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Librarians Working with Diverse Populations: What Impact Does Cultural Competency Training Have on Their Efforts?

by Lori S. Mestre

Only a small portion of librarians have been trained to lead efforts in diversity awareness and training. This study, consisting of surveys and interviews, explored diversity training of librarians and the impact that training has on their efforts to promote cultural competency at their libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Our society is one of many cultures, languages, abilities, preferences, and backgrounds and providing the optimal library experience to all constituencies is clearly at the forefront of librarians' service goals. Working effectively with diverse cultures is of ever increasing importance. It is not enough to rely on a few librarians to oversee diversity training. To advance efforts, all librarians need to come into the profession with at least a foundational knowledge of what it means to be culturally competent. This study explored how well librarians from the United States with responsibilities of working with diverse cultures in academic and research libraries felt they were prepared to work with cultures other than their own. Results are presented, and suggestions offered for improving diversity training, especially for library and information science programs.

Although there are numerous articles that define the need to provide diversity training within library school curricula, little has been written that analyzes the job challenges that occur as a result of the limited diversity (or cultural competency) training. This study investigates those challenges by attempting to answer the question, "What diversity training do librarians receive prior to entering their position and is that training sufficient for becoming culturally competent?" The impact of that training will be discussed and solutions proposed for addressing those shortcomings.

WHAT DO CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND DIVERSITY AWARENESS MEAN?

To explore this research question there is a need to define cultural competency and its relationship to diversity awareness. The term "cultural competency" began to become popular in the late 1990s. Prior to that, terms such as "multicultural competence," "cultural diversity," and "diversity awareness," were common terms used to discuss the knowledge and skills needed to work with people from different cultures. "Cultural competency goes beyond diversity awareness. It denotes an individual's ability to effectively interact with and among others whose values, behaviors and environments are different from one's own."[1] Cultural competency is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period and refers to an ability to understand the needs of diverse populations and to interact effectively with people from different cultures. Whereas there are often diversity training sessions for individuals to learn how to become culturally aware and sensitive to others, training to be culturally competent extends beyond that. One must also be trained to recognize the various learning and communication styles of others and to be able to adjust one's habits based on those style differences in order to best interact with cultures other than one's own.

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> **"Cultural competency is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period and refers to an ability to understand the needs of diverse populations and to interact effectively with people from different cultures."**

Many librarians are aware of the importance of accepting and valuing similarities and differences in cultures, perspectives, preferences and approaches, but perhaps have not moved beyond that acknowledgement. Many libraries and library and information science programs offer periodic diversity training and programming. However, these efforts are only steps towards a more interwoven process that needs to occur for librarians to be culturally competent. Sandra Rios-Balderrama states that the development of cultural competence is critical and to achieve it "We must: (1) be interested in learning from and with people from other cultures; (2) self assess our own cultural values and consider how we obtained them; (3) grow our competency level from awareness to knowledge to expertise."[2]

Overall presents the building blocks to become culturally proficient. The progression she outlines moves from cultural pre-competence to full cultural competence. The stages are: cultural incapacity; cultural blindness; lack of cultural competence; some or limited cultural competence; cultural competence; and finally cultural proficiency.[3]

In addition to individuals progressing through the stages of becoming culturally competent, organizations can work towards becoming culturally competent as well. The National Center for Cultural Competence[4] lists the following requirements for being culturally competent.

Cultural competence requires that organizations:

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.
- Incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.

The above goals may already be established in some libraries as a result of previous diversity strategic planning. Yet, components of the above may or not be present or may not permeate all levels of library structure, activities, management or services. Vaughn and Martin provide an overview of a Cultural Competence Stage Model that describes the stages that organizations go through to become inclusive.[5] The stages are: Conventional (lowest cultural competence stage); Defensive; Ambivalent; Integrative; and Inclusive (highest cultural competence stage). Clearly an organization may progress through these stages faster if individuals have reached the higher stages already. If individuals are already culturally competent or progressing through the stages, the institution will move along the continuum at a much faster rate.

RELATED LITERATURE IN CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

There are many arguments for providing cultural competency training in libraries. Without this training the following has been evidenced: inadequate library service to diverse populations; lack of cultural and language awareness and sensitivity; inability to understand how culture affects library use; and lack of respect for different perspectives.[6]

> **"Without this training the following has been evidenced: inadequate library service to diverse populations; lack of cultural and language awareness and sensitivity; inability to understand how culture affects library use; and lack of respect for different perspectives."**

One of the barriers that may prevent librarians from understanding students from other backgrounds and cultures is unfamiliarity with cultural communication. This lack of effective cross-cultural communication (both verbal and nonverbal) can lead to a mismatch in reference and instructional efforts. Training can help librarians learn to modify instruction to different cultural, linguistic and learning styles and can enhance reference and instructional encounters.[7] Without proper training in cross-cultural communication styles, librarians may inadvertently misinterpret, misunderstand or possibly insult others.[8]

When librarians work with individuals from diverse cultures they need to be flexible and make exceptions to traditional practice. Gomez provides scenarios of how librarians from the mainstream population (white European Americans who are English speakers) can become culturally competent in order to become effective communicators, liaisons, and advocates for members of minority cultures.[9] One of the main characteristics he sees as necessary is a true commitment to public service, which means taking time to learn about the individuals one is working with and their customs and practices.

