Retention of Former Residents in Librarianship: A Preliminary Exploration

KATHERINE DONALDSON
SOCIAL SCIENCES/EDUCATION LIBRARIAN
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
What is a Residency?

“What Post-degree work experience designed as an entry-level program for professionals who have recently received a graduate degree.”

-Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), 1992
Residency ≠ Internship
Characteristics of Residency Programs

• Length: typically 1-3 years

• Type of institution: Mostly academic libraries

• Number of residents: 1 or a cohort (2+)

• Specialization: Departmental rotation model or focus on specific functional area

• Support for professional development

• Diversity?
What needs are residencies addressing?

• Lack of entry level jobs

• Gap between skills/experience acquired in library school and skills/experience needed in first professional position

• Lack of diversity in the profession
Lack of Entry Level Jobs

• In 2012, 75% of academic librarian jobs were not entry level*

• Many “entry level” jobs ask for at least two years of professional (post-graduate) experience

Skill/Experience Gap

• Many recent graduates feel that they don’t have enough practical experience to be competitive in the job market*

Lack of Diversity

• In 2012, around 88% of librarians identified as white*
  

• In ARL institutions, over three quarters of librarians and nearly 90% of academic library leaders identified as white**

**Race/ethnicity—librarians only, by large job types

A Brief History of Librarian Residencies

- In the 1960s, post-master’s internship programs were developed by the National Library of Medicine and at Ohio State University.

- In the 1980s, residency programs began to be influenced by affirmative action policies.

- 1984: U of Delaware became one of the first residency programs to focus on recruiting librarians from underrepresented groups.
A Brief History of Librarian Residencies

• Backlash against affirmative action in early 2000s resulted in bans in some states and changed character of some residency programs

• In 1997, there were approx. 18 residency programs; today there are closer to 49

• The Diversity Alliance began in 2015 at four institutions; now 44 institutions

http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/diversityalliance/2018roster
Where are residencies?

Red = Member of ACRL Diversity Alliance

Taken from ACRL RIG website (2018): http://acrl.ala.org/residency/programs/
Where are former residents now?

- Sample of residents obtained from ACRL RIG list of former residents (n=132)
- Completed residencies between 1993 and 2018 (as of June 2018)
- Looked at LinkedIn profiles and staff directories to determine current job position
Types of jobs (current position)

- Academic librarian: 85
- Public librarian: 7
- Unknown: 7
- Special librarian: 6
- LIS education: 5
- LIS organizations: 5
- Non-profit: 5
- Private sector: 5
- Academic (non-library): 4
- Library vendor: 2
- School librarian: 1
Specialization areas in Academic Librarianship

Reference/Instruction/Outreach: 45
Digital Initiatives: 11
Archives: 10
Technical services: 8
Administration: 6
Assessment: 2
Instructional technology: 2
Access services: 1
Employed by Residency Institution After Residency?

No: 90
Yes (formerly): 23
Yes: 19
Retention of Librarians of Color

• Lack of research, but implicit and explicit barriers for librarians of color are mentioned in the literature:
  • Workplace environment and microaggressions
  • Undervaluing of diversity work (research and service)
  • Feelings of isolation, tokenism, and imposter syndrome
  • Lack of mentorship and professional development
Resident Experiences

WHERE ARE ALL THE LIBRARIANS OF COLOR?
The Experiences of People of Color in Academia
Edited by Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juárez

Diversity in Libraries
Academic Residency Programs
Edited by Raquel V. Capel and Cindy A. Gravell

The New Graduate Experience
Post-MLS Residency Programs and Early Career Librarianship
Megan Zoe Perez and Cindy Ann Gravell, Editors

NDLC'16
National Diversity in Libraries Conference

Residency Interest Group
An interest group of the Association of College and Research Libraries
Positive Experiences

“I was looking for an environment where I could gain professional experience in an academic setting as a librarian but also be given the time and support I needed to grow as a professional before looking at tenure. I was really looking for a supportive, learning-based transition into a professional position.”

Marissa Galindo Acorta, former resident at Purdue University
Positive Experiences

“...my residency at Ohio State University Libraries provided me with valuable time to think about my future, to see a bigger picture, and to visualize a long-term path for my professional career. More important, the residency program introduced me to all the various facets of academic librarianship, including reference, technical services, collection development, area studies, departmental libraries, and special collections.”

Jon Cawthorne, former resident at Ohio State University
Negative Experiences

“I was the first resident at my university. I don’t think there was and is a ton of cultural buy-in. I still don’t think a lot of library staff know or understand what a residency is or does. I was constantly explaining what I did and why I was there...It would also be nice to have an environment in which to safely share the microaggressions that I think are experienced on a regular basis by someone with a “diversity” tag on their title.”

Anonymous
“It is unfortunate that we seemed mostly thought of when multicultural and diversity programs came up and representation from the library was required. Inevitably, we felt that our existence was more about politics rather than an honest attempt to recruit and retain minorities…We believe diversity initiatives are important, but they should be addressed by all, not just those who are visible minorities.”

Sylvia Hu and Demetria Patrick, former residents at Miami University (Ohio)
Successful Residencies

• Institutional buy-in
• Mentorship
• Strategic planning
• Assessment
• Diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the library’s strategic plan


Mack, T., & Keally, J. (2004). Seeding the vision: Designing a minority librarian residency program. The Southeastern Librarian, 52(1), 4-9.
Works Consulted


Questions?