Putting Motion to the Notion — Diversity Scholarship Recipients

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INTRODUCTION

A new diversity effort took place at the 2004 Kentucky Library Association (KLA) Annual Conference. As a result of a year-long collaborative between five KLA round tables, conference scholarships were awarded to five recipients. Scholarships covered the pre-registration cost of the conference. The project was a recruitment and diversity initiative for the Kentucky Library Association and the library profession in Kentucky.

Financial support for the five scholarships came from each of the participating round tables. One member from each round table served as a selector and chose a recipient who was employed in a Kentucky library, museum, or educational institution. The aim was to have the most diverse group of recipients possible; therefore the selectors chose persons of different races, heritages, and cultures.

Scholarship recipients could attend any of the programs at the Kentucky Library Association Conference. The recipients and selectors were invited to attend the new members’ breakfast and the joint round table breakfast meeting, both of which were held during the conference. The only requirements were that they attend the conference and be willing to be interviewed by their respective selector, who would author the biography for publication.

BIOGRAPHIES OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Isariya Locke
Community College Round Table
Isariya Locke has volunteered at the Loman C. Trover Library in Madisonville, Kentucky since September 2003. At Trover Library she worked at the circulation desk, assisted in technical services, and assisted students in using the catalog and databases. Isariya is originally from Thailand and has volunteered in libraries since middle school. She received her Bachelor of Arts in English in 1992 from Silpakorn University, Thailand.

This semester Isariya is taking 9 hours online as she works toward her MLS from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. She has completed 18 hours and is particularly interested in academic librarianship with an emphasis in information technology and electronic resources. Additional interests are multicultural studies and literature for children and young adults.

John Chenault
African American Librarians and Library Employees Round Table
John Chenault is a freelance writer, poet, playwright, and composer. He is the author of two collections of poetry: Blue Blackness (1969), and The Invisible Man Returns (1992). His playwright credits include: “Blood Ritual,” “Warren is Back in the World,”
“Stolen Moments,” “The X-periment,” and “Young Men Grow Older,” a television drama that received the National Conference of Christian and Jews Brotherhood Award.

John has collaborated with composer Frank Proto in creating new works for orchestras, chamber ensembles and jazz bands. They have received commissions from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the American Composers Forum, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music. John holds a BFA in Music and Creative Writing, and he recently completed the coursework for a M.A. in Pan African Studies at the University of Louisville. He currently is a graduate student in the MSLIS program at the University of Kentucky, and is employed as a lecturer/library intern at University of Louisville’s Kornhauser Health Sciences Library.

Julie Ray
Information and Technology Round Table

In 1989 Julie began working in a public library even though her undergraduate degree was in advertising and public relations. She worked in two public libraries, two small church libraries, and now in an academic library – the Camden-Carroll Library at Morehead State University. As the Children’s Librarian at the Bath County Memorial Library, children in the community often referred to her as the “library lady” or “book lady”.

While working at Bath County Memorial Library Julie gained a reputation as a strong advocate for reading to babies and children at an early age, and for allowing the public library to be a positive place for older children and teens. She also served on the Early Childhood Development Council as the public library representative. This Council was successful in receiving grant monies for multicultural materials to be used in conjunction with library programs and local daycares. In addition, Julie secured a grant from the Libri Foundation for a small rural public library to receive excellent hard cover children’s books.

Although she plans to continue working in the academic field after receiving her MLS, Julie hopes to work with children’s and young adult literature via the education department and student teachers. The Learning Resource Center within the library at Morehead State University supports the university’s education department. Julie would like to work in that department or with the Learning Technology Lab that serves education majors with electronic portfolios and other services.

Julie has two boys, Nathan, age 12 and Ian age 9. She hopes to finish her MLS at the University of Kentucky in December of 2005.

Felix Garza
Library Administration and Management Round Table

Felix Garza is head of Public Access Services in the Kornhauser Health Sciences Library at the University of Louisville. He was born in south Texas and his first language is Spanish. Felix’s family members were migrant farm workers, he and his family worked in labor camps in Michigan and North Dakota. In 1986, Felix earned a bachelor’s degree in social work and began his social work career which lasted for eight years.

Felix worked for the Legal Aid Office for Central American Refugees in Harlingen, Texas, and he was also once an employee of the Amnesty Processing Office in Pharr, Texas. Later he came to Louisville, Kentucky to work with Liberty House and the Catholic Charities, Migration Refugee Office. In 1994 he became an employee of the University of Louisville Libraries in the Interlibrary Loan Department.
Marisa Neff is an accounting and business management major at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, and she is from Honolulu, Hawaii. Marisa is a member of the tumbling team, served as class historian, and she has been instrumental in establishing a group that incorporates aspects of her native culture into contemporary worship. Her personal interests include photography and working with children. For the past two summers she has worked at a pre-school in Honolulu and she loved the experience.

What Marisa misses most about her home is the food. Hawaii is a “melting pot” and there is a lot of variety in the cuisine, with all kinds of international foods available. Another big difference between home and Kentucky is winter. When she went home for Christmas it was 55 degrees. “At 70 degrees people were wearing sweatpants!” says Marisa.

As for her reading interests, Marisa was introduced to A Midsummer Night’s Dream when she was in middle school and she fell in love with Shakespeare. She was also impacted by Children of the River. The book helped her to understand a high school friend’s culture. “I’m still not the best reader in the world” Marisa says, “but I really get excited about it with the right book.”

SUMMARY
It is one thing to talk about diversity as if it is some nebulous thing that would be perfect in an ideal world. But, it takes some “umph” to stop talking and start doing. Five round tables and five recipients stepped forward and did a fine job at making this first effort a great success.

The scholarship project was a success from the perspective of the Kentucky Library Association and the scholarship recipients. For KLA, it provided a forum for the participating round tables to actively seek out potential new members from diverse backgrounds, and to be confident enough to invite someone to the annual conference in a vein of sincerity.

For most of the scholarship recipients, it was their first opportunity to witness what takes place at the state library conference. It was also a chance to network, ask questions about the profession, and consider becoming a member of KLA. At least one recipient found it very beneficial to talk with others who perform the same job duties. Also, the scholarship initiative prompted action outside of KLA. One unexpected result was the extension of assistance so that two other first time non-members could attend the conference.

Within the Kentucky Library Association, there has been much interest in the scholarship program, including suggestions and offers of participation. For 2005, a more formal structure will be developed for the program. A few of the changes that will be put in place are as follows:

1. The project will be titled the “Scholarship Program”.
2. The effort will be an annual event headed by AALLERT (African American Librarians and Library Employees Round Table).
3. There will be a nominating form and process.
4. A selection committee will be formed.
5. The program will be opened to all Kentucky Library Association units.

One of the challenges still being discussed is how to reach potential applicants who do not have any connection with KLA, nor have any contact with KLA members. The initiative remains a work in progress, but the changes listed above should be in place by the end of spring when a formal announcement of the Scholarship Program will be released.

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