

# Diversity Study Task Force Report and Recommendations

**I**n December 2016, the ILA Executive Board convened a Diversity Study Task Force, charged with “studying the diversity of Illinois library professionals and presenting recommendations to the ILA Board on how ILA can assist in improving the recruitment and retention of diverse library professionals.” Chaired by Executive Board members Richard Kong and Sarah Armstrong, the Task Force collected data through two surveys and a series of roundtable conversations. Members of the Task Force were Katrina Belogorsky, Vandella Brown, Trixie Dantis, Jody Gray, Keisha Hester, Shala Khan, Kate Marek, Elizabeth Marszalik, and Miguel Ruiz. Survey respondents included 12 Spectrum Scholars and 53 members of the Illinois library community; members of underrepresented groups were the intended respondents to the latter survey. Approximately 35 people participated in the roundtable conversations during the ILA Annual Conference in Tinley Park.

The lack of diversity in the library profession is long-standing and well documented; despite numerous well-meaning attempts, including ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship program, which is supported by most ALA-accredited schools of library and information science, the problem persists. Data from the two in-state ALA-accredited graduate programs’ most recent accreditation program presentations says it all: At Dominican, the student population was 80 percent White as of the 2015 report; at UIUC, 82 percent as of the 2011 report. It is ILA’s goal to prioritize and act on some of the Task Force’s recommendations, ideally with measurable outcomes, in order to “move the needle” on increasing and improving equity, diversity, and inclusion in our profession and in our association. ILA will need to identify success measures in order to benchmark any progress we are able to make.

As the Executive Board embarks on a process to update ILA’s strategic plan, the data and recommendations from the Diversity Study Task Force will provide an important input. But we don’t have to wait for a new strategic plan to take action; Vernā Myers, Opening General Session speaker at the 2017 Annual Conference, directly addressed implicit bias and how to deal with it in a high-energy, engaging, and meaningful session that can serve as our inspiration going forward. Around the same time as the convening of the Diversity Study Task Force, ILA released its “Statement on Inclusion.” The array of conference speakers and topics shows an increasing level of diversity, as do the illustrations featured in our iREAD materials. Funding is being sought to continue and improve the Sylvia Murphy Williams Award to enable Illinois Spectrum Scholars to attend ILA Annual Conference. These are small steps toward a larger goal.

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The recommendations from the Task Force are listed below. The ILA Executive Board will consider them all as we look ahead to developing strategic directions and tactics in the months to come.

### **Building a Community**

- Expand networking opportunities targeted to members of underrepresented groups, including online conversations and regional meetings, to cultivate organic relationships;
- Facilitate community building for members of underrepresented groups, especially ones starting their career, either online or in person, across levels of experience and tenures within libraries;
- Commit to cultural competency training for all members of ILA, including library workers and trustees.
- Create subgroups within existing ILA groups specifically for mentoring purposes;
- Include different minority caucuses at ILA booths to increase visibility; and
- Seek out diverse speakers for conferences and regional events, particularly if they are from a small library or not otherwise connected to other libraries.

### **Expanding Financial Support**

- Increase the number of available travel grants to allow library workers to attend ILA conferences and other continuing education opportunities;
- Provide additional information regarding how to present a case to library administration for attending conference and other professional events.

### **Increasing Awareness of Career Opportunities**

- Advertise librarianship as a profession among traditionally underrepresented groups;
- Encourage librarians to discuss the profession of librarianship with paraprofessionals, student workers, interns, volunteers, and patrons; and
- Develop a library school toolkit for programs and paths to librarianship, which should advance beyond recruitment and support students during their degree-seeking years.

**ILA**