

Library Schools and Diversity: Who Makes the Grade?

By Kathleen de la Peña McCook & Kate Lippincott

DESPITE AN INTENSE commitment, the library and information profession has failed to truly diversify its ranks. We commented on this unfortunate fact more than three years ago in *LJ* (see Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Paula Geist, "Diversity Deferred: Where Are the Minority Librarians?" November 1, 1993, p. 35-38). During the past decade, the number of new minority graduates from programs

accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) has grown from 178 (6.79% of total graduates) in 1985 to 434 (10.01%) in 1995. Still, all minorities but Asian/Pacific Islanders remain significantly underrepresented among 1995 graduates relative to their population at large.

Table 1 shows that both the total number and the percent of minority entrants to the profession have increased from 1984-85 to 1994-95. Meanwhile, the country's population comprised of African Americans, American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics also grew, from 22.77% to 26.40% of the total population. Thus, the gains made by minorities in the library and information field only slightly outpaced the growth in the minority population (see Table 2). If a 100% figure means that minority graduates are represented in equal proportion to their population at large, in 1985, the graduation

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ly quintuple for them to achieve parity with their population at large.

African Americans represent 12% of the population but only 4.24% of the 1995 graduates. The graduation rate for them would have to nearly triple to achieve parity.

The strongest gains in the field have been made by graduates of Asian/Pacific Islander descent. They represent 3.50% of the population and 3.44% of 1995 graduates—near parity.

TABLE 1: A COMPARISON OF 1984/85 AND 1994/95 MINORITY GRADUATION RATES

	1984/85	% of Total	1994/95	% of Total
African American	96	3.66	184	4.24
American Indian	6	0.23	7	0.16
Asian/Pacific	48	1.83	149	3.44
Hispanic	28	1.07	94	2.17
White	2,445	93.21	3,901	89.99
Total Graduates	2,623		4,335	
Total Minorities	178		434	
Total % Minorities	6.79		10.01	
Increase in Minority Graduates			241	
Increase in Total Graduates			1,626	

rate for minorities was 30.49%, while in 1995, the rate was 37.92%.

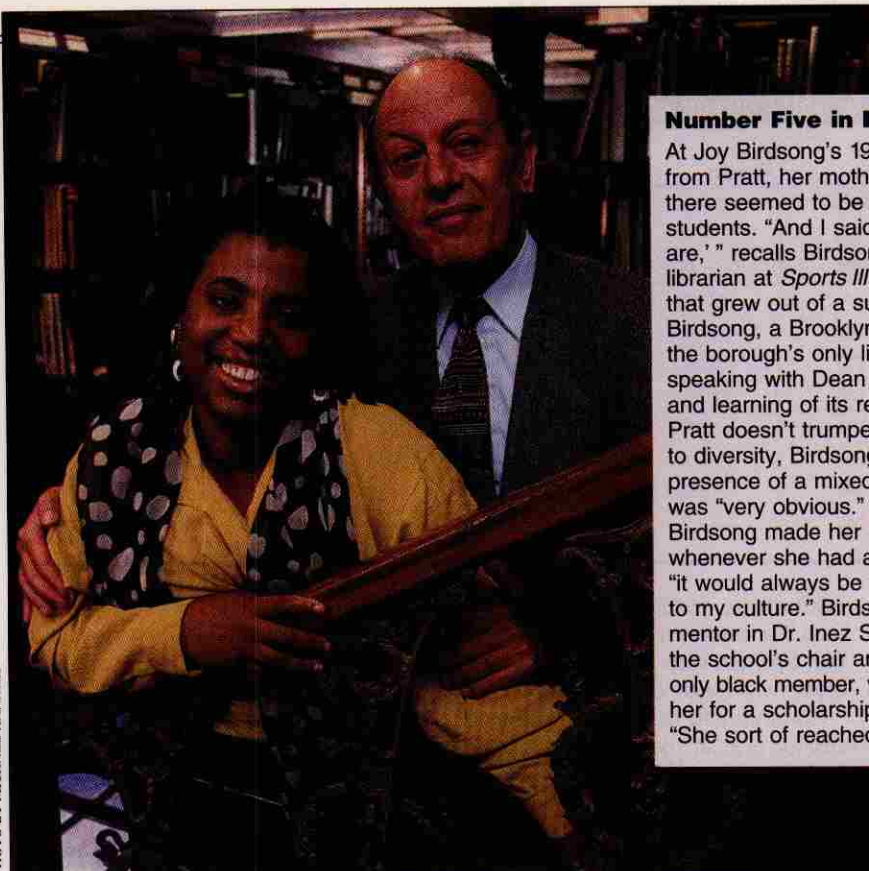
African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indian library graduates remain significantly underrepresented. Hispanics represent 10.20% of the population but only 2.17% of the 1995 graduates. (Moreover, those 1995 figures include the University of Puerto Rico, which was not included in the 1985 graduation data.) American Indians represent .7% of the population but only .16% of 1995 graduates. The graduation rate for each group would have to near-

minority graduates.

