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# Innovating for Diversity: UK Libraries Undergraduate Diversity Scholars Internship Program

Peter Hesseldenz

*University of Kentucky*, [phessel@email.uky.edu](mailto:phessel@email.uky.edu)

Judy Sackett

*University of Kentucky*, [jsackett@email.uky.edu](mailto:jsackett@email.uky.edu)

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# Innovating for Diversity:

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**UK LIBRARIES**

**UNDERGRADUATE DIVERSITY SCHOLARS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

# UK Libraries Undergraduate Diversity Scholars Program Internship

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**Peter Hesseldenz**  
**Academic Liaison for Business and Economics, UK Libraries**  
**and**  
**Judy Sackett**  
**Oral History Reference Librarian, UK Libraries**

**Kentucky Library Association Annual Conference**  
**Louisville, KY**  
**September 17, 2015**

# Introduction

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What we will cover:

- Why the program was created and goals
- Program planning process
- Year One pilot program
- Supervisor perspective
- Assessment
- Year Two

# UK Libraries Diversity Task Force 2013

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Our charge:

The Diversity Task Force is charged with reaffirming UK Libraries **commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce** and with identifying, analyzing, **recommending and developing opportunities for increased diversity/inclusivity** within the UK Libraries.

# Why this program?

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- Previous diversity internship involvement with ARL
- IUPUI Libraries program
- Broad staff involvement

# Program Goals, part 1

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- Create a workforce that better matches the diversity of UK's students and faculty
- Provide additional assistance to UK Libraries' efforts to promote diversity by assigning work such as preparing multicultural displays and special projects
- Give library faculty and staff the opportunity to train and interact with members of diverse populations
- Introduce undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to meaningful work in a research library

## Program Goals, part 2

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- Foster a desire in the diversity scholars to consider a career in academic librarianship following graduation, either at the staff or professional level
- Have the diversity scholars share their knowledge of and interest in UK Libraries with other students
- Encourage others of diverse backgrounds to apply to the Undergraduate Diversity Scholar Program



# Statistics

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## **UK undergraduate student body by racial identification (2013):**

7.7% Black or African American

2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander

3.8% Hispanic/Latino

0.02% American Indian/Alaskan Native

*From University of Kentucky Fact Book 2013-14*

# Statistics: Association of Research Libraries

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## Race/Ethnicity of Professional Staff, FY 2014-2015

- 85.2% Caucasian/other (7447)
- 6.8% Asian or Pacific islander (593)
- 4.6% Black (401)
- 3.0% Hispanic (266)
- 0.4% American Indian or Native Alaskan (34)

# Program Planning Process

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- With Fall 2014 as proposed start date, developed timetable
- Prepared a description, including cost, and proposed pilot project to library administration
- Approved!
- Developed requirements, formal description
- Forms: application, recommendation forms, selection criteria forms, evaluation forms
- Advertised (Spring 2014)
- Interviewed and selected (Summer 2014) interns & overall supervisor
- Recruited volunteer participants to supervise intern assignments
- Interns began September 2014

# 2014-2015: Year One

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# How I Got Involved

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- Long-time interest in African-American Literature, History, and Arts
- Excited by the idea of being able to work in this area again
- Approached Judy simply to learn more about the program and proposed that I work on one project with the students
- Somehow I left the meeting as supervisor!

# Selection and Interviews

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- The process began with an assessment of the applicants and a discussion about who to interview
- All eight applicants were deemed worthy of an interview
- The whole Diversity Task Force participated in the phone interviews
- Although each applicant had something to offer and there was lively discussion among the committee members about who to offer the positions, two candidates stood out and accepted the internships.



# Profile of the Interns

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**Nathan Moore:** An English and African-American and Africana Studies major. Clearly a great student who had already been recognized for his academic accomplishments, having spent the summer as a Schomburg Mellon Fellow in New York.

**Ebony Davis:** A Family Studies and African-American and Africana Studies major. Her strength was in her campus and community involvement with diversity activities.

Both seniors, they complimented each other very well, each with different strengths. They also got along well together.



# Preparing for Nathan & Ebony's arrival

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## Lightning Round

- I and another committee member gave a short 5 minute presentation about the program at our annual staff retreat. We described the project and told the library faculty and staff that they would soon receive an email asking them to submit project proposals.

## Common Reading Book

- Once the students were on-board, I gave both students a copy of the common reading book – *Long Way Gone*, which is about child soldiers in Africa. I asked them to read it – thinking that we might use it in some way.

# First Week

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- **General Orientation**

Showed them their desks; worked out a schedule, trying to have at least a little time when they worked together. I went over expectations and requirements for the position.

