

# LOOKING BEYOND LIBRARIES FOR INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRACTICES: FOUR SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES

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## ABSTRACT

*Academic and research libraries have made many efforts to diversify their workforces; however, today the profession remains largely homogenous. We recognize that diversification cannot be achieved without creating inclusive and more equitable workspaces and workplaces. This requires rethinking our assumptions and behaviors as individuals and as a profession, questioning entrenched structures that maintain the status quo, and developing practices that keep these critical questions in the forefront as we do the difficult work of redefining our infrastructure in order to create equitable and socially just workplaces. To inspire a different type of dialogue, we offer actionable information and tools – strategies, ideas, and concepts from outside our profession. In this chapter, the authors present strategies used by corporations, industries, organizations, or fields outside of academia that have contributed to substantially diversifying their workforces and discuss how they could be integrated into our own workplaces. While these efforts are imperfect, incomplete, or have mixed results, we focus on strategies that demonstrate outside-the-box thinking for our profession, practices that will require academic and research libraries to rethink their operations, the behaviors and structures that support them, and thus the way library management and leadership are practiced. We are hoping that providing strategies outside our profession, as well as guidance on applying these strategies, will create reflection, dialogue, and innovative ideas for our own institutions.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Library associations express the profession's commitment to diversity through statements of value and standards, such as the American Library Association's Core Values of Librarianship (ALA, 2004) and the Association of College and Research Libraries' Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries (ACRL, 2012). Resources, programs and trainings, such as ALA's Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ALA, n.d.) and ACRL's Diversity Alliance (ACRL, n.d.), have also been put in place to encourage greater participation in the profession by underrepresented groups. Though this chapter focuses on academic libraries, the strategies presented for recruiting and retaining a diverse library workforce are applicable to all types of libraries. In the case of academic libraries, the composition of the university or college's student body, faculty, and employees, as well as institutional priorities, policies, and procedures all constitute the environment within which they function. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows a clear challenge for US colleges and universities: of all full-time faculty in degree-granting post-secondary institutions, whose race/ethnicity was known in fall 2016, 76% were White (NCES, 2018), as compared to 54% of student enrollment (NCES, 2017; see Table 1). Academic libraries face a similar challenge. Despite efforts to increase the diversity of library employees, and despite national demographic changes, the academic library employee remains woefully White. Comparing the 2016 NCES data on postsecondary enrollment rates (NCES, 2017) with the Ithaca S+R Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institution demographics (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2017) reveals that the magnitude of disparity for

**Table 1.** Race/Ethnicity Comparisons.

Race/Ethnicity	Postsecondary Enrollment – 2016 (%)	Postsecondary Faculty – 2016 (%)	ARL Institutions – Employee Demographics – 2016 (%)
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	54	76	71
Hispanic or Latino	17	5	6
Black or African American	13	6	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	7	10	8
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.7	<0.5	<1

Postsecondary Enrollment compared to Postsecondary Faculty and ARL Institutions Employee Demographics.

*Note:* Percentages do not include those with two or more races.

representation by race and ethnicity in academic libraries is similar to that of faculty in higher education overall (see [Table 1](#)).

The issue is even worse at the leadership level in academic libraries with White non-Hispanic/Latino in senior positions making up 87% of the workforce ([Hathcock, 2015](#)). As noted earlier, academic libraries function within their institutions of higher education and in many ways inherit and are part of a system that structurally and historically represents the dominant culture: white, middle class, Protestant people of northern European descent. The library “profession is so imbued with whiteness, extending even to the ways in which we discuss and address diversity, it is no wonder that our myriad diversity initiatives are not working” ([Hathcock, 2015](#), “‘White’ Diversity Initiatives,” para. 1).

There is growing evidence that change is required in order to remain relevant to the populations served. There are hundreds of articles, presentations, books, bibliographies, and commentaries on the efforts of academic libraries to address the lack of diversity and the difficulty in retaining library employees from underrepresented groups. In an annotated bibliography of literature on diversity initiatives in academic libraries, the authors found that “workforce diversity is the most discussed topic” ([Semenza, Koury, & Shropshire, 2017](#), p. 89) and yet academic libraries have been unsuccessful in significantly improving the workplace for minoritized groups. Research on the experiences of employees from underrepresented groups offers insights on the persistent effects of the dominant culture on these professionals.

The repeated similarity of experiences ... supports the notion that being a person of color in an academic library is a lived experience and differs from the lived experience of a white colleague. ([Swanson, Tanaka, & Gonzalez-Smith, 2018](#), p. 888)

In writing about the LGBTQ experience in academic libraries, [Kuecker \(2017\)](#) found that workplace culture and climate are essential to employee morale and productivity and that “underrepresented groups face more varied issues related to workplace culture” (para. 5). Academic libraries are beginning to turn their attention to the subtle but negative and forceful effects of implicit bias and microaggressions ([Dalton & Villagran, 2018a, 2018b](#)). Implicit bias and microaggressions are behaviors and attitudes woven through the way that academic libraries, within their larger institutional contexts, structurally and in individual employee interactions, minimize, discount, and communicate hostile or derogatory messages to colleagues from underrepresented groups. Academic libraries must reckon with this often unconscious and unintentional culture with bold and innovative measures that address not only diversity in the workplace but also equity and inclusion. The standard response over the years has been to look at the efforts of other academic libraries and library associations. Though these programs have merits, our demographics based on race and ethnicity remain unbalanced – efforts have not produced the desired outcome of a diverse workforce. To produce different results academic libraries must try new approaches. One way to do this is to look beyond academia for tools, programs, and practices that have been successful. In an effort to break out of the academic mold, to look

beyond and consider a more diversified portfolio of strategies for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), a panel, entitled “Looking Beyond Libraries for Innovation,” presented successful approaches drawn from corporate America, during the Symposium for Strategic Leadership in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in 2018.

In this chapter are four stories illustrating strategies that have successfully advanced DEI in the workplace. While the companies from which the examples are drawn are far from perfect in their handling of racism, justice, and power, the authors found programs and procedures that yielded successes worthy of consideration by the library and information science community.

