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# Archivist-in-Residence: Advocating and Managing Diversity Residency Opportunities in University Archives and Special Collections

Angela Fritz

## ABSTRACT

This article outlines a basic roadmap for university archives and special collections who seek to develop an “archivist-in-residence” position for the first time. The article explores how university archives and special collections can apply diversity management best practices to optimize their unit and organizational approach to diversity and inclusion initiatives. Topics encompass advocacy models, defining a culture of mentorship, recruitment, onboarding and training, assessment as well as addressing opportunities for innovation and areas of expansion.

## Introduction

In her 2007 SAA presidential address, Elizabeth Adkins provided an illuminating overview of diversity initiatives within the field of archives. In outlining the advantages of embracing a new expansive definition of diversity, she addressed the need to consider diversity in three distinct areas: diversity within the profession, diversity within the Society of American Archivists, and diversity in the historical record.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, Dennis Meissner’s presidential address reflected the continuity of this message as he called on the profession to develop more inclusive hiring practices as well as recognized cultural competency as central to the development of the profession’s core skills, values, services, and collections. With their keynote speeches, both Adkins and Meissner redirected the profession’s diversity initiatives to embrace a more holistic, iterative, and evolving approach, with the goals of promoting equity and inclusion in a meaningful, consistent, and impactful manner.

Before Adkins’s address, the profession had focused much of its energies on ensuring “the diversity of the historical record” by refining archival theories and

1. Elizabeth W. Adkins, “Our Journey Toward Diversity—and a Call to (more) Action,” *The American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008), 21.

practices relating to collection development, appraisal, and outreach and instruction. The result has been a rich historiography that has heightened sensitivities and an urgency for action, thereby reaffirming the mission and relevancy of archives and special collections. Successful practices and strategies in diversifying archival collections range from the self-examination of the politics of representation, authority and subjectivity in collecting areas to the social construction of identity and historical memory. Case studies have provided the profession with an array of roadmaps on expanding collecting initiatives, increasing access and discovery to “hidden” collections and narratives, and establishing collaborative relationships with diverse constituents and partners. In reminding us that “multicultural collecting” is active rather than passive, archivists and special collections librarians have called for the profession to engage with communities in multiple ways beyond soliciting collections. This call for action has included creating inclusive shared physical and digital spaces in order to welcome a broad spectrum of community members into the archives. Additionally, the profession has nurtured an array of outward-facing models for collection stewardship with a focus on “participatory archives” that are shaped and fostered by engaged communities and “citizen archivists.”<sup>2</sup>

In this context, archives and libraries have embraced a call for more expansive representation of gender, ethnic and racial minorities, and LGBTQ experiences in the historical record. Today, these initiatives have expanded to include a sensitivity and heightened awareness as well as a recognition that the different characteristics and experiences that define individuals often encompass overlapping identities and multiple facets of diversity. For archivists and special collections librarians, the concept of diversity and how we define and understand it within our profession has been an evolving process as we recognize the multiple dimensions and complex dynamics of gender, race, privilege, and power structures that exist within our society are also reflected in our collections, services, spaces, and workforce.

Additionally, the added urgency of streamlining academic libraries’ distinctive collections has challenged traditional organizational structures within academic libraries with a greater focus on cross-functionality between library units, integrative

2. See Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal, *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014); Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 126-51; Cristine N. Paschild, “Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity: Considering Discursive Impact on Material Needs,” *The American Archivist* 75 (Spring/Summer 2012): 125-42; Randall C. Jimerson, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009); Mark A. Greene, “The Power of Archives: Archivists’ Values and Value in the Post-Modern Age,” *The American Archivist* 72 (Spring/Summer 2009): 17-41; Lorie Roy, Anjati Bhasin, and Sarah K. Arriaga, *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifeways* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2011); Jeannette Bastian and Ben Alexander, *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet Publishing, 2009); Elizabeth Shephard, “Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy, and the Mainstream,” *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 71-86.

collection-building, and the desire to create new digital service pathways in order to facilitate the interdisciplinary connections between archival collections and licensed library content. In this context, archivists and special collections librarians increasingly find themselves poised to support employment development programs with the intent of raising awareness of the need and importance of inclusion initiatives within the larger library profession in general and in special collections and university archives in particular.