- **Marathon Tour of WT Young Library**

Took the students to all parts of the library, introducing them to everyone we ran into.

- **Basic Information Literacy Session**

Wanted them to have a working knowledge of the most basic databases and resources.

# Internship Requirements

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- **Autobiography**

They each would write a 250 word autobiography for posting on the web page.

- **Blog**

They each would start a blog that they would use to record their experiences and impressions of the position.

- **Display**

They each would create a display (online or traditional) for posting in the library somewhere on a diversity issue. They could chose any diversity-related subject.

- **Research project**

A longer-term project in which they researched a topic of their choice (subject to approval) and created a product in the end (e.g., a paper, an online exhibit).

# Intern Assignments, part 1

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- **Reference –August-September, 2014**

Worked on Libguides for an African-American Literature class and a guide to diversity services at UK

- **Cataloging –September, 2014**

Worked on an authority project pertaining to archival materials related to diversity

- **Government Documents – October, 2014**

Followed a document, learning the process from arrival to shelf

- **Oral History – November, 2014**

Worked on processing a collection of interviews with African-American judges. The favorite!

# Intern Assignments, part 2

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- **International Programs – November, 2014**

Help set up and took part in the International Games Day celebration. Short, but fun!

- **Special Collections, part 1 – February, 2015**

Helped process an audio/video collection of materials donated by local musician Michael Jonathan.

- **Special Collections, part 2 – March, 2015**

Added entries to Notable Kentucky African-Americans (NKAA) database and participated in an oral history project about a local neighborhood.

- **University Press of Kentucky –April, 2015**

Helped with the promotion of the newly published *Kentucky African-American Encyclopedia*

# Research Project – Nathan

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Nathan's research project was a paper exploring the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives.

- This topic built on Nathan's previous research, including his work at the Schomburg, where he worked in the area of slave narratives.
- UK is a "Center of Excellence" for WPA materials.
- In his paper, Nathan pointed out some of the issues that scholars have wrestled with as they have studied the narratives – that the interviews were edited, that the subjects were not speaking freely, and that the subjects were presenting an overly positive view of slavery.
- Despite these limitations, Nathan found that a careful study of the works, particularly in passages describing folklore and religion, painted a picture of slaves that were far from being passive, and were actually actively engaged in resistance.

# Research Project – Ebony

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Ebony's research project consisted of an oral history project involving African-American Faculty and Staff at UK.

Ebony's project grew out of her interest in someday working herself in higher education.

She was astonished by the startlingly small number of African-Americans working as faculty at both UK and in other higher education institutions around the country.

For her project, she spoke to and recorded three employees. She was able to draw certain parallels and identify several themes in each person's experience.

One major finding for Ebony was that each of the people she spoke to had a mentor who guided them as they pursued their positions.

# Getting to Know Nathan and Ebony

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Getting to know both students was a very rewarding experience.

Both were friendly, engaging, hard-working people who wanted to make a difference. It was a genuine pleasure to work with both of them (which is why I'm back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year as supervisor!)

Challenged my preconceived ideas on some things. Their view of history and current events is always shaded by their experiences as members of diverse communities. It was always interesting to hear their take on issues.

Gave me some insight into what it's like to be a member of a minority group.



# Assessment – Intern Comments

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“I learned to have a greater appreciation for library science, as someone who loves books and someone who will be researcher in the future. It also piques my interest in library science as an option for employment.”

“I learned that there are multiple jobs that can be handled by a librarian, and that they are all quite important to knowledge production and preservation. I also learned that there really isn't much diversity in library science, furthermore underscoring the need for this program.”

# Assessment – Staff

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“We wanted the Diversity Interns to gain basic understanding of Oral History mechanics and the value of first-account interviews in research through indexing interviews... Each intern has gone on to become an oral historian, and they’re using oral histories to further their own research. If that’s not success, I don’t know what is.”

--Kopana Terry, Oral History Archivist

# Assessment - Supervisor

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“I think the first year of our Undergraduate Diversity Internship was a great success. It was a two-way street in that both the students and the librarians had their horizons broadened. On the one hand, we were able to introduce our diversity students to the world of academic libraries and, on the other, they brought a number of important diversity issues to the fore for us.”

--Peter Hesseldenz, Business and Economics Academic Liaison

# Year Two

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--Approved for academic year 2015-16

--Changes will include:

- Interns will work more with Diversity Task Force activities
- We will document intern activities more fully & take more photos
- Supervisor will increase contact with assignment supervisors
- We will incorporate feedback from assignment supervisors more immediately

# Questions?

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