Elturk also speaks to the need for librarians to become culturally competent and that the services, collections, programs, hiring procedures, and also the physical places in libraries, should reflect its inclusive policies and approaches.[10] She indicates that "in the absence of cultural competency, even fair and just implementations of meaningful and authentic inclusiveness are hollow, cannot be achieved, and will lack the intended impact".[11] Two important considerations she notes for being culturally competent are to empower individuals to get involved, and to keep the bigger picture in mind.

The need for cultural competency training of librarians while in their Library and Information Science (LIS) programs has not only been addressed in the literature, but also by the American Library Association. In 2007 the American Library Association (ALA) Committee on Diversity recommended that section 60.0 of the ALA Policy on Diversity be revised to include goals for inclusive and culturally competent Library and Information Services (60.4). It indicated the need to infuse cultural competency and diversity elements into the Library and Information Science curricula. There was also a revision to section 60.5 (Library Education to Meet the Needs of a Diverse Society). The last part of the statement specifically addresses the need for curricula in LIS programs to include diversity components. The goal states that: "The American Library Association, through the Committee on Accreditation, will encourage graduate library and information science programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation to ensure that their student bodies, faculties, and curricula reflect the diverse histories and information needs of all people in the United States…"[12] This policy makes concrete what libraries have been striving to accomplish for quite some time. Clearly Library and Information Science programs play a key role in preparing librarians to understand the roles and responsibilities related to these goals. In order for these programs to prepare students to be culturally competent there will need to be shifts in curricula, including training related to cross cultural communication, cultural sensitivity, differing service models and working with diverse populations. The ultimate goal would be to help librarians learn to appreciate and acknowledge cultural differences, while modifying their own cultural assumptions and expectations to be more sensitive and knowledgeable about other cultures.

The establishment of a policy and goals by the American Library Association urging libraries to work towards providing inclusive and culturally competent Library and Information Services should be a call to library administrators and Library and Information Science programs to dedicate the required energies towards realizing those goals. This study documents some of the challenges that librarians encountered as a result of not having that cultural competency training in their library and information studies program.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data for this study were gathered through two survey questionnaires and fifteen follow-up interviews. The surveys provided a basis for designing the questions used in the interviews. Qualitative methods, such as allowing open ended responses in surveys and interviewing, provide the ability to uncover details, impressions and information that are quite difficult to obtain by simply doing surveys. Patton describes six types of interviewing questions that can be asked of people: experience/behavior questions, opinion/values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions. Interview questions were constructed from each of these categories, although many questions and prompts emerged as was deemed appropriate during each interview.[13]

METHODOLOGY

Survey 1: Survey to Librarians

An anonymous survey consisting of fifty-two multiple choice questions with options to provide open-ended responses related to multicultural training in library school, hiring, and job-related issues, was sent to 123 selected Association of Research Library (ARL) academic librarians whose job titles indicated that one of their primary responsibilities was to coordinate diversity/multicultural efforts. ARL is a not-for-profit membership organization comprising the libraries of North American research institutions. A follow-up reminder was sent and 44 respondents (35.7%) completed the survey. Of the respondents, 75% were female and 54.2% identified as white, European Americans.

Since closed questions may not tap into the wealth of insight that librarians possess about their particular workplace, this study also included opportunities for respondents to express their views at length in writing and through follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of those who returned the survey.

Selection process

Although it would have been preferable to include all librarians serving multicultural populations, for logistic reasons this study was restricted to those working in ARL libraries who could be identified as having primary duties related to multicultural/diversity. Although many public libraries and non-ARL libraries have done much in the way of diversity training and awareness, ARL libraries were selected in order to arrive at a manageable sample of research libraries.

Survey categories

The categories for the questions on the survey were: Part I: Library School Information; Part II: Current Position Information; Part III: The Hiring Process; Part IV: Reality of the Job; Part V: Job Satisfaction; and Part VI: Background Information/Demographics. Because this is part of a larger study[14] only a subset of the questions that pertain to the research question will be analyzed here. That question is: What diversity training do librarians receive prior to entering their position and is that training sufficient for becoming culturally competent? The specific questions are included in the Results Section below.