Target Corporation, one of DiversityInc’s top 50 companies, has a strong vision and bold goals for increasing diverse representation at all levels and achieving parity in team member workplace experiences. Albuoro suggests more robust visions and strategic plans for libraries, with built-in actions, timelines, and evaluations. Through her experiences at MetLife and the University of North Carolina Greensboro, Bradshaw offers insightful suggestions regarding having a clear, targeted, and communicated talent strategy focused on developing leaders and a learning culture. In the case of Coca Cola, Santiago explains their model for building a multifaceted mentoring program focused on the individual’s professional development and measured based on lateral moves and promotions. T-Mobile’s purposeful and strategic investment in diversity and inclusion (D&I) is not only reflected in the demographics of its employees but also monitored through multiple international equity indices. Vinopal asks why academic libraries and the profession have not been more proactive in developing tools to assess, reward, and recognize inclusive practices.

There is hope in the pages of this chapter, celebrating best practices and innovative approaches to become equally welcoming and supportive of all employees and communities of users. Libraries of all types will find strategies and ideas worth sharing, whether it be developing detailed action plans and talent development strategies; considering inclusive mentoring programs; or committing to diversity assessment, tracking, and rating.

## **WORKING TOWARD A TARGET: PLANNING FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

All too often in libraries and archives, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are afterthoughts. Diversity work is often relegated to diversity committees, which people of color (POC) are usually obligated to lead or serve on, that have no real power to institute change within these organizations. Instead, they are often tasked with putting on whatever informative, but mostly innocuous, programs that the committee members can accomplish with their busy schedules so that their institutions can say they are doing something related to EDI without actually changing the status quo or dealing with the underlying issues. How can libraries and archives move from a perfunctory

treatment of EDI to something more meaningful and effective? How can they show a genuine, long-lasting commitment to EDI? In order to advance EDI, institutions need to be more intentional about making changes and actually embed these ideals into their organizational values and culture. One way of ensuring that this happens is to include EDI as a component of their general strategic plans or to create EDI-specific strategic plans. In this section, Alburo will discuss how Target Corporation is working toward EDI through the implementation of a purposeful diversity plan before offering strategies for creating one for your organization.

### *Target Corporation: Expect(ing) More*

Target Corporation is a popular retailer that caters to the “cheap chic” crowd (Thomas, 2018). For the last nine years, it has been on DiversityInc’s “Top 50 Companies for Diversity” list. In 2017, it was ranked #22 for “continuing its focus on a three-year diversity and inclusion plan” (DiversityInc, 2017, para. 1), one facet of which is “increasing its diverse representation throughout it ranks” (DiversityInc, 2017, para. 1).

While Target’s diversity plan is not publicly available, the company considers D&I to be a central tenet, naming it as one of six stated values on its corporate website (Target Corporation, n.d.-b). In addition to numerous mentions of D&I for its workforce, suppliers, shoppers, and communities, the website includes the following diversity statement [their emphasis]:

We believe diversity and inclusivity make teams and Target better. And we’ll live that belief as champions of a more inclusive society by creating a **diverse and inclusive work environment**, cultivating an **inclusive guest experience**, and fostering **equality in society**. (Target, n.d.-a, “What We Stand For”)

It also mentions several ways in which the company is working to create a diverse and inclusive work environment, such as:

- Recruiting at conferences and career fairs hosted by diverse organizations, as well as in the communities they serve through in-store employment kiosks
- Hiring veterans and providing benefits for activated reservists
- Creating D&I business councils, which provide onboarding, networking, and professional development opportunities
- Encouraging employees to form affinity groups and networks based on common interests and goals (Target Corporation, n.d.-a).

### *Diversity and Inclusion: Goals, Approaches, Progress*

Todd Williams, Target’s Director of D&I, provided further details about their D&I strategy in a phone interview conducted by Alburo (personal communication, April 27, 2018). Though he did not share their diversity plan, he pointed to their 2016 *Target Corporate Social Responsibility Report* (Target Corporation, 2017), which contains D&I goals for 2017 that he said had components of

what is in their strategy. The report lists eight D&I-related goals under three categories (Products, Team, Communities), but since the four personnel-related goals are most applicable to libraries and archives, Albuoro asked Williams to expand on what they meant and the approach(es) the company is taking to accomplish them:

- **Achieve parity in the turnover of diverse and nondiverse team members:** There should be no reason that diverse talent leaves at higher rates than nondiverse talent. If they are, then it is the company's responsibility to understand why. At Target, they conduct exit interviews, analyze the data by business unit, and use the insights gleaned to do things differently.
- **Hire diverse talent at rates exceeding qualified availability:** The most common reasons cited for not having a diverse workforce are: (1) there are not enough diverse applicants and (2) they are unwilling to move to a specific region. Companies should be asking why that gap exists and what is driving that disparity by geography. Target works with a third-party firm that gives them data on the qualified applicant pool and, when the pool is not deep enough, they think of ways to broaden it.
- **Achieve parity in diverse and nondiverse team member workplace experiences:** Diverse and nondiverse employees who work for the same managers should have the same experience, instead of one group having a more negative experience than the other. To help identify problems, Target conducts confidential annual surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions. It also provides training and tools to managers to recognize and manage their personal biases and to gain skills to effectively coach their teams.
- **Increase diverse representation across all levels:** Like most organizations, Target has greater diversity in its lower ranks than in the upper ones. It is easier to diversify at these levels because that is where most employee turnover takes place. Target is trying to create pathways from lower to mid to high levels by offering such benefits as tuition reimbursement, paid training, leadership development programs, and coaching and mentoring.

In deciding what their D&I goals should be, Williams said they asked themselves what the desired outcomes are and how they could get there in a time-bound manner. They thought about their products, their team members, etc. and considered what goals they could set that would "help shore up a more inclusive society" (T. Williams, personal communication, April 27, 2018). This goal setting is not a one-time activity; the D&I team regularly reevaluates its strategies and goals to ascertain if it should carry these forward or add new ones.