When envisioning archival residency programs, many archival and special collections managers, who want to build strong diverse units and programs, are looking beyond single approach management techniques of promoting diversity through traditional collection-based processing or outreach projects. And instead, archivists and special collections librarians are looking to implement programs that can build and sustain diversity initiatives within a department's organizational structure through outward-facing communication strategies, interdepartmental team projects, and cross-functional workflows. Additionally, archival residency programs are playing an increasingly important role in assisting academic libraries' focus on some of the greatest twenty-first century challenges particularly in the area of digital asset stewardship.

Within this context, this article outlines the steps and provides a basic roadmap for university archives and special collections who seek to develop an "archivist-in-residence" position for the first time. The article explores how university archives and special collections can apply best practices to optimize their unit and organizational approach to diversity. The objective of the article is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the evolving challenges in developing impactful opportunities for diversity residents that will prepare early professionals and recent graduates for success in scholarship, professional service and leadership. The article will outline six main areas in managing and supporting an archival diversity residency position including: a) administrative support and advocacy; b) defining and fostering a culture of mentorship; c) recruitment, selection, and hiring; d) onboarding, training, and professional development; f) assessment; and g) challenges and opportunities.

## Distinctive Collections and Diversity Initiatives

University archives and special collections can play a key role in advocating for campus diversity initiatives. Most university archives and special collections are inherently outward-facing as they provide campus stakeholders with an array of services. University archivists build relationships with administrative and academic offices; and support a variety of projects for campus communications, marketing, athletics, and university relations. Information sessions with special collections and university archives are often integrated into the orientation programs for most first-year students as well as new university faculty and staff which can attest to the university's commitment to stewarding an inclusive mission by supporting diverse academic research, teaching, and learning initiatives.

Special collections and university archives are well-positioned to play a significant role in campus diversity initiatives, directly and indirectly, by reaching out to student populations, publicizing diverse collections and services, providing holistic records management services, and offering archival instruction and outreach opportunities. Additionally, university archives often play a central role in how a university defines diversity through its history, institutional memory, shared values, and traditions. Distinctive collections can promote a deeper understanding of a university's history by unearthing narratives that may expand awareness and deepen sensitivities of the history of diversity initiatives on campus, as well as illuminate how these narratives and experiences have changed over time.<sup>3</sup>

### Administrative Support and Advocacy

In addition to highlighting the connection between the university's mission and the importance of diverse, distinctive library collections, successful workplace diversity requires a long-term commitment of organizational resources by senior library management. Since diversity initiatives are a significant investment and collaboration is fundamental to success, a critical first step in developing an archival residency position is garnering administrative support for diversity initiatives within the archives. The libraries' diversity committee and the campus diversity officer are critical advocates that can assist in aligning an archivist-in-residence position with the university's organizational planning documents, mission statements, and strategic initiatives. Archival diversity positions should be integrated into a holistic programmatic framework that outlines diversity goals in the context of a shared vision with campus stakeholders.

Additionally, it is important to remind administrators of the added incentives that are often unique to residency programs in university archives and special collections. Ultimately, promoting diversity across campus through archival outreach

3. See: Brittney Dunkins, "Celebrating Diversity in the University Archives, *GW Today*, published May 24, 2014, <https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/celebrating-diversity-university-archives> (accessed January 24, 2019); Melanie Xu, "Subject Guide: Diversity at the University of Pennsylvania," <https://archives.upenn.edu/collections/subject-guides/diversity> (accessed January 24, 2019); Deborah Jakubs, "Advancing Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality: Duke University," published March 1, 2016, <http://www.arl.org/publications-resources/3941#.W1lk29JKg2w> (accessed January 24, 2019); Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives, "Diversity Collections," <https://archives.lib.iastate.edu/collections/subject-guides-for-manuscripts-and-archives-collections/diversity-collections> (accessed January 24, 2019); University of Oregon Libraries, "Documenting Diversity at the University of Oregon," <https://library.uoregon.edu/documentingdiversity> (accessed January 24, 2019); Indiana University Archives, "Diversity in the Historical Record—The Dean of Faculties Records," published February 23, 2017, <https://libraries.indiana.edu/diversity-historical-record-%E2%80%93-dean-faculties-records> (accessed January 24, 2019); Texas Tech University Southwest Collection Archive, "Fall into Diversity: An Exhibit of our University Archives," published November 1, 2016, <https://southwestcollection.wordpress.com/2016/11/01/fall-into-diversity-an-exhibit-of-our-university-archives/> (accessed January 24, 2019).