Interviews

Follow-up phone interviews were conducted with fifteen of the respondents of the librarian survey who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. These librarians were the designated librarians with responsibilities related to diversity or multicultural librarianship or outreach to underrepresented groups at their library. Librarians in that role were not always from an underrepresented group. Their major responsibilities included diversity training, instruction, programming, collection building, and liaison to diverse groups on campus. In addition to demographic questions, interviewees were asked to discuss their initial interest in multicultural librarianship and working with diverse populations; how their library school prepared them for their current position; what they wish would have been covered in library school (pertaining to being successful in their role); and other questions related to their challenges, rewards, experiences, and suggestions. Interviews were taped and later transcribed using *Dragon Naturally Speaking Software.*

Survey 2: Survey to Library School Administrators

An anonymous survey was sent to the 49 accredited Library schools in the United States. A follow-up reminder was sent, and 25 respondents, or 51%, completed the questionnaire. There were sixteen questions including six open-ended questions. Each question offered an "other" option to provide original responses. A few faculty also sent syllabi corresponding to diversity courses. See appendix for questions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As mentioned above, this study was restricted to librarians at ARL libraries in the United States. The responses, therefore, reflect practices and experiences at research libraries, and not necessarily at public libraries, although many of these librarians also provide outreach services to the community. Another limitation is under-inclusion of possible respondents who might also serve diverse populations. Although web pages at these ARL libraries were scanned to determine librarians with major responsibilities as liaisons to underrepresented or diverse populations, not all web pages included this information. Therefore, it is possible that some librarians were unintentionally excluded from the invitation to participate in the study or they chose not to participate in the study. Finally, because the survey was anonymous it is not possible to know which ARL libraries were represented.

RESULTS

In reporting results below, the quantitative data from the surveys, the open ended comments from the survey, and information extracted from the interviews are combined within various topics in order to provide an overall picture. Because several questions allowed for multiple responses, participants typically cited many factors and issues in their answers. Accordingly, the numbers presented in the tables do not always correspond to the number of respondents, and at times percentages do not always add up to 100, simply because one participant could, for example, cite many different challenges at her/his current position.

Data from several questions that had a bearing on answering the research question were extracted from the Survey to Librarians, and analyzed. Each question had a multiple choice option and an option to type in comments.

- Did you intentionally seek a position that was dedicated to multicultural/diversity services? In other words—was this the job you left library school hoping to pursue or after working in libraries wanted to devote your energies to this type of position?
- Was there anything in your graduate education at the library school that directed you to pursue a job as multicultural librarian?
- What was the main reason you applied to the position you now have?
- Did you find that you had to be creative in trying to fit your experiences into what was envisioned for this job?
- Did you believe that you had all of the qualifications, skills, and experiences that were asked for in this position?
- What made you the most qualified for this job?
- Do you feel that your library school program prepared you for working with multiple cultures?
- Did your library school offer a specific course related to multicultural librarianship?
- If library schools were to offer multicultural librarianship as part of their curriculum how should it be offered?
- Did you find it difficult to find relevant examples elsewhere of accomplishments, plans, programs of multicultural/diversity librarians?
- Which of the following has/have been the most challenging aspect(s) of the job? (various choices)

312 Results were grouped together under the following themes:
313 Reasons for Applying to the Position; Job Qualifications; Library and
314 On-the-job Training; and Courses with Multicultural Components.

Reasons for Applying to the Position

316 One of the major findings of this study was that over half of the
317 librarians did not intend to seek a job related to multicultural services.
318 Fig. 1 provides a breakdown of whether or not librarians intended to
319 look for a job in multicultural librarianship. The majority (64%) of the
320 librarians from the survey did not intend to seek a job related to
321 multicultural services, and entered the positions with little preparation.
322

323 **"One of the major findings of this study was that**
324 **over half of the librarians did not intend to seek a**
325 **job related to multicultural services."**

326 The most commons reasons librarians applied to the position were
327 that: they had previously worked with diverse cultures; it caught their
328 eye; they had outreach experience; they were inspired by another; or
329 were placed into this position due to the elimination of a previous
330 department. Some of the respondents were already at the library working
331 as a resident, an intern, or in another position and were asked if they were
332 interested in the position. A few individuals worked for a long time as
333 advocates in their library to create the position and were subsequently
334 offered the position once it was created. Others applied because it looked
335 interesting, even though they were not trained for the position.

Job Qualifications

337 A second finding was that over one third of the librarians did not
338 feel they were qualified for the position. Many of the librarians did not
339 have a good concept of what this type of job should entail because
340 they had no basis for comparing a position such as this one to some
341 standard. In fact, 35% of the librarians (see Fig. 2) surveyed indicated
342 that they took the jobs despite feeling unqualified.
343 Even among those who said they did have the qualifications, only a
344 handful were knowledgeable about how to develop programming,
345 training and campus connections related to their position. These few
346 librarians attributed their knowledge and qualifications not to library

Figure 1
Did you intentionally seek a position related to multicultural/diversity services?