Based on *Future at Heart: 2018 Target Corporate Responsibility Report* (2018), it appears that Target has been responsive to the personnel-related issues raised by employees in 2016, taking such steps as:

- Increasing the hourly minimum wage to \$11 in 2017 (\$15 by 2020)
- "[R]egularly conduct[ing] pay audits to ensure pay is fair and equitable across the team" (p. 10)

- Initiating several training and certification programs
- Offering opportunities to volunteer in their communities and help coworkers in need

Target's commitment to increasing inclusion acumen throughout the entire organization is particularly noteworthy. It "launched bias training to provide [their] team with tools to recognize and manage bias and to understand how [their] similarities and differences can enhance [their] team and [their] business" (p. 12). First piloted as a bias session for 7,000 of their headquarters employees, it now intends to "[embed] bias training for [their] team members into regular training that they have throughout the year," using a variety of formats, such as online training modules, classroom training, and team conversations (p. 12).

As a result of its D&I efforts, Target has increased its number of female employees and employees of color for their US workforce by 1% – to 57% and 47%, respectively – from 2016 to 2017. With almost 350,000 employees worldwide, that is an increase of a few thousand. It also increased the percentage of POC in its manager workforce, Leadership Team, and Board of Directors by 1%, 11%, and 7%, respectively.

Target is clearly putting resources into D&I and has been for a while – its D&I office is over 10 years old – because achieving D&I is a long-term, ongoing process. According to Williams, there are a number of different phases, from planning to implementation to success. The ultimate goal is to maximize the number of people committed to D&I and minimize the number who are merely complying, to shift accountability to everyone, instead of just the D&I team. The company appears to be on board with this goal, as it aims to "establish metrics and continue rigor on accountability" (*Target Corporation, 2018*, p. 37).

### *Creating a Plan for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

Why is it important to have a plan for equity, diversity, and inclusion? In Target's words, "We believe that when we build our teams through equitable treatment, including equitable pay, we ultimately build a better Target" (p. 10). By creating an EDI strategic plan, an organization demonstrates that it is serious about EDI and willing to take tangible actions to achieve it.

Based on Target's example, follow these steps to create an EDI plan for your institution:

- (1) **Know where you are.** Where are your employees when it comes to EDI? What are you currently doing related to EDI? Conduct an environmental scan or audit to find out. Hire an organizational development consultant who specializes in EDI to do this work.
- (2) **Imagine the future.** What do you want your organization to look like? What outcomes do you want to accomplish? What do your employees and users

- need? What are your goals related to collections and services? Once you know where you want to go, then you can specify your aspirational goals.
- (3) **Create a roadmap.** How do you get from where you are to where you want to be? What is causing the gap between your current state and where you want to be? What steps need to be taken to address the gap? List both broad actions and specific steps to help you accomplish your goals.
  - (4) **Establish a timeline.** How long will it take for you to realistically accomplish your specific steps and long-term goals? Deadlines make you accountable and ensure that the plan is being implemented. However, things often take longer than you think, so timelines must be reviewed often and deadlines adjusted.
  - (5) **Measure progress.** What does success look like when it comes to attaining your EDI goals? How can you measure the effectiveness of your specific actions? How can you gauge if your employees or users feel more welcomed or included? Make sure that there is an assessment component to your plan.
  - (6) **Do it again.** Once you have evaluated your activities, be open and realistic about what worked and what needs to be changed. Use the data from your assessment to review your EDI plan and inform your next steps. Do you want to extend, expand, or amend your current plan, or do you want to create an altogether different one? EDI planning is an iterative process. You have to constantly assess and recalibrate in order to make progress.

Many libraries and archives claim to care about EDI, but most have been unwilling to provide the staffing, funding, and other resources necessary to make substantial change. It is time for our institutions, as well as our associations, to be honest about our level of commitment to EDI. If we are truly serious about it, then we need to take the time to create and implement comprehensive EDI plans that redress fundamental problems. As Target's example shows, EDI work is not easy. It requires careful thought, extensive planning, rigorous implementation, and systematic evaluation. And it requires you to do this again and again. Inclusion is an ongoing process, and it must be an intentional, permanent part of a library's continual growth. Only through purposeful, mindful actions and plans can we hope to make a revolutionary transformation.

## **DIVERSITY AT METLIFE – GROUP SALES AND SERVICE TRAINING**

Prior to my career as an academic librarian, I worked for various private sector organizations and have seen how recruitment and retention strategies work in both arenas. As an employee at MetLife, I collaborated with a team that built an entry-level career program that was regarded as successful by senior leaders within the organization as well as participants. Academic libraries could adopt and adapt recruitment strategies utilized in the private sector in order to increase diversity within the profession.

MetLife is a global financial services organization with offices in more than 40 countries and more than 49,000 employees (MetLife, n.d.-a). Like most US-based Fortune 500 companies, MetLife has a public commitment to EDI with its public web pages touting awards received for various D&I programs, such as Best Companies for Latinas, Top 100 Innovators in Diversity & Inclusion, etc. (MetLife, n.d.-b). MetLife has several affinity networks – e.g., Global Multi-cultural Professionals, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Associates, Met Diverse Abilities, Families at MetLife – to address diversity-related concerns that employees may have.

In 2004, I took a job at MetLife as a Learning & Development Consultant, supporting their large group sales and account management division. One of our team's first tasks was to create a learning curriculum that would attract recent college graduates to apply for entry-level professional positions. At this time, MetLife was facing increasing competition for applicants in part because other industries were seen as more attractive than the insurance industry. Part of the initiative was to develop a curriculum that would create a career path for entry-level professional employees to demonstrate they could build a career in the insurance industry at MetLife. In response to this need, a senior executive recognized the need and funded the initiative to make changes to the hiring practices.

