

Redefining Diversity: Creating an Inclusive Academic Library through Diversity Initiatives

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ABSTRACT. This article contends that it is essential for academic librarians to identify and remain mindful of the unique needs of an increasingly diverse student demographic to ensure that academic libraries are a welcoming place for all students. It is through diversity initiatives that we can expect to improve the educational outcome for students by presenting the library as a vital part of their college experience. The article defines diversity in the most “elastic” sense of the word—including minority racial groups, but expanding the term to include international students, graduate students, returning students, distance learners, transfer students, “at-risk” students, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender students.

KEYWORDS. Diversity, diversity initiatives, minority racial groups, international students, graduate students, returning students, distance learners, transfer students, “at-risk” students, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender students, diverse workforce

It is no longer enough to pay lip service to the idea of tolerance or to exhibit a casual mindfulness of the distinctions separating students by race, ethnicity, physical or mental disabilities, or sexual orientation. Most colleges and universities recognize the importance of demonstrating a

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commitment to the issue of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity—many campuses have altered their mission statements to reflect a stronger dedication to this issue, and some have constructed concrete policies addressing all issues relating to racial and ethnic equality.

Since the inception of the diversity awareness movement, research has been conducted to address the unique educational barriers that can exist for multicultural students. Much of the literature in the area of student racial diversity concurs that the educational barriers that exist for multicultural students are sufficiently considerable to impact a college student's probability to succeed. This implies that a heightened sensitivity to understanding and acknowledging the factors that create learning challenges is needed to ensure the academic achievement and retention for multicultural students. These same studies indicate that use of the library positively affects student retention and academic achievement, particularly for multicultural students (Whitmire 2003; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek 1987).

Although the majority of literature addressing the issue of diversity in the field of academic librarianship focuses on minority and ethnic racial groups, attention is beginning to be placed on other "nontraditional" users—that is, any student who differs from the typical college student with regard to abilities, age, gender/sexuality, nationality or ethnicity, and locale (students taking classes at a remote campus and/or online). The educational barriers are different for each separate population; they are, nonetheless, significant enough to warrant our consideration.

This article evolved based on the contention that the term "diversity" should be redefined to include an increasingly diverse student demographic—many of whom are currently labeled nontraditional students. There is good reason for academic librarians to identify and consider the unique needs of nontraditional students to ensure that academic libraries are a welcoming place for all students. Designing diversity initiatives with multicultural and nontraditional students in mind is key to bridging the various academic and research needs of today's students—this includes aggressively hiring more minority librarians, staff, and student workers in an effort to foster a workforce that is representative of our quickly diversifying university community. It is through such initiatives that we hope to improve the educational outcome for students by presenting the library as a vital part of the college experience.

As with any change in the status quo, this kind of shift requires the support of all members of an academic library—administrators, librarians, and support staff; such a change is not always immediately welcomed. However, raising the priority placed on diversity and crystallizing the arguments

for how each nontraditional group of students can benefit from our consideration and specific initiatives will exhibit the kind of responsiveness necessary to ensure the vitality of academic libraries in our fast-changing environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Minority Racial Groups

Mallinckrodt and Sedlacek (1987) find that use of campus facilities was positively related to academic success and retention of all students, but that the strongest relationship was between African-American student retention and use of the library. This same study maintains that use of the library is one of the three most significant predictors of whether an African-American student will stay in college. The authors conclude that it is vital, in terms of student retention, for African-American students to use academic facilities such as the library and to engage in nonacademic campus activities.

Jones-Quartey's study (1993) echoes the assertion that academic library use contributes to the success and retention of multicultural students. The author also claims that it is vital for institutions of higher learning to expand their efforts to make the academic library a more welcoming place and to commit to empowering minority students academically through bibliographic instruction and library use.

Whitmire analyzes library use among multiple racial groups (as compared to Caucasian undergraduates) and explores whether there are differences in their library use patterns. Whitmire's findings indicate that students of color are using academic libraries more often than Caucasian students, although they have a lower retention rate. Therefore, she concludes that "[i]f academic library use can be associated with retention as earlier studies indicated, it is important for academic libraries to assist their institutions with retention rates by increasing academic library use among this student population" (161).