is about connecting cultures. Universities are global communities and university archives document these international connections, highlight the interrelatedness between existing and past communities on campus, unearth hidden experiences of inclusion and diversity, provide a platform for “lost and found” stories, and offer a springboard for counter-storytelling. A diversity resident can shed new light on the challenges relating to access and discovery of archival materials while providing a gateway for researchers and community members to contribute their stories as well as foster the recognition of their importance. Archivists and special collections librarians will want to make the case that an archives resident has the potential to not only contribute to ongoing campus initiatives, but their work will represent important building blocks to forge community connections, strengthen ties between campus departments, reenergize staff and faculty services, and fortify the mission of the university’s larger diversity program.

## Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring

With administrative support firmly in place, diversity recruitment often begins with the position description which should include a compelling outline of the residency program. The description should provide a demographic overview of the institution as well as convey a welcoming message. The position description should underscore special opportunities for growth and achievement and convey the goal of fostering change, with a special focus on user-based projects, active learning, digital empowerment, and engaging outreach initiatives. The job posting should explicitly describe the diversity initiative and program, and clearly outline the requirements for application materials. Clear requirements assist the search committee in reviewing the pool of applicants. Additional strategies for recruitment include active solicitation through diversity leaders in the profession, academic programs, and specialized listservs which are good tools to highlight compelling resident opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

In many instances, hiring committees for any diversity resident position requires a strong knowledge base of the value of diversity within the organization. Search committees should have a clear sense of the archives and libraries’ needs, an understanding of the larger campus diversity program, an awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, and an understanding of future initiatives for the program. Committee members should be ready to answer candidates’ questions relating to diversity, such as: What are your greatest diversity successes? What are your greatest challenges? And, what is the diversity climate on campus?

4. Angela Boyd, Yolanda Blue and Suzanne Im, “Evaluation of Academic Library Residency Programs in the United States for Librarians of Color,” *College and Research Libraries* (May 2017): 472-511; Kathryn M. Neal, “The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment,” *Archival Issues* 21, no. 2 (1996): 145-58; Anne T. Switzer, “Redefining Diversity: Creating An Inclusive Academic Library through Diversity Initiatives,” *College and Research Libraries* 15, no. 2 (2008): 280-300.

## Onboarding, Training, and Professional Development

The onboarding of a diversity resident is key to making individuals feel informed, confident, connected, and valued. Onboarding encompasses relationship building, training and orientation, fostering connections, and encouraging socialization by introduction and mentorship.<sup>5</sup> Since goals are unique to each resident, a professional development plan is an important tool in defining career goals and objectives, establishing a time frame, and identifying specific skills and core competencies. Additionally, professional development plans foster mutual goal-setting between the residency manager and the resident as well as outline rotations, learning objectives, research areas and professional service opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

Work assignments need to balance the immediate priorities of the archives or special collections with the interests of the resident. Assignments should be responsive and flexible, include the development of leadership skills, and technical knowledge as well as a full range of programmatic opportunities to offer residents options they might not otherwise have considered. Goals need to be aligned with the unit and library, be reasonable and realistic in the given timeframe, reflect diversity initiatives that can be scalable, impactful, and aligned with the interests and passions of the resident.

## Defining and Fostering a Culture of Mentorship

In addition to encouraging a work environment where diversity is valued, an important factor to the experience of any resident is the establishment of strong mentors for ongoing support and feedback. Mentors can range from “primary mentors” who serve as a resource guide in navigating organizational and campus culture to “secondary mentors” who provide guidance on specific work or research projects. Mentors are critical in shaping a resident’s experience as they support areas of interest within core work rotations as well as assist in customizing elective research projects. For new archivists, understanding academic library culture is a vital component to success in a residency program. Mentors help convey organizational identity, collective commitments, and shared values. A good mentor will help formulate peer relationships and career goals, as well as establish group camaraderie throughout the library.

