

They're Just Not a Good Fit: Interrogating and Interrupting Hiring Practices in Academic Libraries That Center Whiteness

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Land Acknowledgements

The University of Richmond is located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Arrohattoc, Monacan, and Powhatan peoples.

Virginia Commonwealth University is located on the traditional lands of the Monacan Indian Nation and the Powhatan Confederacy.

<https://native-land.ca/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powhatan>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrohattoc>



Introduction

Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians

Approved by the ACRL Board of Directors at the ALA Annual Conference. "Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians" is a revision of the 2007 Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians.

The Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians have been developed through a collaborative process.^[1] Within academic and research libraries, recruitment for a librarian position may follow different processes depending on the employment category used for librarians or other factors at that particular institution. Librarians may be hired as faculty (tenure-track or non-tenure-track) appointees, academic appointees, or as administrative or professional staff.

Task Force Executive Summary

February 22, 2018

Overview:

The UR Library Search Committees Task Force was formed to review existing guidelines and procedures related to recruiting, interviewing, and hiring new library staff with a goal of making these processes more equitable, inclusive, and transparent. Our charge, approved by the University Librarian in June 2017 was as follows:

1. We will review our policies regarding searches, the formation of search committees, recruiting, advertising and onboarding
2. We will develop a suggested list of "Core Competencies" staff must acquire prior to being eligible to serve on or chair a search committee
3. Group will meet with members of HR and Common Ground to discuss best practices in implementing searches and legalities involved in searching
4. Once these competencies have been tested, proved worthy, and shared with all staff, we will submit to the University Librarian a list of recommended changes to library policies guidelines¹ for searches.



Defining Whiteness

“Whiteness—an ideological practice that can extend beyond notions of racial supremacy to other areas of dominance”

--April Hathcock (2015)



ARL Spec Kit 356: Diversity & Inclusion, 2017

- 80% of respondents said they are **working on** “strategies specifically to increase the pool of ethnically/culturally diverse job applicants”
- 15% of respondents said they’re actually **assessing** their diversity recruitment efforts



Are we using best practices?

- Training for interviewers
- Rubrics
- Structured interview practices
- Understanding others' jobs



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Powell, 1998

- Lots of contact w/ customers
- Serves diverse customers



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Ferris & King, 1991

- Define what you mean by “fit”!



What do we mean by “fit” *in academic library hiring?*

Part I: “What are Search Committees Actually Looking For?” Literature

Examples:

- Wang & Guarria, 2010
- Benjes-Small, Ackermann, & Hyde, 2011
- Hodge & Spoor, 2012
- Eckard, Rosener, & Scripps-Hoekstra, 2014



What do we mean by “fit” *in academic library hiring?*

Part II: “Fit” is a necessary hiring criterion

- Gaspar & Brown, 2015, “Hiring in an Academic Library: Fit Is Essential”
- Reed, 2016, “Finding More Like Us: Values and Practices for Hiring in Community Colleges”



What do we mean by “fit” *in academic library hiring?*

Part III: “Fit” is just an excuse to hire
people like us

Examples:

- Farkas, 2015
- Bradshaw, 2015
- Galvan, 2015
- Vinopal, 2016



Methodology



- Survey sent to 270 library directors across 10 southeastern states
- Omitted for-profit and special colleges (e.g. seminaries)
- Survey open from July 11, 2018 to August 22, 2018



Findings --Quantitative

- 54 completed surveys (20% response rate)
- Public v. private institutions
- Size of student body
- Job ad promotion
- Use of rubrics in screening candidates
- Collecting data on job searches
- Asking candidates about their experiences with inclusion and diversity



Findings --Qualitative

- How do you define a “good fit”?
- Has your library taken steps to increase diversity in the candidate pool?
 - If yes, describe these steps
- Have you encountered perceived barriers to developing a diverse pool?
 - If so, describe these barriers
 - How have you addressed these barriers?
- Final thoughts?



What we currently do/don't do

- Required Qualifications vs. Preferred
- ALA Joblist, Chronicle of Higher Education
- Saying, but not doing (i.e. “we’re open to entry-level candidates”...but not really)



What we currently do/don't do

- Interview practices where anyone can attend/ask questions/give feedback
- Efforts to create an attractive environment?
 - Cultural Competence for library workers
 - Salary
 - Benefits



What we should be doing/not doing

- Minimal required qualifications
- Be truthful in what you're looking for
- Active recruiting
- Listservs specific to ethnic caucuses
- Cluster hires



What we should be doing/not doing

- Have a rubric
- Phone interview best practices
- Collect data
- Follow up with all candidates
- Provide options for candidates to give feedback



What we should be doing/not doing

- Baseline interview training for all employees
 - Illegal questions
- Additional training for search committee
- All candidates should have the same interview experience
- Give candidates as much information as possible beforehand

Riley-Reid, Trevar. "Breaking Down Barriers: Making It Easier for Academic Librarians of Color to Stay."

Hathcock, April. "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS."



Recommendations

Bradshaw, Agnes K. "Strengthening the Pipeline—Talent Management for Libraries: A Human Resources Perspective."

Alabi, Jaena. "'This Actually Happened':

Sensoy, Özlem, and Robin DiAngelo. "'We Are All for Diversity, but...': How Faculty Hiring Committees Reproduce Whiteness and Practical Suggestions for How They Can Change."

Anca, Celia de. "Why Hiring for Cultural Fit Can Thwart Your Diversity Efforts."

Ferris, Gerald R., and Thomas R. King. "Politics in Human Resources Decisions: A Walk on the Dark Side."

Farkas, Meredith Gorran. "The Insidious Nature of 'Fit' in Hiring and the Workplace."

Frankenberg, Ruth, ed. *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*.

Galvan, Angela. "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship."

Kristof, Amy L. "Person-Organization Fit: An Integrative Review of Its Conceptualizations, Measurement, and Implications."



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Link to our paper from ACRL 2019 Proceedings (for full bibliography):

[http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsa
ndpreconfs/2019/ChallengingtheGoodFitNarrative.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsa
ndpreconfs/2019/ChallengingtheGoodFitNarrative.pdf)