Figure 2
Did you believe that you had all of the qualifications, skills, and experiences that were asked for in this position?
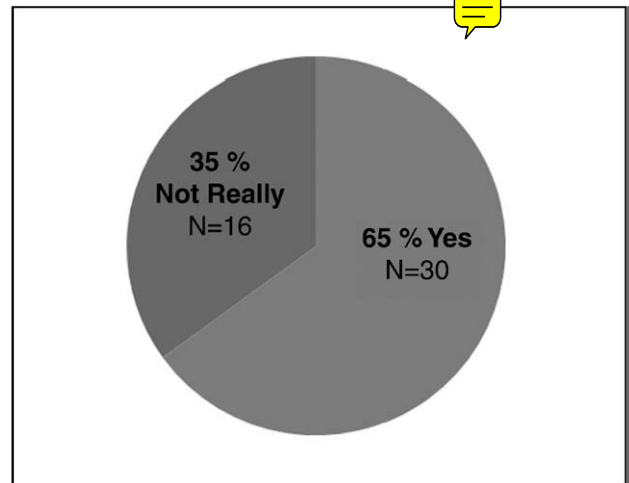
school training, but to the fact that they had been minority residents 380
or interns at that same institution and so they were familiar with local 381
issues. The top four challenges the respondents encountered when 382
working with groups from various cultures (ethnic, racial, religious, 383
linguistic...) were knowing how to: communicate effectively; gain an 384
entrée with groups from other cultures; understand cultural nuances; 385
and be approachable. Respondents thought that they would be able to 386
acquire the needed skills while on the job. 387

Library School and On-The-Job Training

The third major finding was that the amount of diversity training 389
or library school courses that the survey participants had was almost 390
nonexistent, both from library school curricula and from on-the-job 391
training. Participants indicated, in both the open ended responses in 392
the survey and in the interviews, that one of the main challenge they 393
had was not being adequately prepared for the role they were 394
undertaking. The interviewees stated they had little prior training for 395
their role, unless they had been fortunate to have been a minority 396
resident in that institution or had stepped into a position with 397
someone still in place to provide them some transition. 398
Although some library schools do offer stand alone courses as 399
electives focusing on various aspects of multicultural librarianship, 400
none of those surveyed or interviewed had taken such a course or had 401
been advised to take one, if one existed. A survey of the web pages of 402
library and information studies programs reveals that quite a few 403
courses are offered with a specific focus on some element related to 404
developing services, collections or programs for various cultural 405
groups, such as collection building for Latinos, children's and youth 406
literature for specific populations, or community infomatics, even if 407
they may be of possible interest to only a small percentage of students. 408
Although these courses are available, few of those whose jobs focus on 409
diversity seem to be taking them while in library school, unless they 410
already had an interest in the topic. 411
The following Fig. 3a and b, illustrate a mismatch between what 412
librarians thought their library school offered related to courses 413
related to multicultural librarianship and what respondents from the 414
library schools said they offered. Results indicated that 77% of the 415
librarians said no such course existed, whereas 75% of those 416
responding on behalf of the library schools said the opposite. 417
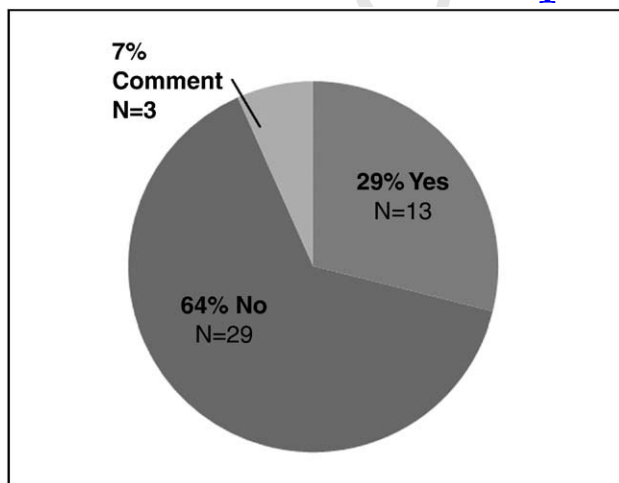
Figure 3
(a) Does the library school you attended Fig. 3b. Does this library school offer a specific course in multicultural librarianship specific course in multicultural librarianship (or something similar)?

