In Their Own Words: A Qualitative Study of Diversity Initiatives and the Careers of Librarians From Underrepresented Groups

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There are a many initiatives devoted to the recruitment and retention of librarians of color. They include fellowships, scholarships, leadership institutes, and residency programs. A qualitative research study was conducted to bring a much needed dimension to the research on diversity in the profession, and hear directly from participants. The speakers will presented data from in-depth interviews, discussed the effectiveness of the institutes, and outlined the implications for diversity in librarianship.
In Their Own Words

A Qualitative Study of Diversity Initiatives and the Careers of Librarian
Background

- Initiatives devoted to the recruitment and retention of librarians of color
  - Fellowships, scholarships, leadership institutes, and residency programs
- Need understanding initiatives effectiveness and the implications for diversity in librarianship
- Identify possible areas of improvement
Study Design

• Qualitative Case Study
  o Multidisciplinary
  o Describes one or more cases in-depth
  o Holistic description & search for themes
Participation

• Involved the voluntary completion of a 45 to 60 minute telephone interview
  o Sept. 11th-18th
• Demographic questions
• Open ended questions
  o Opinions on how participation in a diversity program impacted careers
Demographics

- **Gender**
  - 3 Men
  - 3 Women

- **Years Librarian**
  - 2-3.5 years (3)
  - 6-8 years (3)
Demographics cont.

- **Library Types**
  - 1 Public
  - 4 Academic
    - 1 Specialized
  - 1 Government Library

- **Current Positions**
  - 3 Department Heads
  - 2 Public Services
  - 1 Technical Services
Diversity Programs

• Minority Residency/Fellowship (4)
• Leadership Institute (5)
  o Minnesota
  o LCDP
• Scholarships (7)
  o Spectrum
  o Knowledge River
Effective Experience

• Quality of speakers and facilitators

• Professional exposure/development
  o Led to other experiences

• Contacts/mentoring
Benefits of Participation

• Professional exposure/development
  o Access
  o Career goals
• Financial incentives
  o Tuition
  o Conference attendance
• Cohort interaction
  o Peer network
  o Safe environment
Negative Aspects

- Length of time
- Tension with larger library community
  - Perceptions of program
  - Need for programs in the first place
  - Wanting to be seen as a librarian rather than a diversity......
- Entitlement issues
  - Participation isn’t guarantee
Mentoring

- Developed and maintained relationships with peers (other librarians of color) over time
  - Helped to build network
  - Sustained through social networking & list-servs
- Formal Mentorsip within programs were significant in career advancement
- Some long-lasting relationships with mentors and peers that are helpful socially and professionally
  - Sounding board
Mentoring Others

- Informal Mentoring
  - Discussion with students and others new to the profession
  - Helping others get acclimated to profession and organizations
  - Relating Experiences in diversity programs
- Formal programs
  - with students in Library School
  - Within organizations (ALA and Affiliates)
- Mentoring settings
  - In the Work place in a supervisory capacity
  - Within the diversity programs for current participants
Diversity Programs - Necessity

Are Diversity Programs Necessary
• All respondents said yes

• Recruit and Retain Librarians of Color

• Support Network

• Removes Isolation
Diversity Programs

Marginalization?
• Three Respondents agree the programs do marginalized

  o Recognized that it is a painful important first step to diversifying the profession

  o Outsiders tend to marginalize program participants
Diversity Programs-Cont.

- Two respondents said they don't
  - Represents space for learning and creating contacts
- One believed that the responsibility was on the individual participant
  - Depends on how the librarian uses what they learn
Career Effectiveness

Career Trajectory

- Has confidence to apply and moved forward with career
- Helped in all phases from student, applicant, fellow to specialist
- Resume enhancement
- Exposure to programs and opportunities
Career Effectiveness cont.

Accomplishment without Participation?
• Programs help put participants on tract
• Boost timing in career advancement
• Leads to other opportunities
Thank you!

Questions??

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