In this final column of Diversity Dialogues, Ms. Gabriel highlights selected readings on library science education, diversity initiatives, mentoring and retention, standards and statistics, and on law librarianship and diversity, and she provides her concluding thoughts on the future of diversity in law librarianship.

Introduction

1 In the previous issue of Law Library Journal, I highlighted readings dealing with organizational culture, leadership, conflict management, and racial microaggression to help frame some of the larger issues that may come into play when dealing with diversity in the work environment.1 For this column, I have selected readings that deal particularly with diversity initiatives within librarianship, including those in Master’s of Library Science programs, and with issues surrounding mentoring and retention.2 I have also included articles containing helpful statistics and a few articles that speak specifically to law librarianship. Coupled with the readings noted in my previous column, I hope to convince readers of several conclusions I have drawn from reading and writing about diversity issues in libraries and law librarianship over the past few years: (1) The profession of librarianship as a whole has an alarmingly low percentage of librarians considered to be “diverse” under historical definitions of race and gender, and this underrepresentation is even more apparent within the field of law librarianship. (2) While the profession continues to create opportunities for underrepresented populations, the efforts to

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2. Readers will note that the selections deal almost exclusively with academic libraries, with the notable exception of material from the American Library Association. This may reflect the fact that tenure-track academic librarians, expected to produce scholarship, are the only ones who have the incentive or support to do such original research. Despite the limitations inherent in examining only one specific type of library environment, I believe that the overall observations made by the authors of the selected pieces are worthwhile for all law librarians, no matter the environment, as many touch upon the issues faced by the profession of librarianship as a whole.
do so are scattered and of limited value. (3) The failure to incorporate diverse populations into the profession may have a wider impact on the perceived value of libraries and librarians and may further marginalize librarians within the communities that need their services the most.

¶2 None of these statements is likely to surprise any librarian who has taken more than a cursory glance at the statistics regarding librarianship, or any librarian from a minority background. But it should be alarming that the same themes seem to repeat themselves over and over again within the literature: that there are not enough minority librarians, that there are limited options geared toward diversity available in library science education, and that the ways to further the careers and concerns of minority librarians are few and far between. The literature that speaks specifically to diversity within law librarianship is scarce and usually only discusses the issues as they apply within academia, rarely examining law firm or state, court, and county libraries.

Education, Standards, and Statistics

¶3 Much of the scholarship about diversity and librarianship discusses the barriers within library and information science (LIS) education, whether it is about minority students finding courses that explore multicultural librarianship, or the shortage of minority candidates who wish to become LIS educators. Paired with the statistical information regarding the number of minority librarians from the American Library Association (ALA), the articles below capture how difficult diversity is to achieve at what is the entry point to the library profession.


Adkins’s article on the barriers to Latino librarians becoming faculty members in LIS programs points to four main causes: a sense of isolation from the academy, the lack of ethnic representation within library science education (both the faculty and the program), the cost of doctoral programs, and strongly correlating to that, family and personal concerns. Adkins notes that many Latino librarians chose to join the field because they had a nonminority role model, that library education is “primarily oriented toward a terminal master’s degree” (p.149), and that “in each transition between levels of education—high school to a bachelor’s program, bachelor’s to master’s, and master’s to doctoral—students of color are lost” (p. 151). Drawing upon extensive interviews with eight Latino librarians, she points out that several felt unwelcome within their institutions while pursuing the library degree, and the sense of alienation and intimidation they felt while pursuing their master’s degrees discouraged them from even wanting to be a

3. In 2009–10, white librarians constituted 88% of credentialed librarians, African American librarians 5.2%, Asian Pacific Islanders 2.7%, and Latinos 3%. Librarians of two or more races counted for 0.9%, and Native American librarians accounted for only 0.15%. Table Series A: 2009–2010 American Community Survey Estimates Applied to Institute for Museum and Library Services and National Center for Education Statistics Data, http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/diversity/diversitycounts/diversitycountstable2012.pdf (percentages calculated from figures in table A-1).
part of a doctoral program or become a faculty member. The remarks from the experienced librarians in the article reaffirm that a problem for the larger field of librarianship in recruiting students from diverse backgrounds is the lack of role models or the sense that the communities they may be interested in serving will not be discussed in the curriculum.