The goal of this program was to recruit new and recent college graduates to MetLife, in large part by demonstrating to them *before* they were hired why working at MetLife would be beneficial to them and their careers. A common reason people leave a job is because they feel their career prospects are limited (Frost & Kalman, 2016). This group was charged with creating programs that would demonstrate that MetLife was a first-choice employer, not one of last resort. As part of the overall recruitment strategy, recruitment efforts were made at the local universities near the hiring offices. As part of MetLife's commitment to diversity, an effort was made at each recruiting site to ensure that at least 25% of new hires were from an underrepresented minority group. During the recruitment process, candidates were shown defined career paths that would be available to them.

A curriculum was designed not only to assist these new employees in learning their jobs but also built in time for social activities so that participants from different offices could meet each other and create a community, and encourage informal learning networks, which would serve various purposes throughout their careers. This division had several offices across the country, and it was crucial for new employees to know that career opportunities would not always come within the office to which they were first assigned. The intention was to build cohorts that are similar to what is seen in graduate education.

Over the years, MetLife used the Gallup Q12<sup>®</sup> survey as a way to measure employee engagement and respond to employee concerns (Forbringer, 2002). Gallup defines engaged employees as “those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace” (Gallup, n.d., para. 1). Prioritizing managers' involvement with employees was a key factor in high employee engagement. According to Gallup, high employee engagement results

in better employee performance (Fleming, 2009). Having a career path and manager involvement contributes to employee engagement by letting employees know they are valued and that upward mobility is possible, leading to greater rates of retention.

An initiative within the library profession similar to MetLife's program are library residency programs. The Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) defines a residency as "post graduate work experience designed as an entry level program for professionals who have recently received the MLS degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association" (ACRL, 2008; Brewer, 2010). Library residency programs come in a variety of forms; some, for example, aim to recruit recent MLS graduates to newer areas within the profession (e.g., open educational resources, digital humanities), while others are specifically directed at members of underrepresented minority groups (e.g., ARL/Society of American Archivists Mosaic program) in order to increase minority representation within the profession (Association of Research Libraries, n.d.). While residency programs have existed in various forms since 1961, the first program targeted to reach underrepresented minorities began at the University of Delaware in 1984 (McElroy & Diaz, 2015).

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) Libraries (n.d.) has a Diversity Residency Program, a two-year program for recent MLS graduates to work in several areas of the Libraries so that they can explore different career interests. Residency candidates are recruited through a national search and have access to professional development funding and formalized mentorship. While employed at UNCG, one of my responsibilities was to supervise the Diversity Resident and, in determining how to structure work assignments, I drew on my experiences at MetLife. As a supervisor, I had two objectives: (1) expose the Resident to the various career opportunities within academic librarianship that aligned with their interests and (2) provide adequate training for the Resident to enable them to secure a permanent position in an academic library at the end of the residency. Assignments were given to allow the Resident professional writing opportunities, become involved with the profession through committee work (national and local), and engage with other areas on campus as a faculty member. All these experiences were designed to ensure that Residents were highly competitive once it was time for them to apply for jobs at the end of their residency period.

## **WHAT CAN LIBRARIES DO DIFFERENTLY OR DO BETTER?**

Without access to specific current data on the demographics of its employees, it cannot be determined whether MetLife is doing better than its peers when it comes to D&I. However, it does have a successful program that can be emulated and modified by libraries. While libraries may not have the same financial resources as private sector employers to hire cohorts or classes of library employees, there are alternatives that would not require extensive resources.

The methods that have been tried for years are not succeeding, so it is time to try new approaches.

First, libraries should adopt a recruitment strategy that includes presenting themselves as an employer of choice. Positive branding is advantageous in recruitment and retention (Bugg, 2015). As student populations become more diverse, the expectation is that the employees who work in higher education (including library employees) will become more diverse as well. Libraries need to make conscious efforts to be seen and acknowledged as welcoming a diverse staff that mirrors the increasing diversity of student populations. D&I employment practices must be seen as important, not initiatives that take a back seat when convenient (Burlacu, 2017). There are many positions in libraries that do not require an MLS. Kim, Chiu, Sin, and Robbins (2007) suggest specific recruitment to undergraduates and library paraprofessionals. Academic libraries are large employers of students. Actively recruiting student employees to encourage them to consider the library as a future employer is another way to encourage underrepresented minorities to join the profession (McElroy & Diaz, 2015). Academic libraries could partner with campus career services department to encourage student employees to view the student jobs they are performing as a beginning to a career within a library.

Second, involve hiring managers more in the recruitment and hiring process (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Academic libraries traditionally hire by search committee, which is a long, arduous process that lacks efficiency. Recruitment has to begin prior to the search process. Libraries must understand that recruitment is an active, not a passive, process. Hiring managers can play a big part in proactive recruitment. While academic libraries may be bound by the hiring practices of their universities, that does not prevent them from taking a more proactive approach to recruitment. For instance, rather than waiting for a vacancy and hoping the right candidate will apply, library employees should remember that every time they present at a conference, attend a professional association meeting, or connect on social media, there is the potential for recruitment, even if a vacancy currently does not exist. They can represent their library as a good place to work and welcoming to diverse applicants and that their city a good and welcoming place to live. When a vacancy does become available, some of those connections will recall what they learned about your library in their contacts with you. When job openings become available, encourage employees to reach out to their networks to encourage underrepresented minority candidates and those employees from nontraditional backgrounds to apply. An experienced candidate with public library experience can bring valuable experience to an academic library. (According to the most recent statistics from American Library Association (2010) Office of Research and Statistics/Office of Diversity, the highest numbers of non-White librarians are public librarians, as opposed to higher education librarians.) While a public library employee may have to learn new skills to be successful in an academic library, the difference in skillsets should not be viewed as an insurmountable hiring barrier. Hiring managers and peers need to help new employees understand the variety of career paths and options within the profession, with the understanding that a career path may extend beyond the

initial employer. Emphasizing skill development and working to create a career community of other library and information professionals help to broaden the networks of individual employees. Creating career communities can encourage inclusion because the sense of isolation can be decreased. This is especially important for those working in geographic areas that do not have diverse populations.