Whitmire's later study (2004) uses secondary data to explore the relationship between campus racial climate and perceptions of the library by students of color. It is clear from this author's study that negative racial experiences have a detrimental effect on a student's collegiate success. The author also contends that negative racial experiences will negatively alter a student's perceptions of the library. Caucasian students in each study

cited described much lower levels of negative racial experiences than their multiracial/multiethnic counterparts.

International Students

International students come from a variety of different cultures, and, as such, they may have language barriers or they may simply be overwhelmed by the culture of the American college campus. DiMartino and Zoe (2000) explore many of the issues facing international students today. The authors note that some of the common functional barriers international students experience are the same as those faced by native-born students—problems with the library classification system, underdeveloped critical thinking skills, variations in educational backgrounds, and technological difficulties. These problems can be amplified by the fact that certain cultures do not have public libraries, or, if they do, they do not have open stacks. The authors also point to cultural differences in learning styles and they urge library staff to “become proficient at cultural appraisal and more sensitive to cultural differences” (121).

A study on library anxiety among international students discusses many of the challenges this population faces (Jiao and Onwuegbuzie 2001). The authors explicate the five dimensions of library anxiety: “barriers with staff, affective barriers [feelings of ineptness], comfort with the library, [familiarity with] the library, and mechanical barriers [database use, on-line catalog, printers, etc.]” (17). Their study concludes that mechanical barriers pose the greatest challenge for international students with affective barriers rating second. The authors recommend that librarians address library anxiety issues in each of their instruction sessions and workshops.

Graduate, Returning, and Transfer Students

Often, graduate students are presumed to know how to do library research; however, Williams warns that this assumption is usually unfounded (2000). The author argues that graduate students are a “forgotten, or invisible, community,” sometimes dealt with in the same manner as undergraduates, and sometimes treated as faculty, but more often not dealt with at all. Williams notes that one barrier for this population is technology, and she states that “[w]hile people use computers on the job, this does not necessarily translate into information literacy” (145–146). To close the information literacy gap for graduate students, Williams recommends that librarians contact this population during their orientation (on- or off-site), design workshops geared toward addressing their specific needs, develop

workbooks, handouts, or tutorials (especially online tutorials) to aid with specific subject areas, create a for-credit course to hone research skills and methods, offer one-to-one research consultations and provide students with office hours.

Returning and transfer students also bring unique considerations for academic librarians. As with graduate students, there can be technological barriers for students who have been away from an educational environment; however, as Holmes notes, many reentry students have information and "commonsense" skills that help to compensate for a lack of technological skills (2000). She contends that returning students have an increased goal orientation and tend to be independent with high motivation to succeed. On the other hand, the author asserts that reentry students can frequently suffer from "negative self-images, unrealistic goals, [and] social-familial problems" (132). Holmes suggests that addressing these issues through focused bibliographic instruction might help many reentry students come back to formal education with greater confidence and with a higher likelihood of academic success.

Distance Learners

Heller-Ross and Kiple (2000) examine three institutions' approaches to meeting the needs of their distance learners. Distance students are those students who enroll in one or more of their classes at a remote campus or in an online format. The University of Maine has formed an Off-Campus Library Services office to ensure that the information resources and bibliographic instruction needs are met for both distance learners and the faculty who teach them. Nova Southeastern University provides its distance learners with library support through their Distance Library Services Office. The authors note that this university has been offering distance learning since the 1970s and their library support is extensive in that they offer instruction sessions in several distance-learning formats and the library services available to distance education students are expanding rapidly. Plattsburgh State University's distance students are serviced jointly from the campus' library (by the outreach librarian) and their own site library. Library faculty teach a for-credit course on library research, and the Division of Library and Information Services offers workshops each semester.

At-Risk Students

Jacobson (2000) discusses some useful strategies for designing instruction for at-risk students (students who have been accepted to college but

placed in remedial courses to better prepare them for the transition to post-secondary coursework and bolster their academic skills). She claims it is important to limit the amount of information presented in a library session. She also recommends that librarians involve students in activities rather than expecting them to listen passively to a lecture and she points to certain developmental considerations as reasons for implementing such teaching methods. As Jacobson is aware that librarians are often constrained by time, she emphasizes the importance of recognizing at-risk students' learning issues and suggests that librarians have the willingness to adjust teaching techniques accordingly.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Students

McDowell (2000) offers many insights on the impact of ignoring the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students in academic libraries. The author provides suggestions on how to design instruction that is "inclusive . . . not heterosexist, and . . . meet[s] the information needs of all students for LGBT materials" (75). McDowell asserts that, by addressing LGBT issues, librarians can play an active role in diminishing homophobia and contributing to a healthy learning environment campus-wide. The author recommends using displays, pathfinders, and workshops to "[challenge] the silence around LGBT issues," (78) creating bibliographies and Web pages, and collaborating with LGBT community and campus groups.

