To cite this article:
Spence Juanita Midgette and Nurhak Tuncer Bayramli. 2023. "African American Librarians: A Survey Conducted between 2019 and 2020 in the United States." *The Library Quarterly* 202–21. https://doi.org/10.1086/723852.

African American Librarians:
A Survey Conducted between 2019 and 2020
in the United States

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Abstract

The library profession in the United States faces many challenges in keeping up with diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts. African Americans who are entering the library profession contribute to these efforts. This article presents the analysis of a survey of African American librarians in the United States conducted on October 23, 2019, and closed on February 1, 2020. It looks at the African American librarian's journey to the library profession. Survey takers were asked to describe their achievements in librarianship, how they entered the profession, future goals, and challenges. Analysis of survey responses is presented along with a brief literature review, followed by some suggestions for further research. The authors hope to increase the conversation on this topic and contribute to diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts.

KEYWORDS: African American librarians, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, Black Librarians, United States, American Libraries

Introduction

The library profession in the United States faces many challenges in keeping up with diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts. African Americans who are entering the library profession contribute to these efforts. The authors began working together on this topic in April 2019. They realized that most of what exists in the library literature on African Americans needs further research to discover today's African American librarians' challenges and contributions to the profession. Therefore, the authors surveyed African American librarians in the United States to address this issue and contribute to the library literature on this subject.

This article presents the analysis of a survey of African American librarians in the United States conducted on October 23, 2019 and closed on February 1, 2020. It looks at the African American librarians' journey to the library profession. Survey takers were asked to describe their achievements in librarianship, how they entered the profession, future goals, and challenges. Analysis of survey responses is presented along with a brief literature review, followed by some suggestions for further research. The authors hope to increase the conversation on this topic and contribute to librarianship diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts.

Methods

The authors surveyed African American librarians from all types of libraries/information centers/museums in the United States. Working as a professional librarian when the survey was circulated was the stated eligibility for survey takers mentioned in the survey distribution note and the consent page before surveyors proceeded to the survey. The authors used the Survey Monkey program to create the survey. The survey was launched after approval and passing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. Three hundred fifty-nine people completed it. It was distributed over twelve discussion lists chosen from the American Library Association electronic discussion lists and library Facebook groups. After the survey was closed, the results were exported from the survey program and carefully analyzed by the authors. The survey had 18 questions, and some of the questions included optional text boxes for open-ended responses.

Keyword patterns from these open-ended responses are analyzed by examining the frequency of keyword repetitions in the open-ended responses to the questions. The rationale for using single keywords to analyze qualitative responses was simple; the authors manually counted the number of keyword repetitions for the top repeated specific words and phrases using a keyboard command. Although this was not part of some established method for analysis, the authors wanted to create a way to present the number of specific keywords that repeated the most in the open-ended text box responses.

Literature Review

Because of African American librarians in history and their significant contributions to literature, today's librarians can stand better. A growing body of work in the library literature on African American librarians started in the 1930s and earlier. However, within the last decade, the contribution to the literature on this topic was sparse, leading to suggestions for more research about today's African American librarians and their challenges. Selected resources from the library literature inspired this research to broaden the knowledge base in the research area when contextualizing the survey's findings. Most resources selected to be reviewed in this section were written within the last five years. The resources cited in this section are mainly narrative histories of African American librarians. It is divided into three sub-categories: narrative histories of pioneers, brief library education reviews from the literature, and current narratives.

Narrative Histories of Pioneers

Earlier works offer context for the topic when displaying narratives from pioneering African Americans. For example, a seminal piece is Alma Dawson's (2000), "Celebrating African American Librarians and Librarianship." In her article, Dawson portrays pioneer African American librarians' achievements in librarianship. Ethelene Whitmire's book (2017) about Regina Anderson is another example mentioning an important pioneer. Anderson played an essential role in the Harlem Renaissance when she fought for promotion and equal pay against entrenched sexism and racism. Renate Chancellor's book (2022) on Elonnie J. Josey is a critical contribution to the literature. Josey was the first African American president of ALA from 1984-to 1985 and the first African American

librarian in the Georgia Library Association. Josey was also the founder of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association.

The article from Alex H. Poole (2018) titled "Could My Dark Hands Break Through the Dark Shadow?: Gender, Jim Crow, and Librarianship during the Long Freedom Struggle, 1935-1955" is a valuable addition to the library literature with its historical review of Southern African American female librarians during the long civil rights movement (the 1930s through 1960s). This article lets the researchers follow through on the actions in history and compare them with today's challenges.

Another article about African American female librarians from Joyce K. Thornton, "African American Female Librarians: A Study of Job Satisfaction," is also a valuable contribution to the literature. Thornton (2001) says that "Libraries must move from being philosophically committed to increasing, retaining and advancing the number of minorities, especially African Americans, into the profession" (143). Then, Thornton hopes to provide insight towards that goal by examining the job satisfaction of African American women in the library profession. Greg Landgraf's (2018) article titled "Blazing Trails: Pioneering African American Librarians Share Their Stories" highlights pioneering African American librarians who have dedicated their lives to the profession of librarianship.

