

# Notre Dame's Librarian-in-Residence Program

By: Laura Bayard

**H**esburgh Libraries (formerly University Libraries) and the Kresge Law Library of Notre Dame jointly launched the Librarian-in-Residence program in 2000. This program is the library partners' flagship diversity initiative. The intention is to recruit and hire a newly credentialed librarian every two years who can contribute effectively to diversity to the profession and to the University. The program provides the resident with opportunities to gain professional experience and to clarify his or her thinking about future career directions. In return, the residents contribute their talents and skills to make progress on projects or otherwise accomplish work. The residents are not guaranteed a permanent position at the conclusion of the program, but they are free to apply for library faculty positions that become available. Hesburgh Libraries, however, is fortunate to have been able to hire the first four residents. The first resident to be hired since has moved into library administration at another university. Recently, the fifth Librarian-in-Residence was hired for the program period 2008/09-2009/10.

So what is a residency? Notre Dame's interpretation is that the program is aimed at recent (within two years) graduates from an ALA-accredited library school. Internships, on the other hand, are interpreted to be work opportunities often offered during summers to students who have yet to graduate. Much has been written recently in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the increasing importance of internships for undergraduates in many disciplines as a way to enhance a student's resume, thereby creating better opportunities to attract a good job upon graduation. Similarly, the Notre Dame Librarian-in-Residence is encouraged over the two-year program to enhance his or her CV in the area of contributions to the profession, such as making presentations at national or state

venues and publishing articles in library journals. These kinds of contributions are attractive to academic librarians seeking to hire new librarians, especially in those institutions whose librarians enjoy faculty status. The contributions a resident makes can reinforce the notion of future success in library faculty positions. The Notre Dame resident is hired as a Visiting Librarian at the rank of Assistant Librarian. The residents enjoy the same benefits of health care, vacation, moving expenses, and professional travel support as other librarians except that contribution towards retirement is not provided by the University.

Residencies are prevalent now in academic libraries, especially in member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The oldest residency, the Pauline A. Young Librarian residency began in 1984 at the University of Delaware. Named for a prominent Delaware librarian and civil rights activist, the residency's goal from the beginning was to hire new librarians from underrepresented groups (University, para. 1). Since the mid-1980's, many other residencies have been established, including Indiana at both Notre Dame (Librarian, 2008) and Purdue (Purdue, 2008). Currently, Notre Dame's library residency is unnamed, but there is hope that the program will be endowed within a decade at which time a name will be bestowed. ALA and ARL diversity scholarships provide funding to recruits to the profession, creating a burgeoning applicant pool for residencies.

While there are similarities among programs, not all residencies are designed alike. At Notre Dame, the program has been drawn broadly to allow differences among the residencies. The first year of the residency is divided into three or four rotations with the first rotation in the fall usually beginning in the Research Department of the Law Library.

While the law librarians are busy teaching the legal research course to first-year law students, the resident who is auditing the course offers research assistance to law students and faculty. Sometimes the rotation schedule allows the resident to accompany Notre Dame's law librarians to the American Association of Law Librarians (AALL) annual conference and meeting. This year and perhaps next year will be different with no Law Library rotation being offered because construction of the new law school is underway and there is no available office space to house a resident. The other rotations during the first year are offered by department head colleagues in the Hesburgh Libraries. Department heads who may have a project or some other idea to provide work for the resident will respond to a call for proposals in late winter. Recruitment and hires occur in spring with a start date aimed at July 1. In determining the second year, the resident's interests and the Libraries' needs are factors in the decision about which department will host the resident. The resident's participation on library committees and in professional activities contributes to the resident's understanding of and experience with research and law libraries.

The resident reports to librarians who supervise the work rotations and evaluate the resident's work. As a way to create continuity throughout the two years, the resident reports administratively to the Library Faculty Affirmative Action Officer who pulls together the rotational supervisors' evaluations and writes the annual performance review. In practice, the relationship is a mentor/mentee one to help the resident navigate the University and the Libraries and to enhance his or her CV. The Officer liaises with the Office of Institutional Equity to collect and report diversity data during library faculty recruiting and hiring efforts; reports directly on matters of diversity to Jennifer A. Younger, the Edward H. Arnold Director of University Libraries; chairs the Library Faculty Diversity Committee; and coordinates the Committee's diversity initiatives. Reporting directly to the director is expedient for two reasons. She can authorize funds and actions quickly. Also, she promotes the programs upward to the university level. Notre Dame's aspirational goals include hiring and retaining more women and minority faculty. The residency program supports those

University's goals.