Diversity in Hiring Practices

Alire and Stielow (1997) discuss ways in which university libraries can resolve the issue of racial and ethnic homogeneity among their personnel. They provide suggestions on how to best approach the dilemma through practical and proactive methods. In an effort to change the status quo, the authors recommend focusing on hiring minority student workers, hosting exhibits "that could spark intellectual debate relative to the treatment of minorities on and off campus," (514) reach out to minority students and student groups as well as alumni, offer diversity training to staff and mentor (formally, or informally) minority students as a means of recruiting them into the library profession.

Neely and Peterson (2007) developed a white paper in response to a 2002 Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) white paper titled: *Recruitment, Retention and Restructuring: Human Resources in Academic Libraries*. The 2002 paper discussed the issue of the underrepresentation of minorities in the academic library workforce. It is the authors'

contention that “[t]he current environment for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of people of color in academic librarianship remains virtually unchanged since the appearance of the 2002 white paper” (562). The authors recommend strategies for university libraries to diversify their personnel. They suggest developing a comprehensive recruitment and public awareness campaign, modeled after the efforts achieved in the nursing field—pointing to <http://discovernursing.com/> as an example of “a fully developed, functional and proven successful” (563) resource that can be adopted by the library profession. The authors also stress the importance of advancement for minorities and suggest that this can be best accomplished through mentoring, shadowing leaders, and job rotation within the library.

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY’S DEMOGRAPHICS

Because Oakland University is located near three other major public universities in southeast Michigan (The University of Michigan System with campuses in Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Flint, Eastern Michigan University, and Wayne State University), recognizing and responding to the challenges of diversity is essential if we are to increase our campus’s ability to recruit students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Beyond this, we have a responsibility to foster, not just cope with, diversity, to ensure that our campus will thrive in this rapidly changing academic environment. In order to examine diversity initiatives at Kresge Library, it is important to present an accurate profile of the student population. Oakland University (OU) is a midsize, public university (17,737 students—just over 4,000 graduate students and almost 14,000 undergraduate) in the Detroit suburb of Rochester, Michigan. OU is primarily a commuter, not residential, campus.

DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVES AT KRESGE LIBRARY

Kraemer, Keyes, and Lombardo (2003) offer an overview of the development of an outreach program at OU’s Kresge Library. The initial outreach efforts focused primarily on ethnic and racial diversity issues. The authors highlight the library’s participation in campus-wide programs such as African American Celebration Month, Cultural Awareness Week, and Disability Awareness Day. The authors also describe OU librarians’ involvement in supporting other multicultural issues through displays and

the construction of a diversity resources Web site, and other multicultural related activities.

Following the initial stages of outreach efforts, it became evident that Kresge Library and the OU community would benefit from the creation of an outreach-specific librarian position to reflect Kresge Library's growing commitment to addressing multicultural and diversity issues. In order to devote the number of hours necessary to adequately reflect the priority Kresge Library places on such a commitment, a new position dedicated to outreach was developed in 2004.

Part of the responsibilities of the outreach librarian is to increase the exposure of the library to the OU and surrounding communities. Promoting the library and its initiatives often is accomplished through informational Web pages and marketing strategies such as campus mailings, flyers, banners, the use of Facebook (a social networking Web site), and campus news sources. The outreach librarian is involved in the development of the library's newsletter and also participates in the planning of campus-wide events such as African American Celebration and Welcome Week. In addition, this librarian participates in student-led group discussions and panels on various topics.

Minority Racial Groups

As Kraemer, Keyes, and Lombardo indicate, at the outset, outreach efforts at Kresge Library focused on addressing multicultural issues. The library continues its efforts to celebrate racial and ethnic diversity. It is our philosophy that through providing students and the OU community with information and exposure to different ideas in a variety of formats and forums, we can move toward challenging stereotypes and inspiring open dialog about racial diversity.