The article from Rebecca D. Hunt (2013) titled "African American Leaders in the Library Profession: Little Known History" briefly mentions the historical background of the librarianship profession and when the first African

American library school opened in the United States in 1925. The article also indicates that African Americans and Latinos demanded equal rights and opportunities that society had to offer during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. In 1964, the Library Services Construction Act (LSCA) mandated funding for libraries to develop collections for all people in the United States. The article cites the Black Caucus of ALA (BCALA) mission, established in 1970 for African American librarians. It was founded as a support mechanism for the African American community and recruitment and professional development of African American librarians.

Library Education Review

A discussion on the important role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in educating Black librarians is necessary to build a consensus as part of the literature review. Rosemary Ruhigh DuMont (1986a)'s article "The Educating of Black Librarians: An Historical Perspective" is an essential resource on this topic. It is divided into three main sections: the historical development of library science education for Blacks according to chronological order, the discussion of the present situation when the article was written in the 80s, and the recommendations for future developments in library education for Blacks (234). DuMont (1986b)'s second article, "Race in American Librarianship: Attitudes of the Library Profession," reviews the historical developments of southern public library service access to Black librarians.

Thirty-five years after DuMont's two articles were published, Ana Ndumu and Renate Chancellor also published (2021) an article that revisits DuMont's two

articles from 1986 on Black librarianship and racial attitudes in library education. The second part of the article mentions the discrimination issues in accreditation related to the closure of HBCU-based LIS programs. They indicate that, today, structural racism still impacts the LIS field. They raise many questions at the end of their articles that demand urgent responses. Ndume published another article (2021) titled "Shifts: How Changes in the US Black Population Impact Racial Inclusion and Representation in LIS Education." Ndume (2021) points out the importance of HBCU-based education and how it played a prominent role in educating African American leaders, such as "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Thurgood Marshall ..." (146). It provides recommendations for LIS leaders to improve recruitment and inclusion efforts for Black librarians when it also contributes to the conversation of HBCU-based LIS programs.

Partnership education models in librarianship were also discussed among scholars as one of the solutions to strengthen LIS education. Ndumu's 2020 article she co-authored with Tina Rollins is (2020) titled "Envisioning reciprocal and sustainable HBCU-LIS pipeline partnerships." This article's findings highlight how the inclusion of HBCU educational practices can strengthen LIS and recommends a model of HBCU-LIS degree program partnerships. Elaina Norlin and Patricia Morris' (2001) article also suggest a similar partnership model when they highlight the critical role of HBCUs in providing education for the African-American population. Kimberly Black (2018) also discusses the necessity of delving into diversifying librarianship and how library and information science

education programs at Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs) such as the Chicago State University can play a critical role in this effort.

A valuable recent resource to look at is Dr. Aisha Johnson's (2019) research that explains the historic library practices that discriminated against Blacks in her book titled *The African American Struggle for Library Equality: The Untold Story of the Julius Rosenwald Library Fund*. In her book, Dr. Johnson explains how the Julius Rosenwald Library Fund Program was one of the important initiatives that supported the education of Black librarians as a remedy to cure the injustice in the education of librarianship.

Maurice B. Wheeler and Daniella Smith's (2018) article titled "Race and Leadership in Library and Information Science Education: A Study of African American Administrators" highlights today's library education and lists African American leaders in library education with a brief survey of historical background giving statistics. This recent article is an excellent contribution to the literature that highlights education in librarianship from a leadership perspective while pointing out today's achievements. Wheeler & Smith cited Carla Hayden's speech when she became the 14th Librarian of Congress as the first woman and African American in 2016. Hayden stated in her remarks, "As a descendant of people who were denied the right to read, to now have the opportunity to serve and lead the institution that is the national symbol of knowledge, is a historic[al] moment" (2). Wheeler & Smith also mentions Edward Christopher Williams, the first African American to earn a degree in library science in the United States, who graduated from the New York State Library School in 1900.

Current African American Librarian Narratives

  In addition to reviewing some resources about the education of African American librarians, it is worth citing the current narratives from African American librarians on this topic. The *21st Century Black Librarian in America*, edited by Andrew P. Jackson, Julius C. Jefferson Jr., and Akilah S. Nosakhere (2012), would be a valuable resource on current narratives. This book is a collection of essays written by library educators, library graduate students, retired librarians, public library trustees, veteran librarians, and new librarians that cover many challenges and their contributions to the profession. The book starts with a selected bibliography of works by Elonnie J. Josey, which is a road map for the young generation of librarians. Some of the essays are titled "Challenges of the Black School Librarian in the 21st Century: why I choose to stay," "National and International Challenges of Black Librarianship in the 21st Century," and "What does Black librarianship look like in the Proverbial Information Age?" Two previous editions edited by E. J. Josey is necessary to contextualize the later two editions (1970 and 1994 editions). The latest 2021 edition by Burns-Simpson, Shauntee, Nichelle M. Hayes, Ana Ndumu, Shaundra Walker, and Carla Diane Hayden, titled *The Black Librarian in America: Reflections, Resistance, and Reawakening* is published in commemoration of the BCALA's 50th anniversary.