Another suggestion to improve the attraction and retention of underrepresented minorities is to treat residency programs as an entry to the profession in the way that other professions do, such as medicine. In medicine, the residency is a requirement to becoming a professional physician and required for licensure, which as a profession, librarianship does not require. However, a residency provides the opportunity for in-depth application of the knowledge and skills learned during medical school. Diversity residency programs should be viewed as a way to enhance the formal learning obtained in an MLS program. Unlike medical residencies, where residents are trained in a group, a resident librarian may be in a group of one. The lack of a cohort can lead to feelings of isolation (Boyd, Blue, & Im, 2017). By not viewing residency programs as an extension of formal postgraduate education, library residents, especially those in programs that are designed to expand diversity within the profession, are often viewed as less qualified candidates (McElroy & Diaz, 2015) or viewed as interns/student assistants, as opposed to full members of the profession (Boyd et al., 2017). These sentiments do not set a welcoming tone for the profession and can result in residents questioning their career choices.

Residency programs, while providing a beneficial beginning to a professional career, have many limitations. Residencies are few, and tend to be at larger academic libraries, likely because of funding issues. In addition, residency programs are usually only available to one or two people, so competition for the few openings is stiff. Finally, unlike the program at MetLife, library residency programs are temporary positions. While these are full-time benefited positions, they do not provide a guarantee of employment at the end of the term. It is understandable that applicants may be reluctant to apply for and possibly relocate (perhaps at personal expense) for a position that will only last a few years.

Financially, it may not be possible to hire employees in cohorts the way MetLife did, but smaller libraries could partner with larger libraries to work with entry-level librarians. Unlike MetLife's program, where the expectation was the candidates would have little to no professional work experience; many entry-level librarian positions require previous library experience (Tewell, 2012). For recent MLS graduates without library experience, trying to "break into" the field is often difficult. But librarianship is a profession that draws from many backgrounds and fields of study. Failure to consider candidates for MLS required positions that don't have prior experience working in a library means ignoring candidates that can bring new and different perspectives to the profession. Focusing on only specific kinds of past accomplishments means we are always looking for the same type of employee (Lo, 2014) while still wondering why the demographics for professionals (those holding an MLS or equivalent degree) have not significantly changed.

Increasing diversity within librarianship is a daunting task, and there is more than one way to accomplish this work. Residency programs that focus on underrepresented minorities is one way, but these alone will not solve the problem of low levels of underrepresented minority librarians within academic libraries. Working within librarianship to develop career paths for entry-level librarians, as MetLife did, is another way to increase diversity within the profession, but not the only solution. We've seen what works in other professions and organizations – we may have to try all of them to achieve success.

## **COCA-COLA, CO. AND MENTORING TO SUPPORT PEOPLE OF COLOR**

Mentoring is frequently used in academic libraries to support career development (Abernathy & Weaver, 2015; Ross, 2013) and has positive impacts for mentees in educational settings, including improvement of specific skills, increased job satisfaction, and reduced job turnover (Castanheira, 2016). Mentoring programs in libraries often support library workers in career progression, tenure, and research and writing, among other goals (Lorenzetti & Powelson, 2015); however, libraries have not leveraged mentoring as a strategy specifically for the retention and career development of employees of color. To address that gap, this section looks to Coca-Cola, Co. as an example, as they have successfully retained and promoted employees of color through a comprehensive mentoring program.

Coca-Cola's mentoring program was created as a result of *Ingram v. Coca-Cola*, in which Black employees alleged that they had been systematically discriminated against in comparison to white colleagues (Ingram v. Coca-Cola, 2001). As a result of the lawsuit, an external task force was appointed to oversee changes to the company with the objective of excelling at DEI (Winter, 2000). Company-wide mentoring was one piece of a comprehensive overhaul undertaken at Coca-Cola, in part to ensure a racially and ethnically diverse workforce. The task force defined mentoring as

...both one-on-one and group or self-study programs in which a coach other than an employee's supervisor assists the employee to identify and develop the experience and expertise necessary for their desired professional development. (Coca-Cola, Co., 2002, p. 36)

As a result of the task force's recommendations, Coca-Cola developed a comprehensive mentoring program over the course of five years. This started with one-on-one mentoring, which included

...significant senior management sponsorship and communication, active recruitment of both mentors and mentees, a formal application and matching process, and training for both mentors and mentees in their mutual roles and responsibilities. (Coca-Cola, Co., 2002, p. 37)

Additionally, participants received support through “ongoing training, access to a mentoring coordinator who follow[ed] up with the pairs and serve[d] as an ongoing resource, and ongoing evaluation of the program's effectiveness” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2002, p. 37). It is unclear whether the mentoring coordinator

was a newly hired position due to the development of this program, or if responsibilities were added to an existing position.

Group mentoring was added to meet the needs of the high number of mentees who wanted to participate; this involved a single mentor who facilitated sessions with multiple mentees. A self-study guide was available for those who chose not to participate in the formal one-on-one and group mentoring programs; this took the form of a workbook for individuals “to facilitate their mentoring experience” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2003, p. 57). In the one-on-one executive mentoring program, mentees at job grades 12 and above were matched with mentors at job grades 15 and above; this was implemented in response to “issues concerning pipeline development for the next leadership group” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2004, p. 58). The company also offered a “Networking for Success” course after feedback indicated an interest in more informal experiences.

The mentoring program was open to all employees and saw significant participation from racial and ethnic minorities (Table 2). Demographic information was initially not reported, and later included only estimates, and counted all non-African-American minorities as one group. By the fourth year, the task force reported the number of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American mentees.