Since the development of the outreach position, we have enhanced and increased our "KL Supports" Web pages. These pages are created by librarians and a student assistant as a means of promoting events on campus such as visiting speakers like Maya Angelou, Spike Lee, Ambassador Andrew Young, Coretta Scott King, faculty lectures on diversity topics, informational pages celebrating the various national heritage months, as well as library and campus multicultural events. These pages offer an array of links to library resources such as relevant books and journal articles on the particular subject, and pertinent, authoritative Web sites. The Web pages have garnered the attention of university administrators and faculty alike. Commenting on a KL Supports page designed for Hispanic Celebration 2007,

the director of OU's Center for Multicultural Initiatives, Omar Brown-El, stated, "Diversity awareness is such a critical part of student development, and . . . the library staff continue to be strong supporters" (Brown-El 2007). The development of the outreach position represents our library's commitment to maintaining and enhancing initiatives aimed at diversity.

Another traditional diversity initiative that Kresge Library has implemented in the spirit of multicultural diversity awareness is the creation of a book club for African-American women. The university's Center for Multicultural Initiatives sponsors a student group for African-American women called the Circle of Sisterhood. This group is dedicated to supporting OU's African-American female students in making the social and academic adjustments necessary to have successful college experiences. Kresge Library's outreach librarian facilitated the beginnings of The Circle of Sisterhood Book Club. This reading group chooses fiction, short stories, and nonfiction authored by African-American women about the lives and experiences of African-American women. This type of club has helped make the library more accessible to students. A student book club participant stated: "I had a wonderful experience with the [Circle of Sisterhood Book Club] . . . not only did I meet new students and [library] staff, but I also increased my knowledge by reading different kinds of books." Involvement with students in the smaller, more relaxed atmosphere that a book club provides has led to closer relationships between students and the library—thus increasing the likelihood that students will request and receive help from a librarian.

One of the best ways to combat stereotypes and to lessen the chance for negative racial experiences is through open communication about race. In accordance with this assertion, we have held events at Kresge Library in an effort to foster racial discussions and to honor those who have contributed to improving human rights in this country. For example, we held a panel discussion following the death of Mrs. Rosa Parks. Each panelist described how Mrs. Parks' contributions had impacted her/his life. The audience was then allowed the opportunity to ask questions or to contribute to the discussion. Another event was held during the campus-wide African American Celebration Month during which faculty, staff, students, and a *Detroit Free Press* newspaper columnist participated in a discussion on the racial climate at OU and in the Metro Detroit area. The panel discussion forum provides a platform to discuss issues in an open manner and to give the university community an opportunity to listen to opinions and perceptions of students in ways that other library events cannot provide. Both panel discussions were well attended by students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Many

faculty members integrated the topics into their classes and offered credit to students who attended and wrote essays based on their perceptions. Our most recent event involved inviting the news director from Detroit's National Public Radio station to speak at Kresge Library on the importance of mentorship in the African-American community. The responses from attendees were overwhelmingly positive. In the future, we plan to offer other panel discussions and speakers covering a variety of diversity topics, as well as other topics pertinent to today's students. In terms of library outreach, this type of collaboration with faculty and the merging of the library with the classroom experience are essential to our goal of presenting the library as a vital part of the college experience.

International Students

Addressing the academic and research needs of international students is also a component of our diversity initiative goals. We have found that the most effective means of meeting the informational needs of international students is through research consultations, one-to-one instructional sessions with a librarian provided at the request of a student or faculty member. The cultural barriers discussed by Jiao and Onwuegbuzie, which may keep an international student from requesting research help, tend to be reduced in these private sessions with a librarian. During reference shifts, librarians are also able to use each face-to-face interaction to provide assistance to international students, or, if more time is needed, the reference desk can be an opportunity to heavily promote research consultations to this particular group of students.

To further assure that Kresge Library is addressing the unique needs of international students and scholars, the outreach librarian has contacted the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) to offer support to international students. We plan to develop a workshop designed to address the specific needs of this population. We will also recommend that the ISSO refer students and scholars to the library for research consultations at the start of their OU academic careers. As DiMartino and Zoe suggest, it would also be useful for Kresge Library's staff and librarians to participate in training sessions to increase their sensitivity to the cultural barriers that exist for international students and scholars.

If we continue to create diversity initiatives focusing on minority racial and ethnic groups, as well as increase our sensitivity to such issues, we will present our library as approachable and receptive, which will likely increase library use among students and promote a sense of empowerment

for students belonging to minority racial and ethnic groups. If Whitmire's findings are valid, we will accomplish more than providing a friendly venue for the entire university community by also contributing to the retention rate for the university.

