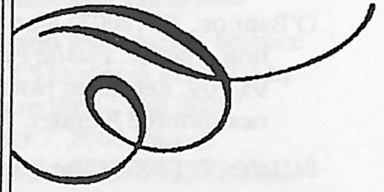# MEASURING DIVERSITY IN INDIANA LIBRARIES

by Deloice Holliday

"Changing demographic realities, as well as our own ethical commitment to diversity, also demand that we further intensify efforts to include more women and minority candidates in our hiring and procurement efforts. Indiana University must advance its traditions of diversity in all that we do."

Indiana University, President Adam Herbert

STATING THE PROBLEMS

According to the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* 2004-2005, in 2002 librarians held about 167,000 jobs, holding positions in schools, special, academic, and public libraries, (p. 215). Employment for librarians is expected to grow primarily because of the anticipated exodus of librarians in line for retirement during the next decade. This should be exciting news for the profession, but there is an expected shortfall of librarians. Fewer people are entering the profession; coupled with low pay and jobs outside of the traditional setting such as information brokers is causing some to wonder where this leaves librarians. For this discussion let us focus on relatively recent concepts and trends in librarianship such as the makeup of the profession, and its customer base. Some questions that will be addressed are: is it important to have a culturally diverse library workforce? More importantly, what's the makeup of library leadership and is it diverse? Who is at the helm in your library: men, minorities, women?

In the May 2005 issue of *American Libraries*, Keith Curry Lance covers the current statistics on the *Racial and Ethnic Diversity of U.S. Library Workers*. He writes, "If libraries are to be welcoming institutions to all, regardless of race and ethnicity, librarians and other library workers should be more diverse" (American Libraries, 41). Lance further states that "when the issue of diversity in libraries is raised, the focus is generally placed on the discrepancies between the racial and ethnic composition of the community at large and that of library workers, especially librarians. Instead, we should be looking at two different bases for comparison: the racial and ethnic composition of the adult population (adults ages 25 and over) and the subset of that population possessing an appropriate level of

educational attainment (a graduate degree for librarians or a high school diploma for library assistants" (*American Libraries*, 41).

MEASURING DIVERSITY

Let us start our discussion of diversity with a few diversity related concepts, beginning with the word or concept "diversity" and "cultural diversity". Other concepts we will be investigating are: inclusion, cultural competency, the digital divide, and social capital. According to *the Oxford American Dictionary* (1980; 1986) diversity is defined simply as "variety" (p. 252). Within the same dictionary readers will find the words multicelluar and multicolored, but not the word multicultural; suggesting the word multicultural is quite a new term. In the world of diversity educators and trainers, the word multicultural means "many". In *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Academic Libraries: Multicultural Issues*, Dr. E.J. Josey and Glendora Johnson-Cooper define cultural diversity as, "the equal participation of men and women in organizations, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender," (p. 2).

Inclusive or inclusion is another term diversity educators and trainers use often. The *Oxford American Dictionary* defines inclusive as "including much or everything," (p. 445). Many of the terms we use to describe or define modern day concepts such as cross-cultural or cultural competency cannot be found in most dictionaries from 25 years ago.

Continuing our introduction to diversity related concepts and phrases, let us investigate the meaning of the term cultural competency. Concepts such as cultural competency can be found on reputable web sites and in social science and health care resources, but not in many of our favorite dictionaries. Cultural competency is defined "as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations," (Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs and Benjamin, 1991). *"Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of*

people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes," (Davis, 1997 referring to health outcomes) (Adapted from the Spruill & Davis article Online Journal of Health Ethics [Online], 1(1). http://www.air.org/cecp/cultural/default.htm

The digital divide is the notion of technology of the haves and have-nots; those who have access to the latest technology and those who are digitally divided and/or economically stressed. Citizens of Indiana who are economically disadvantaged often choose their public libraries as places where they can go and close the digital divide. "The digital divide usually explores four major gaps in technology: schools, gender, race, and the workplace" (Adapted from the Digital Divide Themes PBS Online). View the website for more information: (http://www.pbs.org/digitaldivide/themes.html). A government site (http://clinton4.nara.gov/WH/New/digitaldivide/) provides information regarding the disproportionate access to technology among the poor in American society.

What is social capital and what does it have to do with libraries? In the 2001 article appearing in the *Library Journal*, Miklos Marschall defines social capital as "values and social networks that enable coordination and cooperation within society... the relationship between people and organizations, which form the glue that strengthens civil society" (p. 40). Libraries have been a resource to teach citizens about America and democracy, and thereby maintain the social capital. Should libraries continue to serve in this vital role? If other forms of activities which makes a community viable such as voting, town meetings, joining service organizations, or attending political events are few and far between, the library is the only institution left where community folks can meet, read, talk about their concerns, and learn how to use modern technology. The social capital of a community is its people or citizens.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

The changing demographics of many communities in Indiana will have an explicit effect on how we serve our library patrons. "According to an article by Lance in the May 2005 issue of *American Libraries*, the ethnic makeup of our profession may say more about society than about librarianship (p. 41). U.S. Census Reports show Hispanic, African American Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaskan Natives ages 25 and over with graduate degrees of any kind are few" (Adapted from *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment*). In some Indiana communities and colleges and universities, the makeup of the library profession does not match or mirror the user population it serves.

What skill sets do librarians need to provide effective library services to new groups moving into its communities? What's the role of the librarian in this new technologically savvy global environment? Do they continue to teach library patrons how to use resources, provide educational and collection specific programs and activities, develop resource guides, produce visual library displays, and create websites that promote outreach to specialized groups? Or do librarians re-invent themselves so that the programs, services, and activities they provide mirror the makeup of the community, giving little regard to the type of library serving the user? Who are the new immigrants? How are local communities preparing for different languages, cultures, and religions? What actions are communities taking to ensure that libraries are meeting the needs of their changing population? What does it mean for library users? What does it mean for the library profession? And finally, what does it mean for higher education? These and other questions will have to be decided by individual communities and its library boards.