The program effectiveness was evaluated through surveys and focus groups, which showed that “a vast majority viewed the program as useful in assisting their development” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2003, p. 58). Over 90% of survey respondents indicated that they met at least monthly and found value in the program. Benefits of mentoring included “sharing knowledge and experiences, giving and receiving coaching, and learning something new about the company” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2006, p. 57). Many also said that the mentoring gave them “a new appreciation for a different point of view” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2003, p. 58). At the end of five years, 80% of mentees remained with the company, of whom 45% were minorities (Coca-Cola, Co., 2006). This demonstrated a positive impact of mentoring on retention of minority employees, particularly in comparison to the baseline workforce demographics, in which 30% of all employees were minorities (Table 3).

**Table 2.** One-on-One Mentoring: Mentee Participant Demographics.

Race/ Ethnicity	Wave 1: 100 Mentees	Wave 2: 73 Mentees	Wave 3: 148 Mentees	Wave 4: 76 Mentees	Wave 5: 167 Mentees
White	Not counted	More than half	55%	42%	46%
African- American	Not counted	Majority of those who were ethnic minorities	28%	43%	36%
Hispanic	Not counted	Not counted	Not counted	11%	6%
Asian- American	Not counted	Not counted	Not counted	6%	12%
“Ethnic Minorities”	Not counted	Nearly half	17%	Not counted	Not counted

Source: Data drawn from “Task Force Reports 2002–2006” (Coca-Cola, Co., 2012).

**Table 3.** Demographics of Baseline Workforce and Demographics of Retained Mentees.

Race/Ethnicity	Coca-Cola's Total US Workforce in Dec. 2000	Retained Mentees in Dec. 2006
White	71.3% (4,723)	55% (192)
Total minorities	28.7% (1,900)	45% (156)
African-American	19.7% (1308)	32% (111)
Hispanic	5.5% (367)	9% (31)
Asian or Asian-American	3.2% (209)	4% (14)
Native-American	0.2% (16)	Not reported

*Source:* Data drawn from First Annual Report of the Task Force (Coca-Cola, Co., 2002) and Fifth Annual Report of the Task Force (Coca-Cola, Co., 2006).

The company believed the high number of mentee position changes indicated successful career progression (Isdell & Bielaszka-DuVernay, 2008). Eighty percent of retained mentees experienced position changes, with 38% being lateral moves and 42% being promotions. Around half of all position changes were for minority employees, again demonstrating the desired positive outcomes of supporting professional development for racial and ethnic minorities (Coca-Cola, Co., 2006).

These results are within the context of a much larger initiative to improve DEI throughout the company. The positive impacts of this initiative are evident in Coca-Cola's placements on DiversityInc's "Top 50 Companies for Diversity" list, where they ranked 48th in 2001, and peaked at second place in 2008 (DiversityInc, n.d.). Coca-Cola's numerous diversity awards (Coca-Cola Co, n.d.), including 12 consecutive years on DiversityInc's Top 50 list (DiversityInc, n.d.), suggest that DEI remains a part of the company's culture.

If librarianship wishes to achieve similar success in retaining POC and supporting their career development, these goals should be reflected in libraries' mentoring programs. Librarianship does have mentoring programs specifically to support POC in the field, but they are found in associations, rather than libraries themselves. For example, mentorship is a component of several career development programs that aim to recruit and retain librarians of color, such as the ALA Spectrum Scholarship Program, the ARL Kaleidoscope Program, and the ARL/Society of American Archivists Mosaic Program. However, it is rare to hear of a library mentoring program that explicitly aims to meet the needs of POC – in a review of 42 mentoring programs in academic libraries, DEI was not identified as a component of any of the programs' goals (Lorenzetti & Powelson, 2015). This is not to suggest that mentoring programs in libraries should replace existing mentoring programs for POC, such as those in ALA, ARL, and ethnic caucuses of ALA. Rather, mentoring programs in libraries that explicitly support POC should be implemented in addition to existing opportunities.

The ongoing support system of mentorship can help retain POC by ensuring they are afforded the same opportunities for career development and advancement

as others. [Riley-Reid \(2017\)](#) recommends mentoring as a key method for retaining librarians of color, describing it as an “essential lifeline” (p. 395) in navigating the barriers of academia. A mentor who provides guidance, shares resources, and understands the organizational culture can be the “lifeline” for library employees of color when facing barriers to their retention and career growth.

Libraries can better support POC in the profession by making mentoring opportunities available to all library staff, rather than exclusively for librarians (who are more likely to be white than those in non-librarian staff positions). Literature on mentoring programs in academic libraries focuses on the needs of librarians, particularly those on the track to promotion and tenure ([Ackerman, Hunter, & Wilkinson, 2018](#); [Smigielski, Laning, & Daniels, 2014](#); [Vilz & Por-emski, 2015](#)). While those in tenure-track positions certainly need specific mentoring and support, being in a tenure-track position should not be a requirement for receiving the benefits of professional development support. [Vinopal \(2016\)](#) states this clearly in her recommendation to library leaders that they “devise targeted mentoring and professional development strategies that encourage, support, and develop all staff in your organization” (para. 33). Coca-Cola’s mentoring program exemplifies this practice, as it was made available to all employees – not just those in certain types of positions – and had a specific component for those on the leadership track.

Designing mentoring in various formats contributes to making the benefits available to all staff, as Coca-Cola did by providing multiple options for participation. Although there is no clear consensus on the most effective mentoring model for academic libraries ([Ross, 2013](#)), [Lorenzetti and Powelson \(2015\)](#) found a preference toward one-on-one mentoring and peer mentoring. This can be expanded by offering group mentoring, a resource team model ([Goodsett & Walsh, 2015](#)), informal mentoring, or self-study guides.

Training should be offered so that all participants can engage in meaningful and beneficial relationships. Though it is unknown what Coca-Cola’s mentor training entailed, the company did provide ongoing training for mentors and mentees. There is a clear desire for training for both mentors and mentees, yet many libraries do not include training as part of their mentoring programs ([Ackerman et al., 2018](#); [Goodsett & Walsh, 2015](#); [Lorenzetti & Powelson, 2015](#)). Additionally, assessment should occur regularly, and program coordination should be an employee or administrator’s designated role instead of being added onto an already full plate of responsibilities. Time, resources, and institutional support are necessary for mentoring programs to be effective.