5. Channelle Pickens and Ashleigh D. Coren, “Diversity Residency Programs: Strategies for a Collaborative Approach to Development,” *Collaborative Librarianship* 9, no.2 (July 11, 2017): 104-108; Howard J. Klein, Beth Polin, and Kyra Leigh Sutton, “Specific Onboarding Practices for the Socialization of New Employees,” *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* 23, no. 3 (August 20, 2015): 263-83.
6. For a sample template of a professional development plan, see University of Texas at San Antonio, “Staff Professional Development,” <http://libguides.utsa.edu/professionaldevelopment> (accessed January 24, 2019).

Most residents will benefit from multiple layers of mentoring including formal mentoring with an assigned archivist or librarian, regular meetings with a supervisor, as well as informal meetings with a residency coordinator who can provide additional structured mentoring opportunities that focus on training needs and program development. Career or e-mentoring through professional organizations is an additional possibility for those who seek advice on career development from archivists and librarians in the field. Advice may range from recommendations on continuing education opportunities, career goals, resume or CV review, as well as social outings at annual conferences. Informal mentoring encompasses unplanned meetings and conversations with colleagues, staff members, and fellow residents. These informal opportunities can be an important form of inspiration for new residents. Additionally, many academic libraries organize peer mentoring groups which offer a two-way exchange and conversation focusing on instruction and information literacy programs, individual research initiatives, or book clubs. Critical to the success of any residency program, mentors can foster professional development opportunities, instill confidence, provide moral support, offer tips and advice, help navigate organizational culture, as well as play a critical role in job satisfaction, retention, and future recruitment.

Training opportunities and workshops, which focus on campus and professional initiatives as well as staff enrichment and outreach programs, are an equally important element of fostering an environment supportive of diversity residents. SAA's Cultural Diversity Competency Workshop; ALA's Office of Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services' toolkits and webinars; and ACRL's Diversity Alliance—all offer important opportunities for training, advocacy, and support to ensure successful residency programs. An important foundation for any residency program is providing on-campus diversity training opportunities for unit and program development. These opportunities encourage staff to discuss and value their differences, share their cultures, and foster a sense of community.

## Assessment

In planning for diversity management, archivists have the most to learn from libraries' use of environmental scans and benchmarking. Tools such as ClimateQUAL: Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment, designed by the University of Maryland and now administered by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), can provide an assessment of the library staff's perceptions concerning the institutional commitment to the principles of diversity, organizational policies and procedures and services. Although benchmarking or "climate assessments" in archives and special collections are in developing stages, library studies have indicated that such tools can help in understanding the unique characteristics, attitudes, and perceptions of an organization in order to implement diversity programs, inform staff training and program goals, and establish important benchmarks against which progress and success can be measured.

Assessment identifies where organizational change is most needed, documents progress, and provides direction for realigning specific elements of a diversity program in order to target resources more effectively. Certainly, demographics and statistics relating to workforce make-up and conscious-raising sessions and surveys can measure and indicate increased awareness. Additionally, revisiting climate assessments can assist in measuring the impact of diversity programs by addressing the following questions: Are there changes in perceptions of the role of archives in various underrepresented communities? Are a diverse group of users informed about the collections and services? Is the university archives or special collections inviting and user-friendly? And, are instructional sessions and public programs reflective of the full range of communities we serve?

Just as work-climate assessments are helpful in developing initial benchmarks, exiting surveys are essential in assessing the quality, success and necessary improvements to any diversity program. Exit interviews should reflect evaluative information about the residency and provide suggestions for improvements. Finally, the supervisor and the resident will want to revisit the professional development plan and review the project goals for each rotation. A written assessment and evaluation from the resident addressing the purpose and outcomes of each rotation will allow the supervisor to evaluate and make adjustments to goals and objectives when establishing future residency opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

## Challenges and Opportunities

Establishing residency opportunities in archives and special collections is not without challenges. Managers can meet these challenges by applying foresight planning, open communication, and project flexibility. As the needs and demands for diversity and inclusion initiatives continue to grow, the following challenges become key opportunities for innovation and creative expansion of diversity initiatives.