The authors examined the prevalence of multiculturalism and diversity-related information appearing in library school web sites and course descriptions. They also looked at the types of jobs, by institution and geographic location, that advertised for individuals with diversity qualifications. They found that an increasing number of positions are asking for candidates with qualifications that directly affect the ability to deal with diverse populations, with the largest category of jobs asking for such qualities in administrative positions. While finding that it would be in the best interest of LIS schools to continue to incorporate course work that clearly reflects multiculturalism, what may be of most interest to law librarians is the list of sample qualifications and language found in job descriptions. These could be of use for developing job descriptions for a law library.


In 2006, ALA’s Office for Diversity commissioned an analysis of the 1990 and 2000 census data to provide “reliable estimates of employment in the profession and age, gender, and ethnicity figures for five types of libraries—public, academic, K–12, hospitals, legal libraries—and all other types of libraries reported as a single category” (p.4). Taking that information and comparing it to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the study found that librarians of all types increased 21.6% between 1990 and 2000, with one of the highest increases in the percentage of librarians found in law libraries. The larger picture reflects that the “nearly 110,000 credentialed librarians in public, school and academic libraries are predominantly white regardless of age group or gender” (p.9), that a significant number of librarians under age forty-five were leaving the profession, and that “despite recent diversity recruitment measures, some racial and ethnic minority groups, notably African Americans and Latinos, are actually seeing a decrease in the number of credential[ed] librarians under age 45” (p.11; emphasis added). Even more sobering was the finding that the data suggested that the “persistent lag in diversity in our LIS schools . . . [and] the aging of racial and ethnic library workers . . . suggest[] a proportionally less diverse library workforce on the horizon” (p.18). The study is highly recommended as an overview of what challenges lie ahead for the entire field of librarianship and its recruitment of diverse members.4

4. The ALA commissioned an update of this information in 2012. Id.

In April 2012, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) approved standards that define cultural competency “based on the 2001 National Association of Social Worker Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice.” The Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee, which drafted the standards, stated “that if libraries are to continue being indispensable organizations in their campus communities, they must reflect the communities they serve and provide quality services to their increasingly diverse constituencies.” After defining cultural competence and related terms, ACRL articulates eleven standards for developing cultural competency within libraries primarily through librarians and library staff, and then provides comments interpreting each standard. Within the interpretations, examples show what each standard might look like if executed by library staff. The standards are highly recommended reading for those interested in identifying approaches and strategies for diversity, or looking for language to incorporate into a mission statement or strategic plan including diversity initiatives.

**Diversity Initiatives, Mentoring, and Retention**

¶4 Once minority librarians enter the profession, retention may depend on an atmosphere that is supportive of their goals and that strives to integrate them into the organization. The failure to create an environment where diversity is a priority may isolate minority librarians and lead to job dissatisfaction. Although the following articles deal specifically with academic libraries, the methods they consider for constructing a more inclusive environment hold lessons for all types of library settings.


Former ALA President and Dean of University Libraries at both Colorado State University and the University of New Mexico, Alire sets out a model retention program for junior faculty of color. Alire describes seven areas covered in the programming aimed at junior minority faculty, which was accomplished with limited support and the use of senior faculty volunteers. Much of the programming could easily be adapted to other libraries needing to walk a junior faculty member through the tenure process, or be used as a blueprint to ensure current programs address all of the areas Alire lists.


Ten years after Alire published her article, Andrade and Rivera wrote a much more extensive one examining the process of creating a workforce more attuned to diversity concerns at the University of Arizona. After discussing a survey assessing the climate surrounding diversity in the university, the authors explain how they defined diversity and the development of diversity-related competencies for the university. Of particular value is the list of diversity competency descriptions, cleared by human resources and university officials, which define what it means
to have “entry level” and “mastery level” competency when it comes to diversity. Also covered are the approaches to position postings, candidate interview and reference questions, and tools for assessment of candidates. Finally, they discuss how the competencies and approaches were integrated into the university, as well as future plans. An appendix not only provides a reading list, it also includes the climate survey questions used to initially assess library staff, and a checklist to help evaluate diversity attitudes and behaviors.


