

Assessing Academic Library Diversity Residency Programs from a Resident Standpoint

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Proper evaluation of diversity residency programs is vital to ensuring the enrichment of not only the individuals and organizations involved, but librarianship as a whole. Utilizing survey methodology, we will analyze diversity residency program outcomes such as completion rate, scholarly publication record, career advancement, professional association memberships, and the development of transferable skills. Our goal is to provide methods of assessment, giving academic libraries a way to measure return on investment regarding diversity residency programs.

Introduction

This assessment research study puts in place a valid tool for library administration to make informed decisions when considering implementation or continuing diversity residency programs. The aim of this study also includes key elements that are critical to these programs based on feedback from former residents. The study includes a six year review of the targeted residency program. In examining the literature, it was discovered that there is a gap in information about the assessment of the residency program. This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on practices in academic library residency programs. Another important component of this study was designing an assessment tool that allowed the researchers to ascertain feedback from the identified population. The Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) defines a residency as "the post-degree work experience designed as an entry-level program for professionals who have recently received the M.L.S. degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association". This assessment of diversity residency program sought the feedback of 23 former academic library residents who participated in programs.

Planning Phase

The initial steps of any research project require strategic planning and the determination of key goals and objectives of the research. The three person research team consists of two Diversity Residency Librarians and a program coordinator from the University of Tennessee Libraries in Knoxville. Recruitment and retention as well as diversity remain leading issues in academic libraries as the retirements of seasoned librarians increase progressively. The recruitment of a new class of librarians specifically from diverse populations requires a commitment to programs that provide solutions. It is beneficial for the field of librarianship to understand how residencies and fellowships enrich the profession. Our research proposal allows new librarians to contribute our institution and to librarianship as a whole. Ideally, our work would improve residency programs and the experiences of those involved.

To improve the outcomes for present and future residency programs, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of post-master's training needs to be addressed. The survey instrument was selected in the research design phase to gauge the advantages and disadvantages of such programming. Studying the experiences of the principal investigators would yield minimal data, therefore, the scale of our research needed to extend beyond the borders of our institution. The structure of a residency program varies from place to place as do their participants.

Knowing the goals of such programs and focal points of librarianship might well vary from institution to institution, evaluation of similar or fundamental components across the spectrum of residency programs was essential to the research design process. One program might stress scholarly research and publication, while another might place emphasis on project management. Both of these are, of course, important. Just how important they are depends on the institution at which the program is hosted. Acknowledging that diverse programs will stress specific aspects of librarianship was an essential step toward shaping what would eventually become our survey instrument. It was equally important to investigate the program from the perspective of the resident librarian.

With a focus on diversity-specific programs, the major target for information-seeking about such programs was a conglomeration of residency members from underrepresented groups. As the landscape of residency programs and librarianship constantly changes, accessing this specific population would provide the most valuable data. The use of residency programs to introduce new librarians to academic librarianship has a history of more than twenty years. The research team designated a six year time period excluding current residents in the millennium to provide quality data and avoid the inclusion of outdated information to decide if current residents would be eligible for the survey instrument. With this parameter set, our sample population would have had

a comprehensive residency experience. The effects choices and experiences during their programs on their careers could not be adequately examined using current residents. Career advancement, career path, and salary increases were some of the key features analyzed in our study. Program experiences would still be fairly fresh in memory of survey participants.

The sample population was identified by researching Library Diversity Programs. Information from the Association of Research Libraries (<http://residencies.arl.org/>), ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program (http://wikis.ala.org/spectrum/index.php/Internships_and_Residencies), Library Residency Working Group (<http://libraryresidents.wordpress.com/research/>) and contacts gathered in our perusal of the information provided by these organizations was extremely valuable to our research. The lists of institutions and programs provided us with ideas for our population. Criteria for the programs and target populace that would be able to contribute relevant data had been established. The next step was to contact colleagues and some potential respondents to define which elements and questions should be included in such a survey instrument. We needed to know what information to seek, and what questions would likely get us that information. The input of peers and colleagues was invaluable to our research. The research team spoke with people that had been involved in such programs and the people therein on several levels, as well as colleagues with experience in the creation of survey instrument. Using the advice of colleagues, we created a survey instrument geared toward obtaining pertinent information.

The support of peers was essential in our pursuit, as the survey went through several drafts, all of which were dutifully examined by colleagues who offered advice and constructive criticism. We had several evaluators who separately sent us suggestions to improve the instrument thus resulting in necessary adjustments. The last step was converting our survey instrument into a format that would make it easy to administer and tabulate. To this end, we worked with the Innovative Technology Center, a department at our campus charged with aiding faculty in scholarly pursuits by recommending and providing technological resources applicable to the research being done. The research team needed to identify a survey delivery tool capable of hosting and providing access to online surveys. The tool needed to be capable of collecting the information provided by respondents and organizing it while not attaching personal information to the survey results. We also needed the ability to cross tabulate our results and create graphical representations of the data we received. ITC suggested a few different resources, one of which was Zoomerang, which came to be the vehicle for delivering the survey.