a

From Librarian Survey

23% Yes
N=10

77% No
N=33

b

From Library School Survey

25 % NO
N=6

75% Yes
N=18
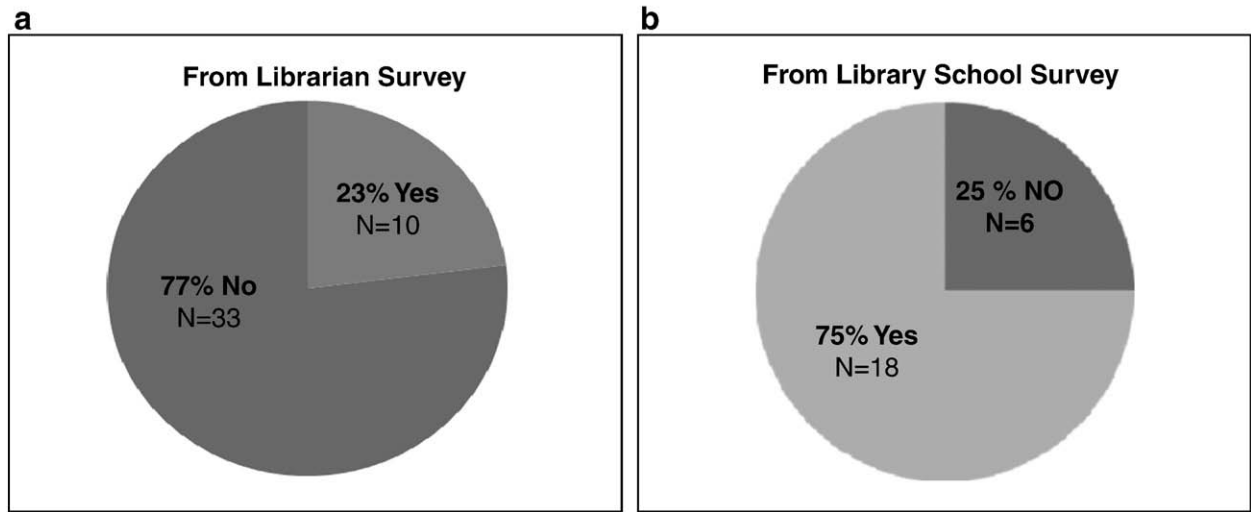
The librarians taking the survey were all librarians in roles serving students from diverse populations. Yet, three quarters of them were not aware that their library school offered a specific course in multicultural librarianship. One respondent commented that, "I agree that this should be more of a priority in Library school. However, I feel that Library School in general is very limited toward meeting the sorts of goals that multicultural outreach demands."

Courses with Multicultural Components

The respondents to the librarian survey stated that there should be more emphasis on multicultural awareness and training in library schools. Their choices of ways to do this are documented in Figs. 4 and 5 below.

When assessing the extent to which aspects or components of multicultural librarianship or education are actually integrated into the curriculum, some of the librarians surveyed could remember instances where there was some effort to discuss these issues in the classes, but most of them could not recall any. However, 44% of the respondents of the library school survey indicated that faculty make a conscious effort to include components in their courses (see Fig. 5).

In response to the question: *Did the program prepare you to work with multiple cultures?,* less than one quarter of the respondents said it did, and half said it did not, as illustrated in Fig. 6 below.

When asked for suggestions of topics that would have been most useful in their library schools, a white, Anglo American librarian commented, "I think that classes should include skills in cross-cultural communication. That's a big one. I didn't get any of that actually. I am picking up by watching and observing." An African American female said, "I think there needs to be some diversity component in every course and faculty need to communicate to the students it's becoming a more diverse area. They need to know how to locate resources across all disciplines and understand populations, even in cataloging. Talk about how Library of Congress subject headings might not work as well. All the way through the curriculum." Another librarian said, "I took an Outreach class at Rutgers, which opened up the field to me. I think in today's world all new librarians should have a similar class

Figure 4
If library schools were to offer multicultural librarianship as part of their curriculum how should it be offered?
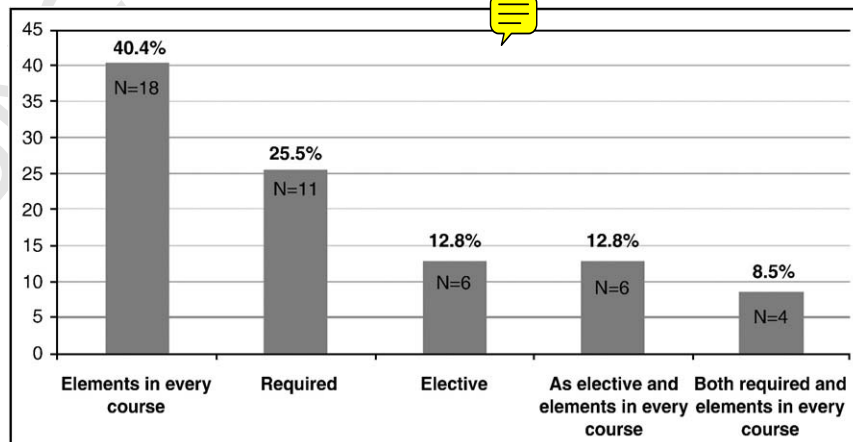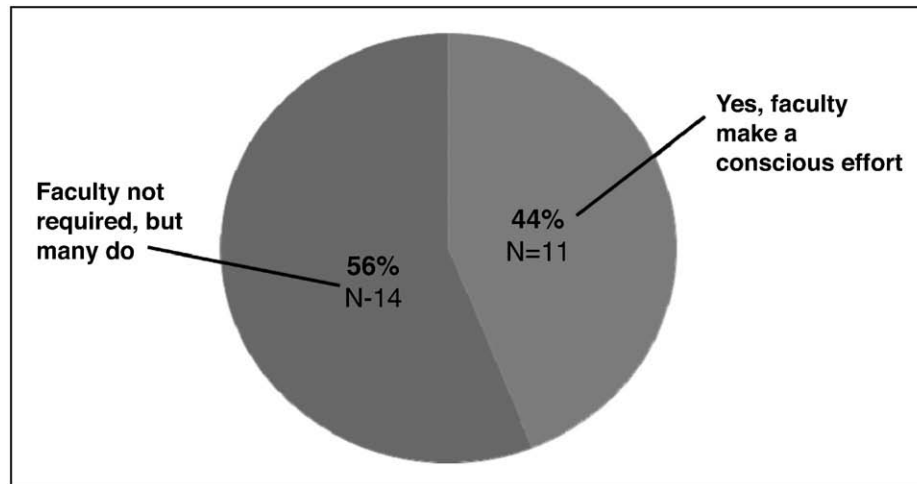
40.4% N=18	Elements in every course
25.5% N=11	Required
12.8% N=6	Elective
12.8% N=6	As elective and elements in every course
8.5% N=4	Both required and elements in every course

Figure 5
Are there components of multicultural/diversity education typically included in a course? (From the Library School Survey).

under their belts. Also, an information-searching behavior class related to different ethnic groups, etc., would be helpful."