Graduate, Returning, and Transfer Students

As important as it is for academic libraries to address the conventional definition of diversity, redefining the term to include other nontraditional students has also been essential at Kresge Library. For example, our librarians place importance on addressing the needs of graduate students who are often returning after a break from academics. Before the fall semester, we collaborate with the Center for Student Activities office to ensure that space is allocated to market the library's services at campus-wide informational open houses and orientations targeted at specific populations like graduate students. Librarians bring laptop computers to help students with technology inquiries or other informational needs in addition to handouts explaining library resources, brochures, and bookmarks with the library's Web address, hours, and phone numbers. The informational tables at campus events have proven to be wonderful opportunities to assist students in obtaining the library assistance they need. To expand on the marketing of the library, in the fall of 2007, we launched a promotional campaign sponsored by university funding. The campaign involved creating banners and give-away items used to advertise library services, printing brochures for new students and visiting potential students, and most importantly, acquiring new laptops for our student computer labs.

In addition to these marketing efforts, we have found that online tutorials, research consultations, and especially formal classroom information literacy instruction have best met the research needs of students. Librarians have cultivated close relationships with departmental faculty through librarian-liaison/faculty-coordinator relationships. Faculty members are encouraged to schedule time with a librarian for information literacy for their classes. In the five years that Kresge Library has focused on diversity initiatives, the total number of information literacy classes has increased 9.7% (total number of information literacy classes taught between July 2007 and January 2008 was 150); the total number of students receiving instruction has increased 8.6% (total number of students receiving instruction between July 2007 and January 2008 was 3,222), and the number of students receiving one-to-one research consultations with a librarian has increased 65.3%

(total number of research consultations between July 2007 and January 2008 was 141).

As with graduate students, research consultations are particularly useful for returning and transfer students who may be encountering difficulties reorienting themselves to an academic setting. Williams recommends, and the librarians at Kresge Library agree, that one-to-one instruction sessions provide the best opportunity for students to overcome any barriers they may be facing—especially technological obstacles. Upon returning after a lapse in enrollment, even a brief one, students may find they are unfamiliar with changes to databases and other informational tools. Also, this population of students may not have had library instruction at any other phase of their academic careers. Students exhibit a wide-range of technological skills in an instruction classroom. Depending on life and employment experiences and length of time away from academics, returning students might be less technically proficient and may be reluctant to raise their questions in a classroom setting. Moreover, in the classroom, the focus is on what the instructor is demonstrating, with database navigation observed by the students. In the one-on-one setting of the research consultation, the student has the opportunity to work with a librarian's guidance, controlling the mouse, thus directly improving their computing and online research skills.

The feedback we have received from students, following their library instruction sessions, has been overwhelmingly positive (their comments are made available to us by the addition of a "comments" section on the online final exam that is taken following their library sessions). One student stated: "This session will increase my research productivity ten fold. Before this class, I didn't know how to utilize [the library's resources]." Other students echoed this sentiment—one stated: "I learned how to accurately narrow my searches to find journal articles," another student added: "I thought that this session was a valuable use of my time because I learned a lot about what the library has to offer. Before this session, I only used the library for computer and printer use, but now that I know how to properly search the databases, I will use the library resources more often."

Distance Learners

Another group of nontraditional students that Kresge Library is working to serve are distance education students. As Holmes suggests, online tutorials have proven effective in serving this populations' informational needs. For example, we have collaborated with faculty in the areas of education and nursing to develop tutorials for distance education students.

In the case of an education leadership class, short pre- and post-tests were designed to help us assess the effectiveness of the tutorial. Generally, after completing the tutorial, students scored significantly higher on the posttest. As OU's online and distance education programs continue to expand, it will be advantageous for Kresge Library to address the information needs of such students and offer them the most convenient mode of library instruction possible. This population of students will particularly require our consideration because they often fall into both the category of distance students as well as graduate, returning, or transfer students.

Other ways we work to address the needs of distance education students are through the expansion of our electronic book and periodical collections. Expansion of these collections, of course, benefits all of our students by increasing access to many more holdings, but it is particularly important to those students taking classes online. To further serve distance education students with their informational needs, Kresge Library provides instant messaging (IM) as a form of reference service (in addition to the reference desk IM account, many librarians have set up their own handles so that they can be reached directly). This has proven far more successful than our previous virtual reference software and IM is available at a fraction of the cost. Also, since IM is already used heavily by many students, they are comfortable with this type of communication and the usage numbers suggest they are enthusiastic about it as a reference option.

