

ACADEMIC LIBRARY RESIDENCY PROGRAMS: AN AVENUE OF SUCCESS FOR NEWLY-MINTED LIBRARIANS

by Leslie L. Morgan



LIBRARY RESIDENCY PROGRAMS: AN INTRODUCTION

Library residency programs are invaluable sources for recruiting and developing professional librarians in academic libraries. In academia, some residency programs offer candidates the opportunity to work towards obtaining their M.L.S. degrees while working for a small stipend and health insurance up to a maximum period of two years as a student librarian. Other academic library programs offer the post M.L.S. degree residency position within the first year of obtaining the degree. Often, a first year librarian salary is offered with an excellent benefit package that may include a line item to cover moving expenses. A well designed residency program can be a window of opportunity and not just a crafty human resources recruitment tool (Cogell & Gruewell, 2000). From the perspective of the M.L.S. student seeking an academic librarian position, the process of obtaining a position may seem daunting because most position descriptions found in academic libraries require one to two years of professional experience. Going through a residency program can help fill such a requirement. Residency programs encourage professional development of new librarians and allow them to learn from colleagues who can enrich their knowledge base of this profession.

What is the key element to a successful residency experience? New professional librarians must actively engage in their development as librarians. In other words, they should be proactive in their development as academic librarians. They should make a connection to what they understand about the work of academic librarianship and make it work for them. Now more than ever, library residency programs are needed in Indiana as well as in the entire United States. A survey entitled, "Diversity Counts: Office for Research Statistics – Office for Diversity" by Denise M. Davis (2006), Director of the ALA Office for Research and Tracie D. Hall, Director for the ALA Office for Diversity, conducted a survey with some alarming facts.

If libraries are to remain relevant, not only must they reach out to diverse user communities, but they must build a workforce reflective of that diversity. From 1990-2000, positions within academic libraries declined

by 4.4% for African American librarians (Davis & Hall, 2006). The percentage of credentialed academic librarians from the 2000 census and the 2006 ALA membership reported: 4.5% are African Americans, 3% Latino, 1.4% Native Americans, 2.7% Asian Pacific Islanders, and 89% white (Davis & Hall, 2001). Libraries currently have three times more African American library assistants on staff than do their M.L.I.S. counterparts.

There are a number of universities and colleges across the country that have been very proactive in creating residency programs for newly minted librarians of color as well as in creating programs that exist for potential M.L.I.S. candidates (see the appendix at the end of this article for a listing of schools).

MY EXPERIENCE WITH LIBRARY RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

When I was in library school, I knew I wanted to work towards an M.L.I.S. degree that focused on academic librarianship. Prior to enrolling in library school, I was fortunate to work in Student Affairs, coordinating outreach programs that benefited a very diverse student population (socio-economic, race, class, and culture). This was my introduction into the academic community, and I soon realized that I wanted to be in an academic environment for the rest of my work life in a career that contributed to the success of students. I found this career in the field of librarianship. After graduation, I discovered a residency program that fit me both professionally and personally: the University of Notre Dame's "Librarian in Residence" program. My experience at the University Libraries at Notre Dame can only be described as being a phenomenal and life altering experience. Not only was I given assignments each semester to work through, the assignments encouraged me to put theories learned in library school into practice in such varied areas as information literacy, collection development, scholarly research, and reference/user services.

As a librarian nearing the end of my residency, I have purposely made professional connections with other academic librarians within the university as well as with other newly-minted librarians in the United

States. This has resulted in my presenting topics relating to information literacy at the state conference of the Indiana Library Federation in 2006; I also returned to my home state to present a workshop and panel presentation on topics that I'm interested in as an academic librarian.

My colleagues at Notre Dame have given me ample opportunities to ask questions and share experiences that I now use in my daily work with students and faculty here at Notre Dame. Having a travel budget as part of my residency program allows me to attend national conferences. To date, my residency program has afforded me opportunities to network with academic librarians at Indiana University, Purdue University, and Indiana Tech University.

CONCLUSION

I have been very fortunate in having worked with academic librarians who want me to succeed in this profession. Academic librarianship is ripe with opportunities to use a multitude of skills one may have acquired in other employment situations or while a library science student. If you want a career in academic librarianship, consider applying for a post graduate residency program. I am grateful for the continued mentorship and support of my former colleagues at Wayne State University's Undergraduate Library and from my colleagues in University Libraries at the University of Notre Dame. All have served as wonderful mentors. For this, I am forever grateful and humbled.

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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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APPENDIX - UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES PROACTIVE IN CREATING RESIDENCY PROGRAMS:

University Libraries - University of Notre Dame: Librarians In Residence

<http://www.library.nd.edu/diversity/residence.shtml>

Purdue University – Diversity Fellowship Program

<http://www.lib.purdue.edu/diversity/fellowship.html>

University of Pittsburgh –

Minority Residency Program for candidates desiring M.L.I.S. degrees

<http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~dlis/academics/download/UlsSisMinApp.pdf>

University of Tennessee –

Minority Librarian Residency Program

<http://www.lib.utk.edu/lss/lpp/minres.html>

University of Delaware – Pauline A. Young Residency

<http://www2.lib.udel.edu/personnel/residency/>

The University of Iowa –

Residency Program Reference Librarian

<http://bcalaemployment.iuplog.com/default.asp?item=240899>

The Ohio State University –

Mary P. Key Residency Program

<http://library.osu.edu/sites/staff/diversity/residency.php#C>



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