Experience in collection development related to diverse groups was also of interest. One interviewee remarked that "Librarianship is traditionally a profession concerned with selecting, collecting, and making accessible a balance of information resources representing all knowledge relative to the mission without censorship. Traditionally, we have always provided professional information service to all users within the group for which a library is established. Diversity and cultural information exists in the books and resources of nearly every library even without special effort to collect them specifically. Today, there are growing, rather than diminishing needs for a more directed collecting and service provision related to racial, cultural, religious, and social diversity." Another said, "When you're selecting you're selecting for everybody and you need to be looking for the materials from other cultures and stuff. But a lot of times, unless somebody set up the approval profile to include that kind of stuff and the publishers, those books never come into the approval process. So somebody had to be out there looking for them."

DISCUSSION

What Diversity Training Do Librarians Receive Prior to Entering Their Position and is That Training Sufficient for Becoming Culturally Competent?

The results of this study provide an indication that there is much more that needs to be done to provide librarians with diversity training prior to entering the profession. One of the main themes that emerged from the study in both the open-ended comments and in the interviews was that librarians should leave their library and information studies programs with some baseline knowledge of cultural competency. One of the findings of the study is that over half of the librarians did not intend to seek a job related to multicultural librarianship. This argues for all librarians to be trained to be culturally competent so that they will be prepared to step into a role where they are diversity advocates and help shape services and collections to diverse populations. Normally when people apply to a position it is because they feel it is a good fit for them and they have the necessary qualifications. Many librarians aspire to a certain type of position and perhaps train for it either through course work or related educational experiences. Yet, multicultural librarianship is rarely discussed as a

field in library school, based on responses gathered in this study, which leaves librarians lacking necessary preparation and knowledge for this type of position and also for helping others to learn to be culturally competent. In fact, these librarians felt they were not qualified to undergo their duties.

> **"The results of this study provide an indication that there is much more that needs to be done to provide librarians with diversity training prior to entering the profession."**

There was also a discrepancy in responses from librarians and library school administrators regarding whether or not course offerings included components of multicultural librarianship. This

Figure 6
Did the program prepare you to work with multiple cultures?
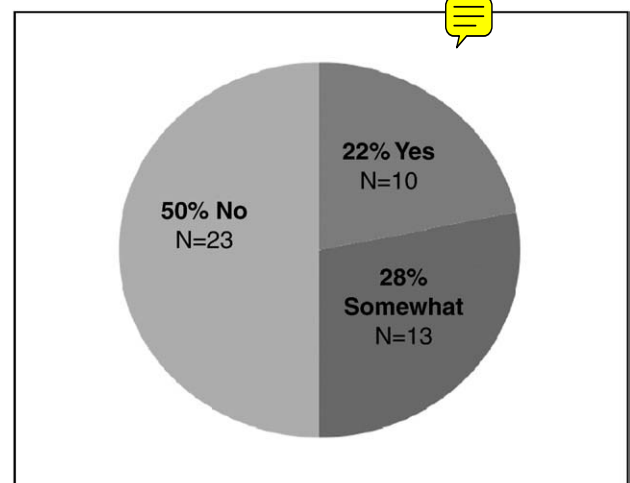
indicates the need to both publicize and to populate these courses better than is currently being done. It may also mean that there is a mismatch in perceptions—students do not see courses that faculty and administrators see as "diversity training" to really fit that category. Part of this discrepancy may be due to the fact that 64% of the respondents indicated that they had not intended to look for a job as a multicultural librarian (Fig. 2 above), so they may not have looked to see if courses were available to prepare them in that role. It may very well be that faculty incorporate some discussion related to strategies for thinking more broadly about services, collections and practices for working with diverse cultures. One would need to evaluate the syllabi to get a more definitive picture of the amount of diversity related content, training and discussion that is covered in classes.

For many students, their only formal course in multicultural education occurs at the undergraduate level and is only an initial step towards developing cultural competency. Library schools in the United States can extend this development of cultural awareness. Given the quantity of existing core courses, it seems improbable to add another core course related to multicultural librarianship, although this would at least provide a minimal foundation for all outgoing librarians.

What is the Impact of Entering the Library Profession Without Adequate Training?

