The CIRLA Fellowship:
A Recruitment Model for Promoting Diversity in Librarianship

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ABSTRACT

The United States is among the most diverse countries in the world. The library profession in the U.S. does not reflect the same level of diversity. Anticipating that a large number of information specialists will retire in the next few years, the field has an opportunity to diversify its pool of librarians. In addition, there is a growing need for librarians specifically trained and experienced in the work of research libraries. This poster session shares the efforts undertaken by the Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance (CIRLA), a group of nine research libraries, to develop a unique recruitment and professional training program designed to solve both problems: recruiting for diversity and developing expertise within the functional areas of research librarianship. The CIRLA Fellowship program is a cooperative model that may be replicated and supported with little external funding. The poster session will cover the genesis and actualization of the program, articulate its definition of diversity, and share suggestions for ways in which libraries, academic and otherwise, may cooperate to meet challenges to the profession.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ***Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance*** (CIRLA), a group of nine research libraries in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, developed a comprehensive plan to recruit, educate, mentor, train and launch new librarians into the profession in the 21st century. It is designed both to accelerate the increase in qualified librarians, and to promote them successfully into a research library career by providing them with mentoring, coaching, and practical professional experience. ***Georgetown University***, a founding member of the CIRLA Consortium, presented this plan in partnership with CIRLA and the ***Association of Research Libraries*** (ARL) in 2003.

This unique recruitment and professional training program was designed to solve two problems:

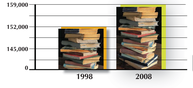
Recruiting for Diversity *and* **Developing Expertise within the Functional Areas of RESEARCH Librarianship**

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

What is the status of the library profession?

- **CRISIS IN THE PROFESSION**
  1. The number of job openings for librarians is projected to increase about 5% between 1998 and 2008. By 2008, librarians are expected to hold more than 159,000 jobs – 7,000 more than they did in 1998.
  2. In the next decade and beyond, many experienced librarians are expected to retire, switch occupations, or otherwise leave the profession.

GRAPH 1: **Growth of library jobs from 1998-2008**



Resource: **Crosby, Olivia.** Information Experts in the Information Age. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*. Winter 2000/01, p.9.

GRAPH 2: **Percentage of (87,409) librarians retiring during 2000-2019**

2000 - 2004	10% of librarians will reach age 65
2005 - 2009	16%
2010 - 2014	More than 20%
2015 - 2019	Approximately 18%

Resource: Association of College and Research Libraries. Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment and Retention Issues. *Recruitment, Retention, and Restructuring: Academic Librarians and Changing Academic Libraries*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, c2002.

- **COMMITMENT TO DIVERSIFY THE WORKFORCE**

GRAPH 3: **Minority population growth** Percent Distribution of U.S. Population

Resource: **Hu, Wan and Frank Hobbs.** *Minority Population Growth: 1995 to 2050*. Washington, DC: Department of Commerce, Minority Business Development Agency, 1999. http://www.census.gov/library/workshops/docs/pdf

- **WELL-TRAINED PROFESSIONAL REPLACEMENTS**

What do research libraries need?

Professionals who can…

- Develop & Manage
- Cooperate & Collaborate
- Understand the library within the context of higher education
- Understand the complexities of a research library environment
- Know the structure, organization, creation, management, use dissemination, and preservation of information resources
- Commit to the values and principles of librarianship
- Fill vacancies in critical areas of need: functional specialties, area studies, expertise in subjects, languages, and formats.

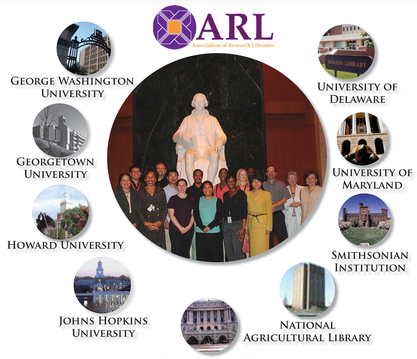
What do library school students need?

- Updated education and curriculum
- Training and mentoring for the 21st century
- Income and incentives to complete the MLS degree
- Practicum to apply academic curriculum
- Career development and launching

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The CIRLA Fellows Program is designed to recruit, develop and launch a cohort of new librarians who can work to diversify the profession and address the growing need for professionals skilled in the specialized work of a research library environment. Drawing on the strengths of the nine alliance libraries, Fellows are mentored as they are exposed to a broad variety of work experiences that complement their academic studies as they work toward their library degrees.

WHO ARE WE?



