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THE NUMBERS

The 1997 report, Planning for a Diverse Workforce in Library and Information Science Professions by Kathleen de la Pena McCook and Kate Lippincott, and their

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accompanying article "Library Schools and Diversity: Who Makes the Grade?," examine statistical data on the number of minority graduates that accredited graduate library and information science programs add to the professional workforce. The source of their statistical information is the Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report published by the Association for Library and Information Science Education. ALISE compiles statistics from ALA accredited library and information science programs. The published ALISE data was reorganized to analyze minority graduation rates. The number of minority graduates increased in the decade from 1984-85 to 1994-95. The 1994-95 minority graduation total (419) and the percent of minorities entering the profession are up from 1984-85. Though this growth rate seems encouraging, it still reflects a small percentage of the total graduates for those years, 6.79 percent minority graduation in 1984-85 and 10.01 percent minority graduation in 1994-95.

The greatest gains were made by Asian/Pacific Islanders. They represent 3.5 percent of the population and 3.44 percent of 1995 graduates-near parity. Hispanic graduation rates increased to 2.17 percent; African Americans moved up slightly to 4.24 percent of all graduates. Native Americans saw a decline to only .16 percent of the total. These gains, however, are undercut by the shift in the U.S. population as a whole. During the same ten-year period, the minority population of the U.S. grew from 22.2 percent to 26.4 percent. The Library and Information Science (LIS) profession's gain is not enough to bring minority representation in the profession to a parity level for individual minority groups. In 1994-95, minorities comprised 26.4 percent of the U.S. population, but only 10.01 percent of new LIS graduates. A 162 percent increase is needed to achieve true diversity.

THE METHODS

(1) Library and Information Science Programs: McCook and Lippincott suggest that library schools need to find out what recruitment strategies work, and then make a concerted effort to work even harder in those areas. Common themes emerge in the schools that are successful in recruiting minorities:
Faculty from ethnic or minority groups

Active multicultural participation

--bilingual advising/Spanish webpage

--mentoring by minority faculty or professionals

--LIS faculty active in campus or community diversity

activities

Financial support (Title II-B, university scholarships,

association scholarship

Partnerships with specific libraries

Targeted Recruitment Strategies

--advertising in ethnic yellow pages

--recruiting trips to historically black institutions

--participation in minority career days

Creative delivery of classes

--where people work

--evening or weekend classes

(2) Associations: National and state library associations need to provide leadership in diversity initiatives aimed at recruitment, retention, and promotion. ALA and its offices and committees, as well as the Association of College and Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Librarians, the Special Libraries Association, and other groups on the national and state level, have sponsored numerous plans, programs and projects over the years. The American Library Association's recently announced Spectrum Initiative will focus on scholarships, leadership training, peer mentoring, and staff development. On another front, the Library Administration and Management Association's new Cultural Diversity Grant, designed to encourage high school students and college undergraduates to consider librarianship as a profession, was awarded for the first time in June 1997.

(3) Individuals: All library professionals need to encourage and promote the profession to the minority support staff in their libraries and to the minority students in their communities who are making career choices. Florence Simkins Brown's "Stop Talking and Start Doing!" workshops and Margaret Myers' "Each One-Reach One" programs illustrate successful grassroots methods of recruitment. The ALA Black Caucus' Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin also exemplifies the personal commitment required by promoting mentoring as a viable strategy. Personal outreach and mentoring, though time-consuming, may sometimes be the only way to identify and reach specially qualified and interested individuals. For these new recruits, a nationwide scholarship program with significant resources, such as the Spectrum Initiative's endowment plan, would be invaluable in ushering a new professional through the educational requirements.

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