There are no hard data to support a hypothesis that these programs have been responsible for the profession's gains over the last decade. But the relatively small attendance—mainly by people with long-term commitment to this issue—demonstrates that the effort must be broadened and deepened state by state and school by school. As ALA develops strategies to expand its financial support of diversity, it is crucial that graduation patterns be examined so that the profession can make meaningful plans.

ALA's response

What does all this mean to the profession? Over the past several annual conferences and Midwinter Meetings of ALA, Florence Simkins Brown has organized a series of powerful programs titled, "Stop Talking and Start Doing! Recruitment and Retention of People of Color at the State and Local Levels." This program, sponsored by the Chapter Relations Committee, has been the forum for ongoing grassroots efforts to expand the pool of



Number Five in Diversity: Pratt

At Joy Birdsong's 1995 graduation from Pratt, her mother observed that there seemed to be a lot of black students. "And I said, 'Yeah, there are,'" recalls Birdsong, a research librarian at *Sports Illustrated*, a job that grew out of a summer internship. Birdsong, a Brooklyn resident, chose the borough's only library school after speaking with Dean Seoud M. Matta and learning of its reputation. Though Pratt doesn't trumpet its commitment to diversity, Birdsong says the presence of a mixed student body was "very obvious." Then again, Birdsong made her own contributions: whenever she had a library project, "it would always be something related to my culture." Birdsong found a mentor in Dr. Inez Sperr Brisford, the school's chair and the faculty's only black member, who recommended her for a scholarship and internship. "She sort of reached out to me."

great stir despite its somewhat dubious methodology. This "first ever ranking of graduate programs" was judged by the deans and senior faculty of the programs. The 73% response to *U.S. News & World Report* undoubtedly means the ranking will be widely quoted and cited. Several schools have already issued press releases noting their rank in its top ten.

The diversity top ten

Another "top ten" can now be added to the rankings of LIS programs—those with top ten minority

graduation rates in 1994–95. As Table 3 illustrates, the top ten are Puerto Rico, Clark Atlanta, Hawaii, North Carolina Central, Pratt, San Jose, Queens, Louisiana State University, South Florida, and Michigan. The rankings of the other 34 reporting programs appear in Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Kate Lippincott's *Planning for a Diverse Workforce in the Library and Information Science Professions* (Univ. of South Florida, SLIS, Research Group, 1997, rev. ed.).

Since the culture of ranking is so strong, it is instructive to compare the three sets of top ten rankings (see Table 4). Only Michigan appears on all three lists.

The most diverse programs

Ten accredited programs account for 41% of all minority graduates in our field. Table 3 (p. 32) lists these top ten LIS programs. Each had a minority graduation rate of 12% or higher in 1994–95.

The four programs graduating the most minority students are Puerto Rico, Clark Atlanta, Hawaii, and North Carolina Central. These four have historic traditions as programs for specific minorities or a geographic situation that forces a concentration of minorities. Each has continued strength in graduates from a single minority group. Of the remaining six schools in the top ten, diversity is strongest in the program at the Pratt Institute.

Asian/Pacific graduates are well represented at Pratt, San Jose, and Queens. African American graduates are strongly represented at LSU, Michigan, Pratt, and South Florida. Hispanics are strongly represented at South Florida. Although Texas does not make the top ten, it did graduate 7.61% Hispanics. Only the University of Washington program graduated more than one new librarian of American Indian heritage. While few of the schools graduating 10% or more minority librarians recruit strongly from more than one or two major minority groups, these programs do demonstrate that modest success is possible.

Rankings and ratings

Americans have a special attachment to rankings and ratings. LIS programs were ranked twice in 1996. The first appeared as "Productivity of Library and Information Science Faculty," in the January 1996 issue of *Library Quarterly* (p. 35–38). It ranked programs based on faculty publications and citations.

The second, "America's Best Graduate Schools: Library Science," in the March 18, 1996 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* (p. 100), caused a

TABLE 2: A COMPARISON OF 1984/85 AND 1994/95 CENSUS POPULATION DATA TO GRADUATION RATES FROM LIS PROGRAMS

	African American	American Indian	Asian/Pacific	Hispanic	White	Total Minorities
1985 Census Distribution (%)	11.66%	0.65%	2.23%	7.72%	77.73%	22.27%
1985 Graduates (%)	3.66	0.23	1.83	1.07	93.21	6.79
1995 Census Distribution (%)	12.00	0.70	3.50	10.20	73.60	26.40
1995 Graduates (%)	4.24	0.16	3.44	2.17	89.99	10.01
1985 Census Distribution (%)	11.66	0.65	2.23	7.72	77.73	22.27
1995 Census Distribution (%)	12.00	0.70	3.50	10.20	73.60	26.40
1985 Graduates (%)	3.66	0.23	1.83	1.07	93.21	6.79
1995 Graduates (%)	4.24	0.16	3.44	2.17	89.99	10.01

Census Data Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1994. Washington, D.C., 1995, No. 19.

