

# Book Reviews



***Diversity Now: People, Collections, and Services in Academic Libraries: Selected Papers from the Big 12 Plus Libraries Consortium Diversity Conference.*** Ed. Teresa Y. Neely and Kuang-Hwei (Janet) Lee-Smeltzer. New York: Haworth, 2002. 308p. alk. paper \$69.95 cloth, (ISBN 0789016966); \$39.95 paper (ISBN 0789016974). LC 2002-17175.

Diversity and diversity-related issues are ongoing topics of conversation within the library profession. *Diversity Now* is a collection of sixteen articles, originally presentations for the Big 12 Plus Libraries Consortium Diversity Conference held in April 2000, bringing together the “best practices in academic libraries in the areas of people, collections, and services.” The editors, Teresa Y. Neely and Kuang-Hwei (Janet) Lee-Smeltzer, both practicing librarians, also served on the program committee. Their introduction explains that this work attempts to go beyond the predictable formula of “this is what we did, and this is how it worked.” Their goal was to identify and disseminate the best practices for fostering diversity in academic libraries.

Presented in four sections, *Diversity Now* covers a broad range of issues from recruitment and retention strategies to organizational culture, collections and access, and library instruction and education. Despite the variety of topics addressed, a common theme runs throughout the book: What responsibility (if any) does the profession have, and what role (if any) do professionals play, in the present state of librarianship in America? All of the topics addressed are relevant to today’s information profession and in the context of our country’s rapidly changing demographics. A bibliography of sources is included at the end of each article.

Section I focuses on the challenges facing academic libraries in recruitment and

retention and sets the stage for the discussion of underrepresented groups in the profession. Efforts to increase the number of minorities in librarianship began in the early 1970s. Why, then, haven’t these efforts been more successful? Today, we appear to be struggling with many of the same issues that we struggled with in the past. Janice Simmons-Welburn and William C. Welburn in “Cultivating Partnerships/Realizing Diversity” explore the potential for cultivating partnerships between libraries and academic support services; libraries can play an active role in diversity by “cultivating partnerships with those campus programs that are directly responsible for diversifying the student body.” The authors present various factors that impact the academic preparedness of students entering higher education by focusing on the many socioeconomic disparities in the American educational system. Sadly, they note that the role of the academic library and the students’ attainment of information literacy skills rarely figure prominently in “discussions on the effect of college on students’ cognitive growth and academic success.”

Additional articles in this section focus on the development of retention programs for junior faculty of color; organization of benefits for employees with unmarried families; use of professional development as a retention tool; and the development of effective retention strategies for minority employees.

Section II examines diversity from the perspective of organizational culture. Joan S. Howland, in “Challenges of Working in a Multicultural Environment,” outlines the many advances that have been made since passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She emphasizes the crucial role that library administrators have in creating environments in which all individuals feel comfortable.

Bertie Greer, Denise Stephens, and Vicki Coleman, authors of "Cultural Diversity and Gender Role Spillover: A Working Perspective," look at diversity from a decidedly different perspective by exploring the effect of gender role spillover. Statistics show that although librarians are predominantly female (over 80%), women are underrepresented at the top. The authors provide an interesting perspective on the relationship of men and women in library administration, noting the important role that cultural influences have in the workplace.

Section II ends with a study that examined the job satisfaction of African American female librarians. The results have implications for helping managers develop programs and strategies to ensure that libraries attract women, especially African American women.

Section III focuses on the libraries at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Tracing the history of these institutions, as well as the development of their libraries and special collections, reveals the important and unique contributions they have made to librarianship. The importance of HBCU libraries and their relative merits are examined; how they can be strengthened and made more useful for the twenty-first century is discussed.

Section IV addresses the unique role that instruction and library education can play in fostering the goal of diversity. Mark D. Winston in "Communication and Teaching: Education about Diversity in the LIS Classroom" presents research revealing a correlation between the promotion of diversity in an organization and the organization's overall success. He examines the need for LIS education to provide instruction in a way that "facilitates learning about diversity for those who will be expected to contribute to the success of their employing institutions." Lorienne Roy, in "Diversity in the Classroom: Incorporating Service-Learning Experiences in the Library and Information Science Curriculum," reminds us that "there is more to Library and Information

Science . . . than what happens in the classroom" in her discussion of the important role that service-learning models can play in providing LIS students with experiences with diverse clientele. Yem S. Fong's experiences as a librarian teaching full-credit courses in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado are presented in "Race, Class, Gender and Librarianship: Teaching Ethnic Studies." Her article implores librarians to "move beyond the library to support diversity."