When developing mentorship opportunities for librarians of color, libraries must also bear in mind the implications of doing so in such a homogeneous, white environment, which can have the “unintended consequence of pushing librarians of color to assimilate into the whiteness of librarianship, alienating those at the margins even further” ([Brown, Ferretti, Leung, & Mendez-Brady, 2018](#), p. 173). Existing career development programs have been criticized for perpetuating systems of white privilege and failing to meet the goal of diversifying the profession ([Hathcock, 2015](#)); the same can become true of libraries’ mentoring

programs for POC if proper care is not taken. These final recommendations are vitally important and require ongoing development – white mentors must: not view POC mentees from a deficit perspective, educate themselves on systemic racism and white privilege, and be allies for their POC colleagues. When mentoring POC in higher education, [Fries-Britt and Snider \(2015\)](#) offer the guiding principles of building authentic relationships, establishing transparency and trust, and allowing for vulnerability. Through these practices, libraries can rise to the challenge of intentionally supporting the career growth of all POC in the profession.

### **TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY, MEASURE INCLUSION: THE CASE OF T-MOBILE**

Like many academic libraries, T-Mobile proudly declares their values and proclaims their commitment to D&I. On their website they tout their support for community projects, green initiatives, and the diversity in their workforce, customers, and supplier network ([T-Mobile, n.d.-a](#)). “We embrace diversity and inclusion – not just because it’s the right thing to do. Our diverse employees (and customers!) help us break down barriers and rewrite the rules” ([T-Mobile, n.d.-d](#)). Their website includes videos featuring employees and affiliates from minoritized communities attesting to the inclusivity of T-Mobile ([T-Mobile, n.d.-d, n.d.-e](#)).

While these claims may sound like platitudes, their employment numbers in terms of diversity are impressive compared to the larger technology sector, to the telecommunications sector, and to the library profession. On their website they state that 62% of their staff are “minorities” and 42% of their workforce is “female” (their terminology) ([T-Mobile, n.d.-b](#)). Compare their employment numbers – 38% white, 58% men – to the tech sector overall, which is 68.5% white and 64% men ([U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.](#), p. 7). Within the telecommunications sector, each company reports its staff demographics somewhat differently, which makes direct comparisons difficult. Nonetheless, T-Mobile is doing well in terms of staff diversity compared to their competition. Verizon reports 59% workforce diversity overall ([Verizon, 2016](#)). In 2017 AT&T reported that they had 43.2% POC on staff in the United States and that, of new hires, 57% were POC and 36% were women ([AT&T, 2017](#), pp. 13, 17). Librarianship has historically been a highly feminized profession below the executive level. According to the American Library Association’s *Diversity Counts* 2009–2010 updated tables, currently 83% of credentialed librarians self-identify as women ([American Library Association, 2010](#)). These same ALA data indicate that 86.1% of credentialed librarians working in higher education are white, while the larger profession is 88% white ([American Library Association, 2010](#)). T-Mobile is outperforming its peers in recruiting for gender, ethnic, and racial diversity and eclipses libraries in terms of ethnic and racial diversity. What can we learn from their example?

T-Mobile does several things that libraries, in general, do not. First, T-Mobile is actively working to create and maintain a climate of inclusivity for their

employees. While we have no access to the results of formal climate assessments of T-Mobile employees, we do know that, in addition to the positive employee demographics discussed above, in 2017 T-Mobile was given a Glassdoor Employee's Choice Award, designating them one of the best places to work in 2018. T-Mobile employees commented that they felt recognized, cared for, and celebrated, and indicated that management was engaged, understanding, supportive, and "had my back" (T-Mobile, n.d.-f). T-Mobile has also received awards for diversity and ethics from Forbes and Fortune magazines, and from Ethisphere (Ethisphere, n.d.; Forbes, n.d.; Fortune, n.d.; T-Mobile, n.d.-c, n.d.-b).

We know that underrepresented people won't want to continue to work with us if our workplaces are not inclusive. Research shows that employee engagement is dependent on an individual's feelings of trust, psychological safety, and fairness in their workplace, and that trust and engagement increase when employees experience the organization as inclusive (Downey, van der Werff, Thomas, & Plaut, 2015; Macey & Schneider, 2008). In particular, the research of Downey et al. demonstrates that "positive perceptions of diversity practices [not just operating ideology] will be positively related to a trusting climate only when employees perceive high levels of inclusion" (2015, p. 40). This makes the American Library Association's 2007 *Diversity Counts Report* all the more concerning, as it notes attrition from the library workforce of librarians and library assistants from minoritized racial and ethnic groups, and a decrease in African Americans and Latinos enrolling in LIS programs. The authors explain,

...despite recent diversity recruitment measures, some racial and ethnic minority groups, notably African Americans and Latinos, are actually seeing a decrease in the number of credential librarians under age 45. (Davis & Hall, 2007, p. 11)

Comparing ALA's demographic data of the profession from 2000 and 2010, we see a comparable attrition of non-white library assistants from the profession (American Library Association, 2010, pp. 1, 2, 4, 6-7). Scholars like Jaena Alabi (2015), in her article on racial microaggressions in academic libraries, and Swanson et al. (2018), in their research into the lived experiences of librarians of color, document the toll that everyday racism takes on minoritized librarians. The demographics of the library population have barely shifted in decades, and we see librarian employees from underrepresented communities continuing to vote with their feet by leaving the profession (Davis & Hall, 2007).