At-Risk Students

Another important group of students who sometimes fall through the cracks in terms of informational needs are at-risk students—students who are either struggling academically or who come to college with a lower skill set than their peers. At Kresge Library, the construction of a new writing center on the main floor of the library has helped to reach those students having difficulties with the mechanics of writing and the elements of college-level term paper construction. The Oakland University Writing Center (OUWC) offers students writing assistance at any stage of the writing process. One of the goals of the OUWC is to help students gain confidence in their academic abilities. Faculty and consultants, who are trained to help students develop writing skills, staff the center and offer their expertise with style guides while also helping students understand professors' expectations. In addition to walk-in and help by appointment, students can enroll in a one-credit course (RHT 104), taught by a Rhetoric faculty member, for continuous support throughout the semester. The OUWC has

been heavily utilized since its opening and librarians have been promoting its use to all of our students and faculty. The faculty who staff the OUWC also encourage students to schedule research consultations with librarians if they need help finding resources for their papers. The partnership has proven a successful one for faculty, Kresge Library, and especially students. The dean of Kresge Library, Julie Voelck, has underlined key elements that have made this partnership so successful: "There is significant synergy between the academic library and the writing center, so placing the writing center physically within the library makes a lot of sense. [T]he library's online tutorial and Web pages on plagiarism are being used by the writing center to educate students who have been sanctioned for academic misconduct" (Voelck, 2007). Together, the library and the writing center are planning workshops on writing and information literacy.

Other future diversity initiatives for the at-risk population include plans for the outreach librarian to participate in the Project Upward Bound Program. Every summer Kresge Library invites high school students participating in the Project Upward Bound program to visit the library's computer labs. These sessions are designed to help "at-risk" students gain the technological skills necessary for success in higher education. Preparation for college involves grasping the basic skills necessary to discern quality information resources from random Internet pages. A session with a librarian on this topic and a brief overview of basic database searching would likely prove useful to our Upward Bound students.

Librarians at Kresge have also created workshops, such as a plagiarism workshop, for dually enrolled high school students who take college courses for college credit if they have completed their high school academic requirements or if no equivalent advanced placement course is available at their institution. Kresge Library will partner with the coordinator of New Student Programs to design other workshops specifically addressing the unique needs (and academic skill levels) of these students.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Students

As McDowell asserts, another nontraditional group of students who should be considered diverse because of the distinctive educational barriers they might face are Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) students. Due to a hostile climate regarding sexuality often found on many college campuses today, it is important to recognize that students who identify as LGBT will likely deal with homophobia in one form or another before graduation. With the aim of becoming advocates for LGBT

students, three librarians participate in a campus-wide initiative called S.A.F.E. On Campus (Students, Administrators and Faculty for Equality). This organization is committed to providing "a safe haven, a listening ear, and support for anyone dealing with issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity. [S.A.F.E.] also educates themselves and the university community on current issues facing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning...populations" (Oakland University 2007b). Allies are given S.A.F.E. On Campus placards and buttons to display in their office or living space to help the OU community identify allies, thereby recognizing that they are a person who is knowledgeable about LGBT resources and issues and willing to assist them in a variety of ways.

The outreach librarian's participation in the S.A.F.E. On Campus program (this involved meetings and personal interactions with students seeking advice or advocacy) led to the formation of the LGBT Book Club in 2004. The outreach librarian had met with several students who had sought her advice on personal issues, and this prompted the librarian to create a social, but library-related, opportunity for students in the LGBT community to come together at Kresge Library. The librarian facilitates the discussions, and members choose books written by LGBT authors or books on LGBT experiences. For the first year of student book clubs, the library provides the books to the group members. This book club meets once a month and now has a committed core membership of students. One member of the LGBT Book Club stated that membership in this group provides students with a situation "that combines educational opportunity with social connection." It has proven a rewarding experience for the librarian as well.