In view of the rapidly changing demographics in this country, librarians will increasingly need to work with individuals who have needs and backgrounds that are very different from their own. As previously noted, for most institutions there really is no single person designated to coordinate diversity efforts. Even the few librarians who do have such roles indicated that when they took on their position they did not have the needed training or qualifications to lead diversity efforts. Every librarian in the survey and interviews, regardless of ethnicity, mentioned the lack of training and the amount of time and dedication it took to even understand where and how to begin. Virtually all of the interviewees indicated that they struggled in their position.

One would assume that librarians in roles that coordinate diversity awareness and training, who were targeted in this survey, would have received the necessary diversity training. However, it appears that most of the training is done once on the job, rather than through their coursework. These librarians are often the ones who need to lead the diversity training for other librarians and help them to become culturally competent; yet they, themselves, revealed that they need to get trained and must look elsewhere for models and examples. However, a far worse scenario is to reflect upon all of the other libraries left without a designated individual assigned to diversity or multicultural issues to take the lead. In fact, another aspect of this study was the examination of ARL library web pages to find instances of diversity on the sites. That examination revealed that 93 of the 107 ARL libraries in the United States do not have a designated librarian to guide or coordinate diversity or multicultural efforts. Only fourteen of the libraries had a full-time "diversity librarian," "multicultural librarian," "outreach librarian for multicultural services," "ethnic studies librarian," or librarian with a similar title. Without this contact person or deliberate support by the administration these libraries may continue to struggle to prepare librarians to become culturally competent. The lack of preparation of librarians to work with other cultures is of concern.

Librarians discussed the consequences of beginning a job in the library without adequate preparation. Of those surveyed, 40% indicated that there had not been a previous person in this position. There were no guidelines, road maps, contacts or support structures in place. These librarians had to shape the position. When asked if they found it difficult to find relevant examples elsewhere of accomplish-ments, plans, or programs of multicultural/diversity librarians 33.3% of the respondents replied that it was difficult. One librarian remarked that "There are very few multicultural/diversity librarians. I recall reading all that was written and became a member of EMIERT[15] and attended annual conferences to acquire relevant plans, programs, services, and interact with other multicultural/diversity librarians." Another commented "There needs to be much more of this!!!" With little prior diversity knowledge or experience, the librarians found they were isolated, did not even know where to begin, and were essentially left on their own to "figure it out." They felt frustrated and noted the uphill struggle in their positions with little forward movement possible pertaining to the roles they were to undertake.

If not adequately trained it becomes a daunting task to learn how to coordinate programmatic training, to forge critical connections needed on campus and in the community, or to effectively develop services, collections and instruction for the diverse groups. In the absence of a dedicated librarian, it becomes even more imperative for all librarians to be minimally trained in diversity awareness and sensitivity. This is one compelling reason for all librarians to come into the profession with some basic foundation in what it means to be culturally competent in order to provide optimal service to all. Another reason to include multicultural education in all courses is that the U.S. Census projects that whites will be a minority in this country in a few decades.[16] More than ever, librarians will need to understand how to modify more, programs, communication, and liaison activities to best assist all cultural and ethnic groups.

As campus recruitment efforts and programs become more successful, library outreach to an increasingly diverse student body becomes ever more important. This broadly translates into the need to learn multiple ways to facilitate access to library resources. Specifically, libraries need to be actively involved in working with various student organizations and groups from diverse backgrounds to promote library instruction and reference services. Additionally, many undergraduate and graduate students need guidance from librarians to assist them with research and information skill building on topics related to various cultures. Knowledge of diverse cultures also means developing collections, programming, online resources, and communication styles that meet the needs of the broader population. At the basic level, librarians may acknowledge that one size does not fit all and may actively try to be friendly and helpful to all users. However, they may not have the intensive inner knowledge and experience to understand how to modify their approach or how to read cultural cues to effectively work with and advance the knowledge quests of others. They may readily admit that they would like to better understand the users they serve, yet may not go beyond that admission if not prompted or offered concrete training or programs. If librarians are unaware of the impact their communication, both verbal and nonverbal, has on others, they may be contributing to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and missed opportunities.

Suggestions for Modifying Courses to Incorporate Cultural Competency

This study provided evidence that librarians, even recent graduates of LIS programs, are still entering the library profession with minimal or no obvious training in becoming culturally competent. Half of the interviewees mentioned that libraries tend to appoint librarians of color already on staff to be the point person for any initiative that has the word "diversity" or "multicultural" in it, which can lead to stress, overload, unrealistic expectations, and burn out. They suggested that there might also be other individuals on staff who are interested and well suited for those committees, exhibits, projects, and liaison work. With training and education they could be ideal. While recruiting and hiring librarians and staff from diverse

backgrounds is an important goal for libraries, that should not be the sole solution to a broader need, namely educating all librarians and staff to become aware of effective modes of interacting with different cultures in order to best provide services for them. Libraries have a variety of ways they try to address these issues, such as establishing diversity committees and training, but educating all future librarians to become culturally competent while they are enrolled in library school should be a priority. A recommendation from the respondents and interviewees in the study was to intersperse cultural competency components into each course in library school, as it relates to the subject content of the course.

