


# Chapter 5


## Making Room: Short-Term Internships as Pathways to Diversity in the Library Profession

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores the development and implementation of a short-term summer paid internship program at Emory Libraries' Access and Resource Services Division. Distinct internships were offered in three departments of a large academic library: Preservation, Access Services and Resource Description. The program, aimed at increasing diversity within the library profession and designed for graduate students from underrepresented communities, exposes interns to a range of tasks in key library functions, providing them with valuable skills and experience. The chapter discusses the program's objectives, including the creation of equitable career pathways, and*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0644-5.ch005

*details its design, recruitment, and project examples from various departments. It also evaluates the program's impact, highlighting the benefits for both interns and staff. The chapter concludes with strategies for scaling and ensuring the program's sustainability while offering practical advice for other institutions seeking to diversify their workforce and increase student engagement.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

The library profession has historically faced significant challenges related to diversity. Despite sustained efforts to address disparities, the workforce remains predominantly white and female, with fewer than 20% of library professionals identifying as members of the BIPOC community (Kendrick & Hulbert, 2023). In addition, a considerable proportion of the profession is aging, with nearly 60% of librarians over the age of 44 (Department for Professional Employees, 2024).

The need for systemic change within libraries is critical. Research indicates that achieving a significantly more diverse library workforce will require the graduation of an additional 500 to 1,100 BIPOC students from Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) programs each year for the next decade (Kendrick, 2023). The latest statistics from the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) in 2020 reveal that only 728 (7.9%) of 9,192 students enrolled in a master's level program identified as Black or African American, and only 748 (8.1%) of students identified as Hispanic of any race. Those who identified as White made up 45.8% of students at the master's level. More students identified as International than African American or Hispanic (Association for Library and Information Science Education, 2020).

Thus, the proportion of White students in library school programs has gradually decreased to below 50% over the past several years. In contrast, the number of students identifying as Asian or as International increased over the same period and the percentages of Hispanic or African American students have remained relatively stable.

### **Emory University Library Environment**

In recent years, Emory University has adopted a broad understanding of diversity, including “race, ethnicity, gender, disability, national origin, age, health status, religion, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic standing, immigration status, family background, neurodiversity, intersectional identities, and the broad representations of human existence” (Office

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