Bonnette briefly covers the benefits of mentoring for professional librarians, noting that “[m]any early to midcareer minority librarians struggle against low salaries, a lack of professional training, and ultimately, stagnating careers” (p.135). Mentoring benefits both minority librarians and the organizations that hire them, and Bonnette argues that “a truly diverse workforce is not fully present until it is represented throughout all levels of the organization, not only at entry and mid-level positions, but throughout the administrative ranks as well” (p.138). Overall, the article acts as strong support for a formal mentoring program within any type of library.


Damasco and Hodges undertook a survey examining the factors that might have an impact on librarians of color seeking tenure and promotion. Reviewing the literature, they found little that specifically focuses on minority librarians in this area; therefore, they drew analogies with teaching faculty of color. The article may be eye opening for some, due to the comments the authors share from the survey of minority librarians. Candid replies regarding the discrimination they faced are not always easy to read, particularly because the article was published in 2012, belying the comfortable assumption that blatant racism is on the wane in academia. Instead, the authors indicate that librarians of color may face inequitable treatment in pursuing a tenure-track position or seeking promotion, and that “mentoring or peer support groups that are designed to help junior faculty should engage in regular assessment to ensure such programs are actually effective” (p.300). The article is highly recommended for the personal reflections of the respondents and the detailed findings related in the survey.

### Law Librarianship

*§5 In 1998, *Law Library Journal*’s fall issue collected several articles into a special feature on diversity. Since then, there has been very little written on diversity in law librarianship, and the lack of literature helped prompt the launch of this series of columns in 2010. Two articles from the special feature are included here, but all are recommended reading for law librarians interested in diversity.*


In an update to a 1995 article,7 the authors compare the profile of minority law librarians in 1992–93 with data from a 2007 survey as well as relevant information from the AALL 2005 and 2007 salary surveys, parsing the differences and explaining how the status of minority librarians has changed. Some of the more interesting findings include that while many minority librarians have achieved management and supervisory positions, many more are over the age of forty, which may have implications for the future. Another finding—that more than half of minority librarians responding to the 2007 survey had worked in a library prior to becoming law librarians—suggests to the authors that more recruitment effort could be directed toward colleges and high schools. The article is recommended reading as it is the most recent, comprehensive effort to canvass information specifically about minorities within law librarianship.


This bibliography collects citations relating to minority librarians from 1990 to 1998 and should be considered a starting point for anyone seeking additional information on diversity within the larger library profession. While the literature has grown steadily since 1998, Garces’s article still remains a firm foundation from which to start analyzing the material.


In this article, Howland reflects that “[l]aw librarianship only mirrors the society in which it must exist” (p.563). She talks of the effect the story of Virginia Proctor Powell Florence, the first African American woman to be admitted to Carnegie Library School in Pittsburgh, had on her own research agenda. Howland observes that Florence’s story, which included facing systemic racism in pursuit of her profession, leads one to “reflect upon the fact that, at a time when African-Americans—albeit in limited numbers—could gain access to professional training in fields such as law, medicine and education, the doors to library school were generally still firmly shut” (p.565–66). Howland also mentions Magdalene O’Rourke’s 1970 essay Hiring Practices in Law Libraries, which discussed racism in the profession. Like O’Rourke, Howland finds that her “impression[s] of a lack of wholehearted acceptance of and commitment to cultural and ethnic differences is not ‘derived from an expensive, elaborate and time-consuming study. They derive from a commonsense look at the realities of a field with which I am familiar”’ (p.573 (quoting O’Rourke)). Almost a hundred years removed from Florence, decades after O’Rourke’s essay, and fifteen years after Howland’s observation, I still share both women’s sentiment.

# Conclusion

I hope that my Diversity Dialogues columns have made it clear that I strongly believe law librarianship as a whole needs to reaffirm and strengthen a commitment to diversity within the profession. Not only is it important for us to

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reflect the country’s demographic changes, but familiarity with the different facets of diversity helps us create better and more efficient work environments. Understanding why conflict arises allows us to influence organizational culture so that it includes more points of view. This will ultimately help librarians and their communities better navigate an increasingly global environment and a rapidly changing profession of law.