The changing demographics are prevalent and affect how we serve our international student populations at colleges and universities, where English is a second, third, or fourth language; in local community schools, and in how the business sector reaches its global partners. Every sector of society is affected by changing demographics. Indiana cannot afford to lag behind when it comes to integrating diversity into its workforce, or in its library collections, programs and services. The information literate Indiana society will have to acquire knowledge about cultures from around the world if it is to remain viable in the global society.

Recently, the state of Colorado published its findings on *Diversity of Colorado Library Workers: Professional Self-Perceptions and Portents for the Future* (March 11, 2005). Indiana librarians and other library workers should look at these findings with a critical eye. By far the most glaring finding is that nine out of ten respondents to the library workers survey were White (89.8%) and female (90.3%). Each of the other three racial groups——American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black/African American represented less than two percent of the respondents." The web site is available at: http://www.lrs.org/documents/fastfacts/217_Diversity.pdf

Respondents in the Colorado survey were asked to identify factors that they perceived to be discouraging to the pursuit of librarianship as a profession, primarily so the survey hosts could find out why so few minorities enter the profession. Hispanics were almost seven times as likely as non-Hispanics to identify the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among library workers as a discouraging factor. Hispanic respondents of the Library Workers survey in Colorado also perceived librarianship to be a female-dominated profession; and

were discouraged from choosing it as a career primarily because of a lack of racial/ethnic diversity and the perception that librarianship is a female-dominated profession. Men were more than half as likely to identify the low prestige of librarians as a problem. The number of librarians in the U.S. total 190,255; White, non-Hispanic librarians total 163,535 for a percentage of 85% of the country's librarians.

Additionally, news from the most recent *ALA Office for Accreditation Annual Report* is not encouraging. It reads, "While the pace of change in most of these...categories remains similar to last year, the largest change from 2003-2004 is in minority enrollment. Categories include change in full time faculty, change in total ALA headcount enrollment, change in full time head count enrollment, change in part time headcount enrollment, and change in minority enrollment. Only 18 schools reported increases in minority enrollment in 2004, while 23 schools reported decreases. In 2003, 34 schools reported increase, compared to 14 reporting decreases."

EVALUATING LIBRARY SERVICES

During the course of the year 2004-2005, I participated in Indiana's first Leadership Institute Lead-IN: Leadership for Indiana Libraries sponsored by INCOLSA. *INCOLSA (Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority)* is a multi-type library network with more than 760 members, the Indiana Library Federation, the Indiana State Library, and a stake holder's advisory group consisting of around 15 members. This leadership institute is designed specifically for Indiana librarians. The Institute's leaders were Dan and Sharon Wiseman of Wiseman Consulting & Training. The candidates participating in the leadership institute were introduced to various leadership concepts, reading material, journaling, and active group participation. Participants already working in leadership roles were able to further hone their skills through this institute. For those participants working in "team" or other environments, they were able to see themselves as a leader even if they did not possess the title of Head, Manager, Director, Dean or President.

During the yearlong institute, the project I chose to develop was closely tied to my position as multicultural outreach librarian for Indiana University Libraries in Bloomington. I created an instrument to survey diversity in Indiana Libraries. The survey is electronic and should take no more than 15-minutes to complete. See the link at: http://www.indiana.edu/~libugls/diversity/survey/

The survey is designed to help Indiana librarians evaluate and improve the library programs and services to patrons visiting libraries. Librarians from special,

corporate, public, academic, and school media centers are being asked to participate in the survey. At the conclusion of the survey, responses will be compiled and evaluations and analysis of the study will be done.

Does your library sponsor programs in languages other than English? Does your library have a department or committee that focuses on issues of diversity and multiculturalism? These are questions that can be found on the survey. It is my hope that knowing the type of questions on the survey whetted appetites or at least generated interest in the survey; so that the information/data gathered would be a good statewide sampling of diversity related issues Indiana Libraries are facing. A benefit of your responses to the survey is that it will aid librarians in improving library services and programs to patrons using Indiana libraries.

When evaluating library services much of the literature suggests that the makeup of the profession does not mirror the overall population base, a disturbing but an all too familiar trend or reality. When the state of Colorado initiated a survey on diversity the final word was, "there is no denying that, at present, there is little diversity among its library workers, but feel there are hopeful signs that particularly as new library workers replace those who are retiring, greater diversity is a likely consequence,"(Adapted from the Diversity of Colorado Library Workers:)

In recent months the Indiana State Library has awarded more than $65,000 in LSTA funds to a number of Indiana public libraries in order to strengthen their services to multicultural populations. Through this effort, Indiana is beginning to show its commitment to diversity. But have hiring practices changed? What are library administrators doing to diversify the library workforce? More importantly, what are administrators doing to retain minority library workers? Do they offer mentoring programs, travel incentives, continuing education and professional development opportunities, employee diversity or sensitivity training? These are but some of the questions Indiana library administrators need to address if a diverse library workforce will ever be realized.

My Words:

Although words such as inclusion, cultural diversity, social capital and others have been defined in a most elementary way, sometimes the simple but direct way is the best. So in conclusion, it is my hope that Indiana librarians will begin to think of diversity education in terms of not only hiring a diverse workforce, but also in terms of collections, services, programs, and events. We cannot ignore the fact that the face of Indiana is changing. Indiana is indeed becoming a multicultural state and its libraries should reflect that.

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