Findings from the Research and Program Development Phase of the BIPOC Become Librarians Project

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The People of Color in Library & Information Science (POCinLIS) Summit

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Land Acknowledgement

As part of Loyola Marymount University's recognition of our history, location, and relationship to the indigenous communities in Los Angeles, we acknowledge the Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and southern Channel Islands) and the presence of LMU on this traditional, ancestral, and unceded land. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, study, create, and be in this place.

https://resources.lmu.edu/dei/indigenous/
Introduction
Team

Project Leads

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Principal Investigator

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Co-Principal Investigator

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About the BIPOC Become Librarians Project

San José State University’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library (SJSU King Library), San José State University’s School of Information (SJSU iSchool), and San José Public Library (SJPL) will collaborate to establish BIPOC Become Librarians (BBL), a pilot mentorship and internship program that will introduce undergraduate students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to careers in Library and Information Science (LIS).

Project Details

Need Statement

BIPOC Become Librarians (BBL) responds to the ongoing lack of diversity in the library and archives professions. In 2020, just 9.5% of librarians identified as Black or African American, 9.9% as Hispanic or Latino (of any race), and 3.5% as Asian-American or Pacific Islander. The most recent comprehensive survey of the archival profession was conducted in 2006, but similarly found that just 7% of archivists identified as people of color.

Reasons for the lack of diversity in library and archives professions are as numerous as they are nuanced. Studies over the years have noted the social, economic and cultural barriers, as well as the lack of support BIPOC students face when entering library and archives professions. As a result, graduates of LIS programs often do not reflect the communities they serve, which impacts how librarians engage, provide services to and represent their communities.
Lack of racial / ethnic diversity in LIS professions

- In 2022, only 4.3 percent of **librarians** identified themselves as Black or African American, 8.0 percent as Hispanic or Latino (of any race), and 5.1 percent Asian-American or Pacific Islander.

Rationale

- Diversity crisis in our profession
- How do we create a pool of candidates from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds?
- Meet undergraduates who identify as BIPOC and demystify the profession to them and develop a pipeline of candidates to enter the profession
Goals

● Raise awareness of librarianship among BIPOC students
● Expose more BIPOC students to LIS career paths
● Encourage them to pursue MLIS via mentorship and internship experiences
● Create a solid pipeline for recruiting a more diverse workforce in library and archival professions
Project Overview

- Advisory Board
- Recruiting and training
- Focus groups
- Mentorship
- Internship

A pilot mentorship and internship program (August 2023 - June 2024)
Recruitment of BIPOC undergraduate students
Recruiting

- Recruiting channels (SJSU Campus Partners, SJSU King Library, SJPL)
- BBL Focus Group Interest form was sent out
- Received 700+ responses
- What we learned
Research: Focus Groups
Focus Group Interviews

- IRB approval
- Interview moderator guide & focus group questions developed
- We scheduled 11 semi-structured group interviews
  - Held a total of 8 sessions to meet our goal: min 3 participants and max 8
  - 5 different co-PIs host
  - 4 zoom and 4 in-person sessions scheduled (Total of 38 participants)
- All were recorded and transcribed
Questions for Focus Groups Participants

1. Have you ever visited a library; if so, at what age?
2. When you think about libraries, what comes to mind?
3. Have you considered librarianship as a career pathway? Why/Why not?
4. What type of support would you need to consider a career in librarianship?
5. What skills make a good librarian?
6. Becoming a librarian requires a master's degree. In your opinion, what barriers exist to earning a master’s degree?
7. What are your expectations about career opportunities in librarianship?
Qualitative Coding Process

- Qualitative coding process via Taguette
- Reviewed several codebooks and glossaries
  - Elected to create codes (tags) with definitions as we go
  - Also coded (tagged) to Q#
- Two assigned Co-PI transcribed and light editing
- Uploaded all 8 session transcripts
  - Coded in teams: 2 assigned Co-PI [code 4 each]; 2nd set of 2 assigned Co-PI [code 4 each]; 2 assigned as 3rd person to check
- Reviewing by question; analysis, discussion and recommendations for inclusion in our journal publication
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<td>An idea, feeling, or opinion about librarians and the skills required to be a librarian, especially one formed without conscious thought or on the basis of little evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>impression of library</td>
<td>An idea, feeling, or opinion about libraries, especially one formed without conscious thought or on the basis of little evidence.</td>
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<td>barriers</td>
<td>Barriers to becoming a librarian (for example, financial)</td>
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<td>public libraries</td>
<td>An interaction with or impression of public libraries. A public library is nonprofit library maintained for public use and usually supported in whole or in part by local taxation</td>
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High-level findings

- Perceptions of Libraries
  - Most students expressed their love and appreciation for libraries
  - Learned of libraries at a young age either via school or public library

- Perceptions of librarianship as a career
  - Some do/some didn’t think of it as a career option
  - Knew very little about what actual librarianship entails and means

- Barriers to becoming librarian

- Support to pursue a career in librarianship
  - Several asked about a mentor without a prompt
Q3 What type of support would you need to consider a career in librarianship?