The second thing T-Mobile does that libraries generally don't is to consistently track their progress by monitoring how they're doing year after year with assessment tools designed by the communities they're trying to engage. They've repeatedly achieved top scores according to three inclusion indices: the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index (five years in a row), the Military Friendly Company Survey (11 years in a row); and the Disability Equality Index (Disability:IN & American Association of People with Disabilities, n.d.; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.-b; Military Friendly, n.d.; T-Mobile, n.d.-b). These tools measure a wide range of factors relevant to the health and well-being of people in their focus communities. As workplace expectations, legal protections and

practices, health practices, etc. change to better serve marginalized communities, the assessment tools developed and administered by these communities evolve, thereby motivating companies to continually update how they create an inclusive and equitable workplace (e.g., updating their HR practices, monitoring their cultural climate, developing cultural competence in their staff). The Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Survey provides a good example. It measures inclusivity in the areas of non-discrimination/Equal Employment Opportunity policy, spousal and partner benefits, transgender-inclusive benefits, organizational LGBTQ competency, public engagement (marketing and recruitment, legal support for the LGBTQ community, etc.), and LGBTQ policies in companies' international operations. Starting in 2019 the Corporate Equality Survey has added new requirements, including

...“remov[ing] transgender exclusions from **all** benefits plans” (emphasis theirs) and “includ[ing] LGBTQ suppliers as part of their supplier diversity program (if such a program is in existence)”. (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.-a)

By committing to these annual assessments, T-Mobile is also committing to upping their inclusion game year upon year based on industry standards developed by the communities they say they care about.

A few caveats are in order in this analysis of T-Mobile's D&I. T-Mobile, Amazon, and other technology companies have recently been accused of using Facebook ads to exclude older Americans from jobs (Dwoskin, 2017). As well, it's hard to know what the T-Mobile staff demographic numbers actually mean (62% minoritized people and 42% women). Do employees from minoritized communities stay long-term or is there a cycle of attrition and new recruitment, as there is in libraries? Is the majority of their diversity evenly distributed throughout the organization, or is it concentrated, as in libraries, in lower-level staff positions? While they don't publicly share this information, a look at their leadership team gives us a hint. Of T-Mobile's 18 senior leaders, 17 are white-presenting, 15 are masculine-presenting, and only three are feminine-presenting. Their Board of Directors demonstrates a similar extreme bias toward white, masculine-presenting members (T-Mobile, n.d.-g). Despite their enviable workforce diversity numbers, T-Mobile's leadership looks a lot like the top leadership of many other technology companies. That said, leadership is a lagging indicator, requiring years of recruitment, retention, mentoring, and promotion of under-represented people to rise to the C-suite leadership level.

Despite these questions about T-Mobile's vertical diversity distribution and their alleged ageism, they're still doing a lot better than libraries are in terms equity, diversity, and inclusion. Where are the inclusion assessment tools for libraries? While the ARL's ClimateQUAL survey is designed to measure staff *perceptions* of their organization's diversity fairness in order to improve service quality, this focus on perceptions in such a homogeneous profession risks skewing survey results because of the significant underrepresentation of the very people who would notice and experience bias and discrimination in the organization (Vinopal, 2016). As well, unlike the corporate indices discussed here, ClimateQUAL does not include evaluation of any of the tangible practices and benefits that would make minoritized communities feel

valued and well-supported ([ClimateQUAL](#), n.d.). Why haven't we adopted or adapted these corporate tools for our own use? Shouldn't we purposefully and regularly be seeking the feedback of the communities we claim to value to know how we're actually doing? Where are the nationally prominent rewards and recognition for libraries that genuinely commit to inclusive practices? How do we know what works and what doesn't if we don't assess it?

We measure what we value. If we're not identifying appropriate measures for inclusion, assessing, learning from our assessments, and committing real resources and effort, year upon year, into addressing our deficiencies, we're not doing all we can to create inclusive workplaces. And if we're not creating inclusive workplaces, no matter how enthusiastically we claim we value diversity, underrepresented people aren't going to want to work with us long-term. Libraries should consider following T-Mobile's model in adopting or adapting inclusivity assessment tools to understand how underrepresented communities define inclusivity for themselves, to measure how we're really doing, and to learn how to do better.

## CONCLUSION

The thread that runs through all of the corporate examples offered here is the practice of setting DEI-related goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound, and then doing them. (Yes, there is a reason we are encouraged annually by our supervisors to develop S.M.A.R.T goals and then are evaluated on our success in achieving them.) Whether it be through initiatives focused on recruitment, onboarding, mentoring, career pathways, leadership development, HR benefits, or other work practices, these companies have all made D&I a priority in their strategic planning, they have invested resources in specific strategies to achieve their goals, they have designed initiatives with assessment in mind, and then measured their outcomes.

While some libraries may include goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion in their strategic plans, few have developed robust, standalone diversity plans as Target ([Damasco, 2018](#), p. 7). We've known for quite some time that our recruitment and hiring practices are not positioning us for competitive success in the current market ([Raschke, 2003](#)). Companies like MetLife and others provide models for the kind of active recruitment that would expand our talent pools to further our diversity goals. Formal mentoring programs like those at Coca-Cola replace the kind of informal networking that disadvantages people from underrepresented groups and are one of the most successful strategies for increasing diversity, keeping underrepresented staff engaged, and ensuring their career progression ([Dobbin & Kalev, 2016](#)). And finally, these companies benchmark and measure their progress in all kinds of ways that libraries rarely do ([Anaya & Maxey-Harris, 2017](#), p. 5). Target, MetLife, Coca Cola, T-Mobile, and many others measure against their own past performance indicators; they measure against the quantitative and qualitative goals they set for themselves at the outset of their equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives; and they measure against their competition.

Imagine what progress libraries might make in the EDI space if we adopted some of these models and resourced them well enough to succeed. Imagine if we listened to the experiences of people from underrepresented communities, set concrete goals for increasing equity and inclusivity *on their terms*, and benchmarked progress against *their expectations*, not those of the majority culture. Imagine if we heeded Santiago's advice above and educated ourselves on systemic racism and white privilege, and truly committed to an anti-oppression agenda in libraries. This all takes work and a personal commitment to introspection and honesty in order to change ourselves, our workplaces, and our profession. Such change also requires leadership to model behavior, set vision and goals, and allocate resources in line with our strategic intent. We know what can be done, now we need to do it.

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