**Lack of resources.** Given the fact that most special collections librarians and archivists have to manage increasing job responsibilities, residency opportunities require special considerations and foresight planning to ensure that the opportunity is framed by effective mentoring, specialized training, and group comradery. Juggling the onboarding process of a new resident with the stresses of everyday work responsibilities and deadlines can sometimes overshadow the implementation of an effective archivist-in-residence opportunity. In planning the structure of the

7. Taylor Cox, *Creating the Multicultural Organization: A Strategy for Capturing the Power of Diversity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001); Sylvia Hurtado and Rona Halualani, "Diversity Assessment, Accountability, and Action: Going Beyond the Numbers," *Diversity and Democracy* 17, no.4 (Fall 2014), <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2014/fall/hurtado-halualani> (accessed January 24, 2019); Teresa Y. Neely and Kuang-Hwei Lee-Smeltzer, eds. *Diversity Now: People, Collections, and Services in Academic Libraries* (New York: Haworth Press, 2002); Zheng Ye Yang and Brenda White, "The Evaluation of a Diversity Program at an Academic Library," *Library Philosophy and Practice* (October 2007): 1-9.

residency, distinct rotations can help distribute the time for training and supervision across the department as well as ensure the benefits of a wide-ranging experience for the resident. Rotations in rare books, manuscript processing, records management, outreach and instruction, digital preservation, and/or digital projects for 3 months to 6 months to a year provide holistic exposure to the multifaceted duties of archivists and special collection librarians.

In planning and reviewing for diversity initiatives, the structure of the residency is critical as it ultimately impacts the success and funding for the program. For institutions that lack library funding to establish or continue a residency program, additional funding sources for such initiatives may include monetary gifts from library donors, class credit opportunities, strategic engagement with faculty and university centers and institutes as well as university, state and national foundations and granting opportunities.

**Sustaining holistic diversity initiatives.** Residency opportunities should strike a balance between the resident's interests and the unit's needs. Structuring rotations around assigned projects as well as resident's creative endeavors is critical in leveraging new innovative research interests with projects that promote interdepartmental team building. For many archival residents, one of the main challenges is the perception that residents are interns working on "special projects" as opposed to full-fledged faculty members working on programmatic goals. In order to mitigate feelings of isolation and fragmented initiatives, work rotations should provide foundational building blocks for further program and unit development, as opposed to a continuation of standing projects.

By structuring rotations around institutional strategic initiatives, managers should align the residency with the goals of the unit as well as the performance evaluation of staff members in order to integrate the resident in projects that not only support the everyday needs of the unit, but also offer opportunities for innovation. Additionally, managers should think about the continuity plans for the work of residents in order to carry diversity initiatives forward when the resident leaves. Defining resident opportunities as foundational work will mitigate feelings of isolation while underscoring the importance and impact of the resident's work to their colleagues. Additionally, projects that promote digital advocacy and empowerment in the form of podcasts, community archiving, oral histories, LibGuides, digital archiving, and web archiving offer powerful means to incorporate the work of residents as foundational elements for future programmatic development.

**Meeting expectations.** Managers should revisit the professional development plan throughout the residency in order to review joint learning outcomes and adapt projects as part of an ongoing conversation with the resident. Performance plans should be measured against the success to which residents will develop professional and leadership skills. And, the overall structure of the residency should ensure individuals develop the broadest professional knowledge and skill set to prepare them

for a competitive job market, as well as address the “personal learning agenda” which can be measured by reflective assessment.

## Conclusion

For most supervisors, first-time residencies can be challenging, but also rewarding. The benefits of diversity and inclusion initiatives are at the heart of transformative library services that give equal attention to the cultural needs and contributions of all groups in society. As college and university campuses become increasingly diverse, archives and special collections must fully leverage their resources to ensure intellectual and social growth and engagement in broader conversations on diversity management. The potential for special collections and university archives to participate and support campus diversity initiatives include building collections that reflect the experiences and needs of the diverse community at large, extending services and resources to diverse patrons, and also supporting an academic climate that values diversity in staffing and faculty recruitment and development.

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