Storytelling as an instructional tool and its use as a change agent for libraries is discussed in "Healing Hearts, Enriching Minds: The Multicultural Storytelling Project and the Texas A&M University Libraries." Finally, Deborah A. Lee presents a case study on the academic information needs of, and library use by, Canadian Aboriginal students at the University of Alberta.

Underscoring all of the articles is the reality of America's changing demography. Eric Kofi Acree, Sharon K. Epps, Yolanda Gilmore, and Charmaine Henriques, in "Using Professional Development as a Retention Tool for Underrepresented Academic Librarians," claim that by 2058, the average U. S. resident will trace his or her ancestral roots to one of the present minority groups and not to white Europeans. The bottom line is that more and more Americans will have contact with people from cultures and backgrounds that differ from their own. In the words of E. J. Josey, "The nation cannot afford to ignore the education, training and library needs of its minorities."

This book pulls no punches in outlining the overall failure of the library and information science profession to significantly diversify it ranks. Statistics reveal that the library profession is "90.1 percent White, 3.8 percent Black, 3.85 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.6 percent Hispanic, and .4 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native." Does the lack of significant numbers of minorities within the profession signal a lack of commitment on the part of library schools, colleges, and universities to actively seek out these

groups? Have we in the profession been giving lip service to the idea of diversity in our ranks? Are we as a profession truly ready for a diverse workforce? For those who are confused about what can be done to increase diversity in our ranks, *Diversity Now* not only provides a great starting point for serious discussion of this critical topic, but also serves as a useful springboard for action and change.—*Kelly Rhodes, Appalachian State University.*

**Graham, Patterson Toby.** *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Public Libraries, 1900–1965.* Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Univ. of Alabama Pr., 2002. 191p. \$37.50 (ISBN 0817311440). LC 2001-5918.

In the December 1960 issue of *Library Journal*, newly appointed editor Eric Moon wrote his infamous editorial, "The Silent Subject," in which he complained that the library profession, specifically the ALA, had generally ignored the racial segregation of public libraries in the South. Published forty-two years after Moon's editorial, Patterson Toby Graham's *A Right to Read* is the first book to examine public library segregation in Alabama from its origins in the late nineteenth-century U. S. Supreme Court ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which proclaimed the legality of "separate but equal," public institutions for whites and blacks, through the eventual passage of landmark civil rights legislation in 1964.

Based on the records of library boards of the public libraries studied and on secondary sources addressing race relations and social responsibility in librarianship, Graham's book is divided into five chronological topics: the early years of public library development, 1918 to 1931; the Great Depression years, the 1930s; the Black Public Library Movement, 1941 to 1954; the Read-in Movement, 1960 to 1963; and librarians and the Civil Rights Movement, 1955 to 1965.

The early years of public library development in Alabama were characterized by the gradual establishment of separate, but "equal," African American public library branches. In 1918, the first public

library branch for African Americans, the Booker T. Washington Branch Library, was established in Birmingham. Thirteen years later in 1931, the Davis Avenue Branch Library in Mobile opened. Graham describes the ambivalence that moderate, white library board members felt with regard to race during this early period: African American branches served as tangible evidence that some white library supporters desired social improvement for blacks as long as they did not challenge white supremacy and were not too expensive

Although the Great Depression was a period of expansion of the public library movement in the South, and particularly in Alabama, the benefits of expanded library service did not touch the lives of many African Americans. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) allowed a "grass-roots" policy for decision making, ensuring discrimination against hiring black workers. Despite the qualified success of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in establishing library service for black mine workers in Walker County, and the enlightened collaboration of the National Youth Administration (NYA) and the industrial leadership of the American Cast Iron Pipe Company (Acipco), which led to the establishment of the Slossfield Branch of the Birmingham Public Library in 1940, Graham characterizes the 1930s as a decade full of missed and only partially realized opportunities in the provision of library service to African Americans.

The Black Public Library Movement in Huntsville, Montgomery, and Birmingham in the 1940s and 1950s was the work of black civic and religious leaders, educators, businesspeople, and librarians, notably Dulcina DeBerry, for whom the black branch of the Huntsville Public Library was named in 1941, and Bertha Pleasant Williams, who helped to establish the Union Street Branch Library in Montgomery in 1948.

The Read-in Movement was a focal point of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s. Southern blacks