P8: It appears that it's a very organized position. You need to be someone who is very organized, very, very punctual, maybe. And you need to understand the workings of the entire building, which books goes here, which stuff goes here. And in my opinion that is a demanding criteria.

P14: I think understanding of pay and responsibility would be really huge as well as...I know librarians do like a lot of different jobs under the role title. It's probably like, okay, What would that training look like
Q4 Have you considered librarianship as a career pathway? Why/Why not?

P13: When I was younger I did consider it because I wanted to be part of... the adults in my life growing up that librarians they were supportive, and my academics, or any questions that I had... I feel like it’s of a fulfilling profession.

P26: I actually consider librarianship as a lucrative profession. The reason being that it helps people to access and use information most especially for education purposes, for work and for playing. Yeah, because it purposely helps people to access and use information most especially for education purposes, for work. And also it gives pleasure.
Q6 Becoming a librarian requires a master's degree. In your opinion, what barriers exist to earning a master’s degree?

P1: I’m not sure what the exact GPA requirement is. That’s one of the barriers to entry. You know when you mentioned the barriers, what’s stopping me from doing it, another thing is money. So I needed help from my dad just to pay for this major. I thought, Well, you know, if you get a master’s that’s even more money and more time. So I thought, you know I don’t want to put my parents through this.

P14: I think finances is another one. It takes a lot of time, and it takes a lot of money to get a masters degree. So that’s definitely a consideration, especially if you’re doing part time, and it takes a while.

P4: I don't want to be in school another six years, 12 years to get this master's degree just to be a librarian, to be not paid enough or underappreciated. I think one that could be a factor, driving them people away to not be librarians.
Q7 What are your expectations about career opportunities in librarianship?

P1: I would say how tough it is now job hunting… I have a cynical view of what I can do in terms of finding a job. I feel like there’s so much mystery surrounding all this.

P14: Oh, um, okay, I can answer then…. expectations. I think it takes a lot of responsibility. Yeah, a lot of responsibility and organization like we talked about. Um. But I think also a lot of room for creativity, and improvement, in different library systems depending where you’re working, which I think is something I look for in the job is creativity and expression.

P37: My expectation is that you would be working with kids and adults.
Next Steps with Research

- Utilizing focus group data to inform development of next pieces of project: mentorships & internship opportunities
- Disseminating results and findings via peer-reviewed journal publication and at conferences at the end of the grant
- Conducting satisfaction surveys throughout among mentors and mentees to gain insights about their experiences in working and learning together & exit interview once completed
- Develop a toolkit
Mentorships & Internship
Recruiting and training of mentors and mentees

- Training in February 2023 with Dr. Jerome Offord, Associate University Librarian for Anti-racism at Harvard University
- 20 mentees committed
- Expressed the most interest in the following areas of librarianship: Academic, Public, School, Archives, and Medical
- 7 mentors selected out of 76 candidates
Our Mentors

CSU- East Bay (works with equity issues and advises minority student groups)

Weill Cornell Medicine (library administration, clinical services)

Worcester Polytechnic Institute (digital collections and metadata)

San Francisco Public Library (youth services)

University of Arizona (College of Medicine)

Bellarmine College Preparatory (secondary school)

Metropolitan Library System, Oklahoma County (library administration)
What we learned

- Career Center placement on handshake
- Create a pool of mentors, stay in touch
- Mentors in archives or museum
- Consider timing of training sessions
Different Roles in the Library

1. What types of jobs do you think are available in a public library? Would a university library have different types of jobs available?

Types of Jobs, by Library Type

There are a number of roles and responsibilities in libraries beyond a librarian. Here are a few roles and main responsibilities that comprise library teams, depending on the type of library system.

Public Library Jobs

A variety of roles and qualifications create public library worker teams.

Academic Libraries

Libraries at colleges and universities support students, staff and faculty.

School Libraries

Librarians working in K-12 schools support students and teachers.

Special Libraries

Special Libraries serve specialized interests and fields, such as hospitals, museums, law schools, government. Special libraries may also serve particular populations.

Overall Resources for Careers in Libraries

MLIS Skills at Work – Prepared by SJSU, this presentation provides a snapshot of job postings and needed skills, Spring 2023

Bibliography of Traditional and Web-based Library Career Resources – LibraryCareers.org – A website developed by the American Library Association with basic information for individuals curious about careers in libraries.
Internship

- Administration of Internship
- Keep the terms of the internship flexible

Photo by Malte Luk:
Prospective Internship Partners

- BBL Team Organizations (SJSU King Library and SJPL)
- Public community college library in San Jose, California
- Public community college library in Redwood City, CA
- NNLM (Network of the National Library of Medicine) Region 5
What’s coming next?

- Mentorship kick-off on August 3rd
- Matching internship hosts with mentees
- Mentorship experience enhancing their engagement with their internship
Thank you!

Q/A

https://library.sjsu.edu/bbl