> "In the CIRLA fellows family, practical professional development, reflection on what it means to be a next-generation librarian, and the critical role diversity plays in strengthening the profession, and serving our patrons, are valued."
>
> **~ Andrew Young**

> "Working with the CIRLA Fellows is a joy. Their enthusiasm inspires me to rededicate myself to the profession."
>
> **~ Joan Cheverie**

> "There is much lip service given to taking steps to increase diversity of the profession – the CIRLA Fellows Program is one of the few concrete initiatives to contribute in a substantial way to fulfilling such a vision.
>
> CIRLA Fellows Program has allowed me the opportunity to meet my obligation to contribute in a meaningful way to the development of the next generation of librarians."
>
> **~ Beacher Wiggins**

> "The CIRLA fellowship opened the doors toward a professional library career immediately after my graduation. As a professional librarian, I feel confident in applying what I have learned in a real working academic library environment.
>
> As the Head of the New Media Center in the Georgetown University main campus library, I have worked with four CIRLA Fellows over the last year or so. I asked each of the Fellows to work on a project dealing with our media collection. They were able to focus their attention on the projects while learning how our materials are used and thinking about the preservation of media with real examples instead of just reading about these issues in a textbook."
>
> **~ Beth Campolieto Marhanka**

> "The relationship between the mentor and new professional is the foundation for the success of the CIRLA program. The transfer of knowledge from the seasoned professional to the next generation will be the key to the continued growth of librarianship. With a diverse group of new librarians , the wisdom and experience of mentors, the CIRLA program will prove to be a model for bringing underrepresented people to research librarianship."
>
> **~ Julius C. Jefferson, Jr.**

> "The CIRLA Fellows Program's rotations, offer the valuable opportunity to be exposed to and learn from the different types of libraries: academic, special and federal."
>
> **~ Sandra Marroquin**

> "No library school in this country can offer the kind of diverse work I have experienced through the CIRLA Fellowship.
>
> CIRLA provides me with professional experiences that allow me to connect the theoretical information from my coursework with the realities of practice in the field."
>
> **~ Ivonne Martinez**

> "Mentoring is a learning partnership that allows us to grow as we guide and share experienced-based wisdom to someone else — to pass it on is an obligation for those who have achieved success. It is a privilege to be among the CIRLA Fellowship Program Mentors."
>
> **~ Peggy Jones Blake**

> "The CIRLA Fellowship has provided mentoring, professional development and library experience, all of which I am grateful for and need to make a difference in the academic and research libraries of the future."
>
> **~ Netta Cox**

4. METHODOLOGY

Diversity and the development of research librarians drove the methodology for this program. Thanks to a grant from the ***Institute of Museum and Library Services*** (IMLS), a program was developed to recruit fifteen fellows from the ranks of CIRLA libraries and library schools. The methodology includes:

Define the term "Diversity"

"CIRLA Fellowships will be awarded to applicants who demonstrate an ability to contribute to the diversity of the library profession, either because they are a member of a traditionally underserved ethnic or racial group, or because they can otherwise demonstrate contributions to diversity based on background or experiences."

The beginning phase:

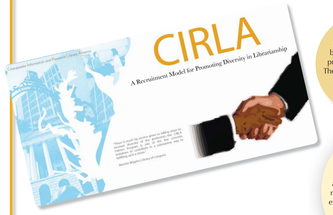
Crafted with help from the Association of Research Libraries an extensive program that includes:
1. Mentors
2. Programs for:
   - Extensive professional development
   - Diversity training

Developed a rigorous and effective "work curriculum" for each Fellow that exposes them to library work in:
- core areas (reference, technical services, collection development, and systems)
- specialized areas (digital library services, archives and special collections, library administration, etc.)

The final phase:

"Launching Fellows" careers by providing them with a one-year, post-MLS position in a CIRLA library fast-tracking the new professionals into the field and helping them gain valuable professional experience.

5. OUTCOMES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE



OUTCOMES

1. The nine CIRLA libraries have been energized by the presence of the fellows. Their diverse backgrounds and perspectives are refreshing and engaging.

2. The Fellows are learning about the library profession as practiced – not just in the classroom. This 'living laboratory' of the fellowship rotations is exposing them to day-to-day realistic professional issues and concepts that will be required of them when they are hired for their first professional position.

3. Fellows are actively engaged in professional development: attending conferences, developing publications, and making presentations preparing themselves to make professional contributions throughout their careers.

4. The Fellows and Mentors have developed strong work relationships and are learning from one another.

5. The library profession is gaining new professionals who are accomplished, well-trained, and prepared for the challenges of research librarianship. The Program exposes Fellows to issues and trends in **Research Librarianship**, giving them the opportunity to participate and become involved.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The CIRLA Fellows Program is a cooperative model for diversity and professional training programs in research libraries. The Program may be easily replicated and supported with minimal outside funding.

The United States will benefit from information services provided to researchers, educators, scholars, and other patrons by skilled librarians. The CIRLA Fellows Program is contributing to the ongoing research and scholarly leadership of the United States through its contribution to the diverse staffing of research libraries and training of aspiring research librarians.

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