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What then, can be done to meet the diversity goals set forth by the American Library Association? Many researchers have provided specific goals towards developing this competency, whether it is working with students who are from the community or from different countries. Press and Diggs-Hobson, for example, include specific suggestions for developing mutual understanding with individuals and communities: Acknowledge that it is not possible to know as much about other people or communities as they know about themselves; recognize individual and community biases; be open to learn about and from other people and other communities; and work to develop a trusting relationship with individuals and communities.[17] They also provide a suggested code of characteristics of the culturally competent librarian (adapted from the health field) in the areas of attitude, knowledge and skills. Allard, Mehra, and Qayyum provide suggestions for actions that librarians can take if they want to be intercultural leaders. They discuss the need for intercultural training and the need: to be able to negotiate relationships with individuals from other cultures and linguistic backgrounds; to expand collection development efforts to underserved populations; and to conduct regular assessment of services and needs.[18]

Researchers and faculty have long provided suggestions for modifying the (LIS) curriculum in order to better prepare future librarians for working with diverse groups.[19] They suggest that students need more training to better prepare them to effectively interact and communicate with diverse students; to plan programs that meet their needs; and to support their growth and development. Yet, it is not clear how well existing programs are incorporating these suggestions.

One of the suggestions provided by researchers for infusing cultural competency into the existing curriculum is to add multicultural components into each course.[20] This "integration approach" to providing diversity education would be most effective if done in a coordinated effort. If not, students may only learn about topics that are of interest to the particular faculty member teaching the course or that could easily or naturally be introduced into the course. It does not assure that every student will receive the necessary knowledge needed to be culturally competent. By developing articulation between courses related to diversity education, students may begin to reflect more deeply on the necessity to reframe their thinking and procedures with a broader lens. Librarians in the present study felt that the "integration approach" would have helped them (and others) in order to consider diverse populations in every area of librarianship.

Other researchers have provided frameworks and integration plans for redesigning the entire LIS curriculum. One conceptual framework for cultural competence for the LIS professions proposed by Montiel-Overall identifies three domains in which cultural competence is developed, namely cognitive, interpersonal, and environmental, and provides a guide for implementing cultural competency guidelines within the LIS profession.[21] Another framework by Flowers recommends that graduate programs create a "diversity integration plan."[22] This plan would look at the panoply of courses offered and suggest components for diversity knowledge to be incorporated into them. Josey and Abdullahi propose that library schools should plan for systematic inclusion of intercultural issues within the curriculum.[23] They discuss four characteristics that the curricula should help students develop: sociocultural consciousness; an affirming attitude towards students from diverse backgrounds; commitment and skills to act as agents of change; and culturally responsive teaching practices.

Although the above researchers provide suggestions for redesigning curricula in library schools to infuse this type of training, it is not clear if there have been any empirical tests to evaluate whether or not suggestions made have been implemented in LIS programs, and if they have, what the impact has been. Future research to determine the effect of specific cultural competency programming in LIS programs is needed.

Clearly there have been many efforts to modify the LIS curricula to infuse elements to help students become culturally competent. There is much more to be done on this front. Educating future librarians to recognize the contributions and information needs of diverse populations is critical and a good first step for curriculum planning reform. LIS programs need to provide education that allows students to: raise their level of self-awareness; improve authentic cross-cultural knowledge; improve cross-cultural communication; modify and apply cultural considerations into their practice; learn how to assess the library and campus climate; and develop plans to improve areas. Along with a diversity integration plan, some exit interview or assessment might be offered to assess whether the students have developed adequate cultural competencies.

CONCLUSION

Through this study it became apparent that few academic libraries now have a designated librarian to oversee diversity efforts and outreach. Additionally, librarians currently in those positions indicated that prior to accepting their positions they had minimal diversity training or library school courses related to diversity or what it means to be culturally competent. Every librarian will no doubt be working with other cultures, no matter which library or position they are in. Although they may not intentionally seek a position with a focus on multicultural librarianship, they will minimally be working with others who may have different views, perspectives, experiences, communication styles, interaction styles and expectations. Any librarian who comes in contact with another individual, either face to face or virtually, can benefit from learning about other cultures, norms, expectations, and communication styles. Becoming culturally competent is a long process. It takes time to reflect, absorb, and then integrate the information. Even if the coordinator provides training opportunities, without support from the administration (including mandated training), the result may be low attendance and an inability to achieve the desired goals. Providing diversity education opportunities for all future librarians is becoming more critical than ever as our society becomes more diverse. If this type of education occurred in library schools, librarians would then enter the profession with some minimal training. That would then allow a librarian who coordinates diversity efforts to continue with ongoing training and programmatic opportunities. Library and Information Science programs need to play

794 a key role in this development. By consciously extending the content
795 in each course to reflect on what some of the issues or strategies might
796 be for working with different populations, students may begin to
797 think more broadly about their actions and reactions.

799 **"Providing diversity education opportunities for all**
800 **future librarians is becoming more critical than ever**
as our society becomes more diverse."

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