Having decided which program would best meet our needs, we needed to format our survey in a way acceptable to the program. This period in the process was almost entirely performed by ITC. We provided the instrument as we'd created it, and it was placed in the survey delivery tool. Our instrument went through several iterations at this stage as well, as some multi-part questions were reformatted to better mesh with the program we chose. Each change required a careful review of the survey and new draft to include changes and adjustments necessitated by the conversion of the data to a format acceptable in the survey delivery system. Once all of the changes to the survey had been implemented, it was ready to be sent to our pool of respondents. A six week period with several calls for information followed giving respondents' ample time to contribute to our research.

Survey Outcomes

This study outlines how the authors' assessment tool became a viable resource that can be used to measure the return on the investment of a residency program. The survey was divided to highlight the outcomes from the residency program, knowledge, skills and abilities, career advancement, social acceptance among residents, and professional associations and memberships. The demographic results included 9 survey respondents age 25 -34 and 14 age 35-44. The ethnicity divisions were as follows: 15, African-Americans; 4, Hispanics; 3, Other and 1, Asian-Pacific Islander. Our respondents' gender breakdowns include 18 females and 5 males.

To determine the development of transferrable skills, it was significant to distinguish the skills resident librarians brought to their academic library as well as the skills gained from the residency program. The top skills brought to the institution include technology experience, teaching and bibliographic instruction, oral and written communication, public and customer service, and working well with others. The residency program provided hands-on experience with bibliographic instruction, networking, reference/public service, organizational communication, and research and publishing.

The average residency program lasts 2 years. Ninety-six percent of the respondents felt this time period was enough to meet expectations and accomplish program goals. Most residency programs offer rotations in multiple departments. Seventy-eight percent of the survey participants gained experience in multiple areas of the library. While only seventy-four percent of our population had a cohort for their residency program, 100% felt the cohort experience was valuable. In terms of networking, over two-thirds of participants had over twelve networking contacts upon program completion. The mentor experience was viewed favorably by the greater part of the survey respondents. 26.1% of residents rated their mentee experience as average. Over sixty percent rated the mentee experience as above average or excellent. The 2002 ARL Bimonthly Report 221 highlights the following quote: "Research studies that focus on faculty in general show that faculty of color experience social isolation, subtle (and occasionally overt) prejudice, lack of mentors, and ambiguous expectations."

The following questions and results underscore how the previous statement could impact diversity residency programs.

1. Outside of direct relationships formed with residency coordinators, supervisors, and mentors, how would you rate the level of reception into the academic library environment?

Very Poor	2	9%
Below Average	2	9%
Average	7	32%
Above Average	7	32%
Excellent	4	18%
Total	22	100%

2. Upon entering the residency program, how many librarians from underrepresented groups were employed in your institution?

Unknown	2	9%
1-2	8	35%
3-5	8	35%
6-8	3	13%
9-11	2	9%
12+	0	0%
Total	23	100%

Our assessment views salary increase as one measure of career advancement. The majority of our participants moved into a higher salary range post-residency program. The universe of professional association memberships resulted in a slight decline in participation in American Library Association, Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), ethnic caucuses, and state library organizations. Involvement in special library associations like the Medical Library Association, Society of American Archivists remained the same post residency. For additional information, see Appendix 1.

In conclusion, the positive outcomes from involvement in a diversity residency program far outweigh any negatives. Eighty-six percent of respondents felt the residency helped to achieve

their career goals. The program completion rate was ninety-one percent and eighty-seven percent of former residents are currently employed in academic libraries. The majority of academic libraries expect at least two years of post-master's library experience for many professional positions. The residency program format gives entry-level librarians the opportunity to build competencies in an environment that supports hands-on training, professional development and research and publishing.

The research team plans to continue this study and publish a more in-depth analysis of the results of the survey.

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Abstract

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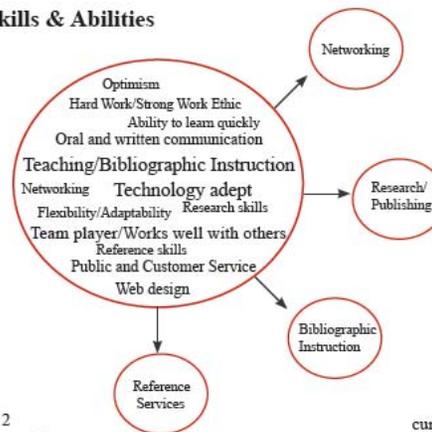
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Knowledge, Skills & Abilities



64%
acquired over 12
professional networking
contacts during their
residency program

Socialization

"Research studies that focus on faculty in general show that faculty of color experience social isolation, subtle (and occasionally overt) prejudice, lack of mentors, and ambiguous expectations."

ARL Bimonthly Report 221 April 2002

Conclusion

91%
completed their residency program

87%
currently employed in academic libraries

86%
felt the residency helped to achieve their career goals

Residency Program

* The average residency program lasts 2 years.



100%
felt a cohort
experience
is valuable

Do you feel this length of time was enough to meet your expectations and accomplish program goals?

Yes	22	96%
No	1	4%

Did the program include rotations or opportunities to experience multiple areas of the library?

Yes	18	78%
No	5	22%

Did your residency include a cohort component (either more than one resident starting at the same time or a staggered system with a new resident starting each year so that there is one year overlap)?

Yes	17	74%
No	6	26%