In the run-up to establishing the rotation, the Diversity Committee spent a good deal of time too with university counsel. Mostly there were questions about language used in job ads and on the website as the Committee grappled to understand the legal nuances inherent in the program that was being established. As the Committee became more experienced with the residency, the meetings with the university counsel diminished. The director of the Office of Institutional Equity, however, would be available for consultation as needed. The Library Leadership & Management Association's (LLAMA) Diversity Officers' Discussion Group meets at both ALA Mid-Winter and Annual Conferences. The DG offers good support, allowing leaders to share experiences that can lead to programmatic changes at home. Also meeting at the same conferences is the Diversity Interest Network & Exchange (DINE) that offers a broader arena to share information about diversity issues and to enjoy some refreshments too.

The main responsibility of the Diversity Committee during a search for a resident is to perform the duties of a search committee. There are three predominant venues where the job ad for the residency is placed. The first is ARL's Research Library Residence Programs Database at: <http://residencies.arl.org/>. The database is free. Second are electronic mailing lists devoted to diversity, specifically ALA's [DINE@ala.org](mailto:DINE@ala.org), LLAMA's list at [diversity-l@ala.org](mailto:diversity-l@ala.org), and the Spectrum's Scholar list at <http://lists.ala.org/wws/info/scholars>. Because making efforts to increase the diversity of applicant pools for all library faculty positions is the essence of affirmative action, these lists also are used when advertising for any available library faculty position. Finally, another avenue of advertisement is to contact all ALA-accredited library schools. In earlier times, this meant writing and sending a letter to each school. Today, however, more and more schools have an electronic jobs board so a mere E-mail attachment will work fine. Sometimes proactively recruiting individuals can be an effective method, but it is generally not used for the residency position.

Of course all things evolve or change depending



upon circumstances at the time and Notre Dame's library residency is no exception. For example, usually only one position is available at a time, but during 2005/06-2006/07, two excellent applicants were appointed. Much is written about the positive impact of cohorts. But it was difficult to double the number of rotations needed because the Libraries is not as large as some other ARL libraries. It is unlikely that there will be two simultaneous residents at Notre Dame in the future. For another example, the rotations during the first year have been reduced from four to three in the last couple of cycles. Yet another example is the more explicit attempts through the position descriptions and ads to attract residents who are technologically savvy. The advertisement for this most recent residency indicated that emerging technologies would be the focus. The resident will identify and analyze emerging technologies and innovations during the second rotation in the Library Systems Department. In the third rotation, she will recognize and implement relevant technological improvements for the reference department and the Engineering Library. Her first rotation will be in the Mahaffey Business Information Center (BIC) within the Mendoza College of Business where the collections are primarily electronic. She will gain insight and experience that will allow her to get ideas of public services' needs that will help her when she moves into the rotation in Systems. Rotations often incorporate other activities that might be going on during the residency for the first and maybe last time in the Libraries. Yet these perhaps one-time activities can induce department heads to see a need for hosting a rotation at a particular time. For example, Hesburgh Libraries recently received an LSTA grant to purchase a/v equipment to create instructional content and deliver it over the Internet. The new resident probably will participate in learning the modalities, perhaps creating a/v instructional content for the BIC. Another example of a resident's participation in such an activity would be when the Law Library participated in LibQual+ (TM), a survey developed by ARL to assess users' perceptions of the quality of library services. Lastly, when a new product from the Libraries' integrated library system is to be implemented, the resident could have a role in conducting user-centered studies. Whatever the motivation to host a rotation, colleagues'

good-will is key to a successful program.

It is true historically that residencies occur in larger academic libraries, but recently a community college in a Western state was seeking ways to fund a residency. It may be too soon to call it a trend, but it is clear that librarians see value in post-MLS opportunities for new librarians. The programs provide practical rather than theoretical work experiences. The benefit of the work produced accrues to libraries. New librarians have opportunities to discover where their passions lie within the profession. The benefit of experience accrues to new librarians. Finally, anecdotal evidence suggests that an unanticipated benefit of a successful residency is the boon of more diverse applicant pools for other available positions within the Libraries because the applicants perceive an environment hospitable to librarians of color. Who knew?

## Bibliography

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