Christian wanted to become a doctor. Toni was interested in pharmacy. Mainza wanted to be an electrical engineer. But could we interest them—and about 50 other young people—in considering a career in academic librarianship? At Notre Dame we hoped we could with the Summer Program and the Project to Recruit the Next Generation of Librarians.

**Summer program 2002**
The Summer Program began in 2002. It was a joint program between Notre Dame’s main library and its law library. It was developed by the main library’s Diversity Committee, of which I am a member. Librarians become interested in the profession in a variety of ways, for me, it was through my part-time job as a high school page in my local public library. Thus, we decided we would try to recruit more minority students to librarianship—specifically, academic librarianship—by offering these students employment in our libraries.

After securing funding from our directors, we contacted department heads and supervisors asking them to describe projects for which they could use assistance. Soon after, we contacted area high school principals to ask for their participation in the program. Working with the schools’ guidance counselors we were able to get applicants from six of the seven schools.

Another librarian and I traveled to the schools to interview about 40 students. Although we intended to hire only four, we ended up hiring five students—four juniors and one senior.

The students worked ten 40-hour weeks, performing the same types of duties as our college student assistants. They worked a four-hour shift in one department in the morning and then in a different department in the afternoon. After five weeks, they switched to two or three other departments.

We also had weekly programming for the students. We offered classes on electronic resources students were likely to use in college. Our Librarian-in-Residence spoke to them about becoming a librarian, emphasizing how to become an academic librarian. Students toured many of the Notre Dame branch libraries. We also sent the students to a leadership workshop on campus.

In their exit interviews, most students reported having a positive experience and said they would recommend the program to others; however, there were some complaints. Students were “not fond of the more monotonous tasks,” such as searching for missing sources, shelving and filing.

And the major student complaint was that they spent too much time sitting around. In several instances, supervisors over-estimated the amount of time it would take to complete projects, and they did not have back-up projects when students worked more quickly than expected.

**Summer program 2003 and 2004**
A few changes were made to the Summer Program in 2003 and 2004. We hired only

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seniors because we were disappointed with
the immaturity of some of our juniors the
previous summer. We also wanted to reduce
the number of applicants. The program was
cut from ten weeks to eight after students
complained the ten-week program was too
long. And students were assigned two-hour
shifts in a department instead of four-hour
shifts, so that they could obtain a greater
variety of assignments.

Project to Recruit the Next Generation
of Librarians (PRNGL)
In 2003, the Diversity Committee sought to
expand the Summer Program with a grant
from the Institute for Museum and Library
Science (IMLS). IMLS awards the “Laura Bush
21st Century Librarian Program” grant, which
supports projects to “recruit future librarians
from the ranks of promising junior high, high
school or college students.”

Although our proposal was not accepted
in 2003, we received the grant for the PRNGL
in November 2004. IMLS awarded $194,000
to six partner academic libraries in northern
Indiana to support the three-year project.
Like the Summer Program, PRNGL introduced
college-bound graduating seniors from area
public schools to the profession of academic
librarianship through employment as sum-
mer student assistants. In addition, PRNGL
involved mentoring services and tracking of a
participant’s career/education decisions. Like
the Summer Program, it also featured special
programming, such as field trips and instruc-
tional learning sessions—but more than what
was offered by the Summer Program.

With PRNGL, we hired many more
students than we did with the Summer
Program—14 per year as opposed to 4.
To help attract a larger applicant pool, we
developed a brochure, a colorful poster,
and a Web site.

After traveling to the South Bend public
schools for interviews, the five representatives
of the South Bend libraries met to review the
applicants and decide where to assign them.
The Valparaiso partner, of the six partner
libraries, had a more difficult time attracting
students. We were interested in attracting
diverse students, but the Valparaiso area is
very homogeneous. The guidance counselors
in the three area high schools were not help-
ful in identifying applicants. The Valparaiso
partner used his contacts through church and
with local Spanish-language teachers to find
candidates. His struggles paid off, and he
ended up with five students.

Programming
Several activities were offered to give the stu-
dents more information about librarianship.
These activities also afforded opportunities
to bring together all 14 participating students
from South Bend and Valparaiso.

Each year, all students attended a half-
day orientation at Notre Dame. The agenda
included introductions and presentations on
the purpose of the project. In 2005, we took
a field trip to the Exhibit Hall at the ALA An-
nual Conference in Chicago and had a tour
of the Chicago Public Library. The tour was
repeated in 2006 and 2007.

Each year, the South Bend students trav-
eled to Valparaiso University for a luncheon
and a tour of the university library. The 2006
students were able to practice the table man-
ners they had learned in a talk on business
etiquette. Each Valparaiso intern was featured
in an ALA READ poster. Valparaiso University
interns had a two-hour session with Mark
Winston, then associate professor of library
science at Rutgers University, in which he
discussed career options for persons from
under-represented groups.