The library presented a documentary during LGBT awareness week about the life and murder of a young transgender person, Brandon Teena, with a discussion following the movie led by a graduate student and LGBT activist. In our Diversity Film Series we included the film *Ma Vie en Rose (My Life in Pink)* with a discussion following the movie moderated by a professor of sociology. Such events offer students a deeper understanding of the experiences of people in the LGBT community who have had to fight against prejudice and oppression, and who have sometimes had to give their lives in the struggle. Although attendance tends to be lower at LGBT-oriented events, we feel they are still important as a means of reducing harassment and other educational barriers created by intolerance, and a way to foster an environment of acceptance to members of OU's LGBT community. Kresge Library has also recently received a gift of almost 3000 titles focusing on gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered individuals

or lifestyles. Approximately 40% of the collection is fiction featuring gay or lesbian characters. The remaining texts cover a wide variety of disciplines, such as religion, philosophy, psychology, sociology, politics, literature, the arts, and history. This gift led to the creation of a GLBT Literature and Resource Center in Kresge Library. Robert G. Gaylor, Professor Emeritus of the Oakland University Library, began collecting the materials in this collection in the 1960s. Using book reviews and his library expertise, he put together a collection of high-quality books and journals now named The Gaylor Collection.

The Impact of Outreach and Diversity Initiatives at Kresge Library

Beyond the initial expectations for this position, the role of outreach librarian has expanded to include mentorship, with this component of the job becoming more defined over time. For example, as with all librarians at Kresge, students seek time with the outreach librarian for assistance with academic projects, but many have also requested help in completing graduate school applications and scholarship essays, and many have asked only for a listening ear. Our outreach librarian has striven to present an open door to students, resulting in a bonding with students that has been a positive experience, both personally and professionally, for this librarian.

Since the inception of the outreach librarian position, outreach efforts have positively impacted library use and perceptions among the OU community. For example, the outreach librarian has been successful in providing an accessible and responsive presence to library users and the campus as a whole. As Associate Dean Frank Lepkowski stated: “[H]aving an outreach librarian has made an impact for the students who we have reached. It has been valuable in terms of [public relations] to have an approachable person students can easily relate to” (Lepkowski 2007, interview). A student involved with the LGBT book club stated that through his visits to the library for the book club and his relationship with the outreach librarian, he has become a more frequent library user: “I spend far more time in the library than I did before [attending book club meetings].” Another student who utilized the research consultation service provided by the outreach librarian stated that she was more comfortable asking for help because she had met with a librarian directly: “Everyone [at the library] is extremely helpful—I always know that if I have a question there is someone who will help me find the answer. I used to Google all my sources, so I know my papers have gotten better because I use the library.”

The outreach position has also helped to change the library's role and image on campus and in the community. The OU Alumni Association (OUAA) Literature to Film Book Club has brought alumni back to campus and into the library and helped to bring community members here as well. Several of the book club members are not Alumni, but joined the Alumni Association so that they could participate in the club. Gail Meyers of the OU Alumni Association stated: "Since being involved in the book club, I have realized that the administration at Kresge Library want patrons from the community as well as the university to use the library. I also realize that the librarians are very approachable and helpful. I've brought my son to the library to work on a high school English paper." Another OUAA book club member, Alysa Hunton (2007), stated that she also uses the library more often since joining the book club: "It's wonderful to read somewhere about a director or film that I've never heard of, have my curiosity piqued, check the catalog, and find the film is owned by OU's library."

Library events, such as panel discussions, poetry slams, art openings, and guest speakers have helped to foster an image of accessibility for students, faculty, and community members. A student who participated in a panel discussion on race describes her impressions of the library following the event: "... I did not expect to learn so much from sitting on the panel. My fellow panelists and the audience gave me insight on race relations on campus. ... I think my view of the library changed since this panel. I see the library as a place for meetings and discussions, not just a place to check out books."

Future Diversity Initiatives at Kresge Library

One primary focus for the future of diversity initiatives at Kresge Library is in the area of personnel diversification. Because our commitment to serving our increasingly multicultural community is so strong, we think it is essential that our library personnel reflect the growing diversity of the greater community. A library diversity policy was created in 2005 to strengthen Kresge Library's dedication to this issue. The crux of the policy states that Kresge Library is "committed to developing programs, collections, and services to enhance and support multiculturalism and diversity ... " (Kresge Library 2005) and that for all new and replacement positions at the library, Kresge Library "strives to attract a racially diverse pool of candidates." Specifically, we send postings to diversity related listservs and to library and information science schools that have higher than average

enrollment of minority students. We also share job postings with minority librarians at conferences, professional meetings, workshops or any other venue where the opportunity to recruit might present itself (Kresge Library 2005).

