assessments or conducting new ones to gain a better understanding of key stakeholder (administration, the library, faculty, staff, students) culture, needs, and diversity issues on campus.¹²

- Before host institutions implement a post-MLS diversity program, university and/or library administration should assign a coordinator/committee to design the post-MLS residency in a way that aligns with the university's mission, strategic plan, and/or current campus-wide diversity initiatives.
- As the residency coordinator/committee continues with climate assessment, they should simultaneously update key stakeholders with their progress and any further developments that shape the residency program (see "Communication" below).

- Before implementation, host institutions should research and assess past residents' experiences, which will provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of those programs and inform the development and assessment of their own efforts.

Communication

Because the new librarian's presence can have an impact on campus, the cultural climate assessment should guide the evolution of the diversity program and initiate a campus-wide conversation about the results.

- Early conversations that discuss the climate assessment provide an opportunity to address pre-existing diversity issues and discuss how the diversity resident will benefit the university.
- Furthermore, open communication intercepts hesitation, misinterpretation of the program, and pre-existing workplace hostility.

Diversity Training

According to Mestre, diversity education (a) inspires "cultural competence,"¹³ (b) provides opportunities for campus-wide collaboration, and (c) should remain an ongoing part of diversity and inclusion initiatives within organizations.¹⁴

- Diversity education has the potential to impart "cross-cultural communication" and "cultural sensitivity" skills to participants. Library staff should complete diversity training before and continue to receive training after hiring the resident.¹⁵
- Engagement by the residency program administrators with on-campus multicultural partners/organizations will complement diversity education, build new relationships, assist with campus/departamental buy-in, and add to the success of the diversity resident program.
- Host institutions should assume the responsibility and lead diversity initiatives on campus. Diversity program sponsors should collaborate with (not solely rely on) the resident to develop new ideas when planning diversity initiatives on campus.

The Resident Experience and Mentorship

Formal mentorship and involvement with on-campus multicultural organizations can help the new librarians transition



into their new environment and may alleviate some of the isolation that occurs when residents are the only “diverse” librarians on staff.

- It is important that direct supervisors do not act as formal mentors. Residents may feel uncomfortable speaking to their direct supervisors, fearing retaliation or being ostracized by management or colleagues. A resident requires an objective mentor who can advocate for the resident and offer advice throughout her or his time at the institution.
- Coordinators/committees can review the Association of College and Research Libraries Residency Interest Group (ACRL-RIG) webpage to locate and contact past residents.¹⁶ Coordinators/committees should also consider contacting librarians from Knowledge+Alliance, a program sponsored by the American Library Association that connects prospective or early-career librarians with established allies in the field.¹⁷
- Both ACRL-RIG and Knowledge+Alliance recruit librarians from historically underrepresented populations and can offer professional resources, networking opportunities, and emotional support that host institutions may not be able to provide. Some programs pair the resident with a senior level professional who can formally serve in the role of a mentor.

Work Plan Development

While flexibility within diversity residency programs is a positive aspect, new residents need some structure to their temporary positions to prevent miscommunication between the supervisors and residents regarding the new employees’ responsibilities and work projects.

- Coordinators/committee members can resolve miscommunication by collaborating with residents and their supervisors to document program objectives, determine work plans/timelines, and identify possible projects for residents to complete.
- Coordinators/committee members should document the finalized agreements and deliver to each party so that the supervisors and residents can refer to the resources throughout the program.
- Perez and Gruwell also encourage host institutions to offer time management training for new residents who may be new to the profession or who

may struggle to adapt to an unfamiliar, non-diverse work culture.¹⁸

The goal of this article is not to criticize diversity residency programs but to reveal underlying issues that exist for participants and to encourage host institutions to think proactively about the residential experience while planning and continuously developing the post-MLS diversity program. Challenges for diversity residents will continue unless host institutions (a) address the diversity needs of the their own institutions before implementing diversity programs; (b) create hospitable, inclusive environments within their departments; (c) acknowledge and address resident concerns; and (d) define learning objectives and develop reasonable timelines for residents to achieve goals.

Further Resources

- Knowledge+Alliance, <http://knowledgealliance.org>
- ACRL Residency Interest Group, <http://acrl.ala.org/residency/>
- P.E. Kayes, “New Paradigms for Diversifying Faculty and Staff in Higher Education: Uncovering Cultural Biases in the Search and Hiring Process,” *Multicultural Education* (Winter 2006), 65-69.

Endnotes

1. In this article, the terms “diversity residency programs,” “residency,” and “post-MLS programs” will be used interchangeably.
2. Jason Kelly Alston, “Minerva’s First Born: My Experiences as UNCG’s First Diversity Resident Librarian,” *North Carolina Libraries* 68, no. 1 (2010): 14.
3. Rebecca Hankins, Michele Saunders, and Ping Situ, “Diversity Initiatives vs. Residency Programs: Agents of Change?” *College & Research Libraries News* 64, no. 5 (2003): 308-09.
- 4.t Jason Kelly Alston in discussion with Madeline Sheldon, March 2015.
5. Alston, “Minerva’s First Born.”
6. Sylvia S. Hu and Demetria E. Patrick, “Our Experiences as Minority Residents: Benefits, Drawbacks, and Suggestions,” *College & Research Libraries News* 67, no. 5 (2006): 297-300.
7. Jason Kelly Alston and Michael Crumpton, “Ebony and Ivory: Addressing the Social Aspects of Diversity Initiatives” (presentation, Association for Library and

- Information Science Education, Chicago, IL, January 28, 2015).
8. Ibid.
 9. Hu and Patrick, "Our Experiences as Minority Residents."
 10. Cindy A. Gruwell and Raquel V. Cogell, *Diversity in Libraries: Academic Residency Programs*, Great Cultural Eras of the Western World (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).
 11. The following suggestions are based on current resident Madeline Sheldon's observations and research of current literature, which she offers as possible constructive solutions to the problems outlined earlier in this article.
 12. Lori S. Mestre, "Librarians Working with Diverse Populations: What Impact Does Cultural Competency Training Have on Their Efforts?" *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 36, no. 6 (2010): 479-88.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Ibid.
 16. ACRL Residency Interest Group, accessed June 24, 2015, <http://acrl.ala.org/residency/>.
 17. Knowledge+Alliance, accessed June 24, 2015, <http://knowledgealliance.org/>.
 18. Megan Zoe Perez and Cindy A. Gruwell, *The New Graduate Experience: Post-MLS Programs and Early Career Librarianship* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2011).



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