Mentoring
Mentoring was a new and important aspect
of the PRNGL project. We did not have a
formal mentoring mechanism in the Summer
Program. We hoped that our mentors would
advise these recent high school graduates
on ways to become successful college stu-
dents—and particularly on ways to become
successful researchers. Ideally, the mentors
might establish a relationship that could lead
to library school for some of the program
participants.
In May 2005, all 14 mentors attended a half-day training session offered by the Notre Dame Human Resources (HR) department. Mentors were assigned to one or more students and met two hours per week for a minimum of 16 hours over eight weeks.

An outcome-based evaluation
The IMLS grant mandated that we use outcome-based evaluation to assess the success of the project. These are some of the most important outcomes we set out to achieve. Did we accomplish them?

Outcome 1: College-bound student assistants will gain knowledge of academic librarianship through summer employment.

We are quite confident that all who completed the program gained knowledge about academic librarianship. We measured this outcome by comparing the students’ responses during their initial interviews at the high schools with their responses in their exit interviews. In the exit interviews, they stated that their knowledge of academic libraries had deepened. Students indicated that “they appreciated libraries more” and “they liked the introduction to different departments and types of jobs.”

Outcome 2: Supervisors and mentors will communicate effectively with a different generation of student employees.

Supervisors
To measure this outcome, we surveyed supervisors, mentors, and students. We were much more successful with this outcome in subsequent years than in 2005. In 2005, supervisors were very disappointed with the workplace behavior of some students. Tardiness was a large problem. Some students did not show up for their shifts. Consequently, in June of 2006 and 2007, we asked a Notre Dame HR representative to meet with all PRNGL students and speak to them about job responsibilities and workplace behavior. Supervisors were also told to be more explicit in telling students what was expected. Following these actions, supervisor satisfaction increased.

Mentors
When surveyed, many of the mentors responded that they gained valuable insight into the minds of millennials. They enjoyed sharing their expertise and instructing students “in library research, ethics, and current issues.”

While most mentors reported having positive relationships, only 31 percent of the 2006 students felt as if they could talk to their mentors. Eight percent specifically said that they could not do so. It was a disappointment to learn that 15 percent of the mentees said that they could not establish a one-on-one relationship with their mentors, and 23 percent complained that they did not learn anything from their mentors.

Outcome 3: Students will pursue employment as student assistants in their undergraduate years.

Outcome 4: Students will keep in touch with partners/mentors periodically throughout college.

These two outcomes go hand-in-hand. We wanted interns to keep in touch to let us know if they used their PRNGL experience to find a library job in college.

Each year, invitations were sent to the interns asking them to furnish education and career data through our online participant update form.

In June 2008, in preparation for a presentation on the PRNGL program, I attempted to contact all 40 of the PRNGL interns to find out how many of them worked in libraries after completing our program. I heard from 22 (55%) of them. Thirteen (33%) of them have worked in a library in college. Eight have worked multiple years. Our goal was to have one third of our students continue to work in libraries, and we accomplished it.
Outcome 5: Students will regard academic librarianship as a profession of choice.

We still don’t know the answer to this one, but we are committed to tracking students through 2011—the year that the 2007 class will complete college. One student in particular had indicated a strong interest in attending library school. This 2005 intern worked at the Indiana University-South Bend library for three years. Now, however, he is pursuing a career in business.

Conclusion
Whatever happened to the three Summer Program students I mentioned at the beginning of this article—the students who hoped to become a doctor, pharmacist, and engineer? Christian did not become a doctor. He graduated from Duke with majors in political science and sociology and is now a day trader in Austin, Texas. He worked in the Duke library as a sophomore, junior, and senior. Unfortunately, I’ve not been able to contact Toni, who intended to become a pharmacist. In 2003, Mainza was interested in computer science and electrical engineering. Now he’s a hip hop artist in New York City. Perhaps he will consider librarianship when his hip hop days are over.

Time will tell whether any of our students become librarians. For now, we take pleasure in knowing that we were able to provide summer jobs for 40 diverse high school students, and most of them left our program with a deeper appreciation for academic libraries. Thirteen of those students were able to work in their college libraries. Eight have worked in libraries for multiple years. And many have told us that by participating in our program, they became better researchers in college.

Thus, we count our small successes and hope that our efforts ultimately result in a few more librarians from underrepresented groups. But no matter what happens, we know that when it comes to recruiting more librarians, we definitely gave it the “old college library try!”

Bibliography


Notes

2. With the Librarian-in-Residence diversity program, the Notre Dame Libraries offer a two-year residency to recent minority library school graduates.


4. Ibid.


6. The five initial partner institutions were: The University Libraries of Notre Dame; Kresge Law Library at Notre Dame; McKenna Library at Holy Cross College; Franklin D. Schurz Library at Indiana University South Bend; and the Christopher Center for Library and Information Resources at Valparaiso University. Cushwa-Leighton Library of Saint Mary’s College became the sixth partner institution in 2006.


8. Ibid., 11.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 12.