Ever since John W. Berry, American Library Association president from 2001–2002, brought attention to the issue of recruitment and diversity, calling it a “crisis” in his Presidential Message (Berry 2002), the library profession has become aggressive in its efforts to represent the multicultural population it serves. However, the literature indicates that as a profession, librarianship is struggling to recruit a diversified workforce. The AFL-CIO’s Library Workers Facts & Figures Fact Sheet’s data illustrates the recruitment of minorities dilemma: “Librarians, technicians, and assistants are predominately white. . . . In 2006, 12.8% of all librarians were minorities. Minorities accounted for 28% of all library assistance 13% of the professional staff [was] composed of minorities ” (AFL-CIO, Department for Professional Employees 2007).

One way Kresge Library hopes to encourage a more diversified workforce is through initiatives aimed at breaking down stereotypes about librarianship and bridging communication with younger minority students. We are already working to accomplish this goal through the use of social networking. Facebook, and other social networking sites like Friendster and MySpace, can help dissolve barriers between librarians and students of all ages. An online profile can allow librarians a new brand of accessibility to the university community, as well as to the online community at-large. This type of cyber-communication helps present librarians as approachable and “real” as opposed to reinforcing the stereotype of librarians as intimidating know-it-alls.

Another diversity initiative aimed at creating a more diverse library personnel is the establishment of a mentorship program with Wayne State University’s Library and Information Science Program. We already encourage students to intern at Kresge for a semester, but we hope to develop a program specifically geared toward encouraging minorities to choose academic librarianship by offering a mentorship program. In this same vein, we may establish a “job shadow” day for local high school students—one nearby city, Pontiac, has a population comprised of 73.7% minorities (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/26/2665440.html>) and neighboring Detroit has a population comprised of 92.7% minorities (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/26/2622000.html>). This will hopefully encourage interest in the field of librarianship and the library profession as a whole. As one survey’s findings revealed, among minority

librarians, positive interaction with a librarian was one of the most influential reasons he or she entered the field (Heim and Moen 1989).

A final diversity initiative we will soon implement is the development of diversity training workshops for library personnel. In an effort to ensure that Kresge Library is a welcoming work environment for all, we will design workshops to reinforce to our staff the importance of diversity and to encourage them to behave in a multiculturally sensitive manner. The diversity training sessions will focus on knowledge and awareness of various cultures, perceived barriers between cultures, intercultural communication skills, and discussion about existing attitudes among library personnel with an emphasis on fostering acceptance of cultural, religious, and ethnic differences. We will design games aimed at providing a safe environment in which employees can challenge their existing attitudes and become more proficient at serving a multicultural community in a nonjudgmental manner. Such workshops would not only offer a proactive approach to attracting minorities to our library but could also benefit the university community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

It has become increasingly important for Kresge Library, and all of academe, to address the unique needs of each of the constituencies comprising nontraditional students. Colleges and universities that are just beginning to embark on the creation of an outreach campaign should strive first to identify the groups of students who could benefit from specifically structured outreach. This article helps to illuminate some of the needs of such groups. It is also important to foster collaborations with other departments on campus—even if it is simply to extend an invitation to a diversity-related library event. Having an outreach specific librarian involved in campus-wide planning committees and writing proposals to ensure the library's inclusion in campus celebrations is also important. Over time, we have seen an increase in the enthusiasm of our library personnel and expect this to continue. A 2010 profile (Oakland University 2007a) for the university states that it hopes to become “a scholarly community strengthened by diversity,” and that this “. . . environment will provide students with cultural and social experiences, community outreach activities. . .” to help them become tomorrow's leaders. Kresge Library, through diversity initiatives and outreach efforts, has created and promoted an atmosphere of openness to diversity in the broadest sense, and

we should remain steadfast in our dedication to this issue. The development and continued expansion of our library's focus on diversity, in both the traditional and nontraditional definition of the term, has required the efforts and support of each librarian, staff person, and administrator in the library.

Traditional and nontraditional students have the same requirements for graduation and attend the same classes. However, nontraditional students have added barriers that cannot be ignored. It is important that we recognize that diversity is more than race and ethnicity. If we are serious about our commitment to improve the educational outcomes for all of our students, academic libraries must remain resolute in our determination to implement diversity initiatives. The current and future diversity initiatives discussed in this article are redefining Kresge Library and positively impacting the OU community as a whole.

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