TABLE 3: TOP TEN LIBRARY SCHOOLS IN RANK ORDER ACCORDING TO MINORITY GRADUATION RATES—1994/95

School	African American		American Indian		Asian/Pacific		Hispanic		White		Total Graduates	Total Minorities	Percent Minorities
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
1. Puerto Rico	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	14	100%	0	0%	14	14	100%
2. Clark Atlanta	16	51.61%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	15	48.39%	31	16	51.61%
3. Hawaii	0	0%	0	0%	26	42.62%	0	0%	35	57.38%	61	26	42.62%
4. NC Central	16	33.33%	0	0%	1	2.08%	0	0%	31	64.58%	48	17	35.42%
5. Pratt	13	16.88%	0	0%	7	9.09%	5	6.49%	52	67.53%	77	25	32.47%
6. San Jose	3	2.68%	0	0%	14	12.50%	3	2.68%	92	82.14%	112	20	17.86%
7. Queens	5	5.81%	0	0%	6	6.98%	4	4.65%	71	82.56%	86	15	17.44%
8. Louisiana	8	12.50%	1	1.56%	0	0%	2	3.13%	53	82.81%	64	11	17.19%
9. S. Florida	8	6.72%	0	0%	2	1.68%	9	7.56%	100	84.03%	119	19	15.97%
10. Michigan	8	6.61%	0	0%	5	4.13%	3	2.48%	105	86.78%	121	16	13.22%

A proposal

ALA is currently considering a \$1.5 million diversity plan, the Spectrum Initiative, mandating that the profession plan with care to consolidate strategies that work. A survey mailed to U.S. ALA-accredited programs in fall 1996 identified several successful actions:

1. recruitment of faculty from minority groups;
2. active participation in diversity initiatives by faculty;
3. partnerships with libraries to provide educational opportunities for minority support staff;
4. financial support (Title II-B, scholarships);
5. targeted recruitment such as advertising in ethnic yellow pages, recruiting trips to historically black

institutions, participation in career fairs for minorities, bilingual advising, Spanish web pages; and
6. creative delivery of classes.

Commitment to building a diverse profession is at an all-time high. A study of these statistics and a review of years of efforts to attract and recruit a more diverse work force combine to suggest to the profession a sensible, workable proposal.

Instead of an all-fronts attempt to solve the problem, why not return to the simple but effective strategy outlined by Margaret Myers, former director of the ALA Office for Library Personnel Resources: "Each One-Reach One"? Have ALA work with state chapters by providing matching grants—\$1000 per state. The effect would be to create 50 new minority scholarships and a com-

mittee in each state to compound the recruitment effort. While some states already have such initiatives, many do not. A collaborative campaign could generate 50 new minority librarians a year—with ready-made mentoring committees in each state to provide advice and counsel.

At the recent ALA Midwinter Meeting Past President Betty Turock and Executive Director Elizabeth Martinez presented the Spectrum Initiative to increase and enhance the recruitment and retention of minorities in librarianship. This innovative proposal, with its \$1.5 million price tag, is now being considered by the ALA Executive Board. If the Spectrum Initiative is funded, possibly both it and the "Each One-Reach One" strategy outlined above could be used to increase diversity among new entrants to our field.

By focusing on strategies that work and monitoring minority graduation rates we can achieve greater diversity in both the library education programs and libraries. ■

TABLE 4: HOW THE TOP RANKED SCHOOLS COMPARE

School	U.S. News & World Report (Perceptions of deans and senior faculty)*	Budd & Seavey (Publications & citations)**	McCook & Lippincott (Percent of Minority Grads)*** 1994-95	
			No.	%
Illinois	1	2	19	9.48%
Michigan	2 (Tie)	12	10	13.22%
NC-Chapel Hill	2 (Tie)	7	42	1.85%
Syracuse	4	5	40	2.22%
Pittsburgh	5	Not ranked	20	9.38%
Indiana	6 (Tie)	3	27	7.55%
Rutgers	6 (Tie)	9 (Tie)	24	8.05%
Wisconsin-Madison	6 (Tie)	14 (Tie)	39	2.67%
Texas	9	Not ranked	12	11.38%
Drexel	10	6	36	4.00%

* "America's Best Graduate Schools: Library Science," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 18, 1996, p. 100

** John M. Budd & Charles A. Seavey, "Productivity of Library and Information Science Faculty," *Library Quarterly*, January 1996, p. 1-20

*** Kathleen de la Peña McCook & Kate Lippincott, *Planning for a Diverse Workforce in the Library and Information Science Professions*. Univ. of South Florida, SLIS, Research Group, 1997 (rev. ed.).

Data Sources

Data used here are derived from the Library and Information Science Education Statistical Report series issued by the Association for Library and Information Science Education. This annual series provides graduation statistics for reporting U.S. and Canadian library and information science education programs accredited by the American Library Association. A full set of school-by-school recalculated data for 1984-85 and 1992-93 and 1994-95 appear in by Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Kate Lippincott's *Planning for a Diverse Workforce in the Library and Information Science Professions* (Univ. of South Florida, SLIS, Research Group, 1997. rev. ed.).