¶7 Embracing diversity in all its forms, whether it be the people we work with, the organizations we work within, or the ways in which we have traditionally approached the profession and work we do, can only help us navigate the path ahead. The issues confronting law librarians regarding diversity, proving the value of the profession to the community, and new ways we can reach out and maximize our impact on users are already being discussed within the larger field of librarianship, and we can look there for guidance on how to approach the problem within our specialized field. At the very least, there should be a concerted effort by AALL to determine the number of minority librarians within law librarianship and the management or leadership roles in which they serve. AALL must make a greater formal effort in both time and money to address the issues of recruitment and retention in underrepresented populations.

¶8 For example, what holds back formal or ongoing dialogue between different types of libraries where we can openly discuss the challenges or problems we face? Can AALL provide open spots at the Annual Meeting where librarians from different backgrounds have the time and space to discuss what they share in common or try to let one another know how we are being innovative within our own organizations? And could AALL make it a priority to let these conversations be led by trained facilitators who can report back to the larger membership?

¶9 The barriers that have traditionally existed to separate academic; law firm; and state, court, and county law librarians should be understood to be largely of our own making. In the end, we all work with attorneys and people who interact with the legal system, and we should be more actively and aggressively working together to understand what we have in common. By doing so, we will help the profession as a whole instead of wasting time and effort determining what makes us so different from one another.

¶10 In 1998, many of the articles that discussed diversity in Law Library Journal advocated for more diversity, in part due to the growing multicultural population. In 2013, while progress has been made, AALL and the law librarianship profession are far behind in clearly establishing a consistent commitment to diversity. Half-hearted attempts or diffuse efforts over decades will not bring about permanent change, nor can it be expected or assumed that the limited number of minority and diverse librarians already within the profession should bear the heaviest responsibility when it comes to recruitment or retention. There needs to be a systemic effort that, I would argue, can only be initiated, promoted, and sustained by AALL to reach out to LIS educators, to relevant populations, and to all librarians to promote the value of diversity within the profession and demonstrate how it can assist the entire field.

¶11 While I have enjoyed writing this column, I am concerned that in another fifteen years another librarian will still be echoing the sentiments I have expressed,
which already repeat some of the concerns voiced in 1998. Perhaps law librarianship will become more diverse simply due to demographics, which will force the profession to include more librarians from minority backgrounds. Yet that is an enormous assumption to make, and it is countered by the risk that the numbers of minority librarians will remain the same or decrease because of factors such as changes in legal education and the profession, which may shrink the field of law librarianship.

¶12 I never expected that the career I chose would be able to utilize both my library and law degrees in a way I find so professionally and personally rewarding. And I adamantly believe that my experience as a person of color helps me work with the community I serve within my institution. But I recognize and understand that while part of that is due to my own initiative, it was, frankly, due equally to my great luck in having connected with minority librarians who have mentored me, as well as my experience in libraries before I went to law school. I believe many law librarians from minority backgrounds end up within law librarianship because we “fell into it.” We found a mentor or worked in a library. We practiced law and perhaps burned out a bit doing it. We were looking for second or third careers, wanting to harness our thirst for information or our desire to help others.

¶13 My most fervent wish is that every law librarian will understand the need for more librarians from diverse backgrounds within the field and commit to helping increase the opportunities for those who wish to join us, that you comprehend the value of diversity within your law library, that you agree change is needed, and that you believe your library needs assistance in breaking down barriers that limit the richness diversity can bring to the workplace.

¶14 If each librarian, no matter his or her background, decides to take the personal initiative to be more open to diversity—to question whether their workplace or attitudes are inclusive of the experiences of their colleagues, their students, faculty, attorneys, or whomever they serve—I am convinced that a movement may come to fruition. I firmly believe that embracing diversity increases the chance of innovation, which is sorely needed now, as the legal profession shifts in ways few of us anticipated.

¶15 The only constant is change. If, after repeated warnings and reflections, the field of law librarianship chooses to ignore the realities of demographics and a fundamental shift in the practice of law, we will cease to be relevant to those we have traditionally served. I, for one, believe that with the collective will to embrace diversity, there are enough of us to make sure that does not happen.