  Jean Darnell's (2021) article, "Unpacking black school librarianship," tells of her experience as a young Black school librarian. It explains how she created "inclusive programs that address the setbacks to Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) caused by predominantly white institutions (PWIs)" (33). Erika

Long's (2021) article "Making a Mark on White Space: My experience as a Black school librarian" is yet another recent article that tells us the success story of a school librarian. She indicates that she advocates the recruitment of more school librarians of color by displaying her authenticity within professional associations and being more vocal about her accomplishments. Maegen Rose's (2021) article "Black School Librarianship: Navigating Race and Creating Change" adds another narrative to school librarianship as she shifted her career from being a social worker to librarianship.

Another recent article from Steven Harris S. (2019) titled "Strange Career: Reconciling Race and Profession in American Librarianship" indicates some reconciliation efforts in today's time. For instance, he mentions ALA Council's task "Resolution to Honor African Americans Who Fought Library Segregation," adopted in June 2018 (106). According to him, this effort was not sufficient. He indicates that "this charge needs to be an ongoing commitment, not a single resolution," and he suggests creating a commission for reconciliation to "a path toward healing" that would make a more whole and inclusive profession (106).

Renee F. Hill's (2019) narrative is also highlighted in her article "The Danger of an Untold Story: Excerpts from My Life as a Black Academic." Her narrative is from an academic librarian's perspective. She mentions microaggressions, double marginalization, and many other challenges she faces. Despite all of the challenges, she encourages librarians of color to continue working in higher education to add diverse perspectives and help pave the way for future librarians. Similar to Hill's article, Amy VanScoy and Kawanna Bright's

(2019) article "Articulating the Experience of Uniqueness and Difference for Librarians of Color" tells the story of librarians of color experiencing uniqueness and difference in a predominantly white profession.

SURVEY RESULTS

The first nine questions were background questions, which included educational, age, sex, and statistical career-oriented questions. The remainder of the questions included comment sections that were designed to measure survey takers' input about their experiences. The first question was asked to find out the type of library the African American librarians currently work in. As shown in table 1, "academic" was the top response, although all kinds of libraries had received answers. Special libraries and school libraries received the lowest results. Further research may be needed by narrowing it down to a particular library type and looking at why some libraries received the lowest results.

Table 1		
1- At what type of library are you currently working?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
HBCU Academic Library	56	15.82%
Academic Library (Non-HBCU)	161	45.48%
Public Library	99	27.97%
Special Library (government, museum, law firm, etc.)	21	5.93%
School Library	17	4.80%
Total	354	

The second question was asked to find out how long the respondents have been in the library profession working as a librarian. The majority of survey

takers were in the profession between ten and twenty years and more. Being in the

library profession is defined as "employed as a professional librarian," as the

survey indicated on the survey's consent page that only professional librarians are

eligible to take the survey. Only 65 African Americans out of 355 respondents are

in their first five years at an entry-level (see table 2).

Table 2		
2- How long have you been in the library profession?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
1-5 years	65	18.31%
5-10 years	76	21.41%
10-20 years	108	30.42%
20 and more years	106	29.86%
Total	355	

The third question was about the salary range. The lowest pay scale is

determined as 35k as an approximate number based on the statistics from the

American Library Association Allied Professional Association ("Minimum

Salaries by State," 2019) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational

Outlook Handbook ("Librarians and Library Pay," 2019). The majority of

respondents indicated that they have been receiving between 55k and 75k.

Between 35k and 75k, as well as between 75k and 125k, received high responses.

A tiny percentage of respondents indicated that they received 125k and more (see

table 3). The table for this question displays the inequity of salaries between

positions and salary ranges. Each librarian's position differs by its geographic

location and its particular responsibilities depending on the size of the library.

Perhaps more research and analysis are needed for future studies to find a much more detailed analysis of salary inequity according to size, type, and location.

Table 3		
3- What is your salary range?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Between 35k and 55k	109	31.05%
Between 55k and 75k	118	33.62%
Between 75k and 125k	110	31.34%
125k and more	14	3.99%
Total	351	

The fourth question was asked to determine how many survey participants participated in library organizations or associations. Most survey takers responded as "Yes" to this question. Participation in library organizations does not necessarily mean being a member of them. Therefore, the question also asked survey-takers to comment optionally for naming the organizations they were a member of. The participation percentage on this question is shown in the table below (see table 4). In the comment section, the survey takers gave names of the affiliated organizations. These were the most common organizations: Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), Indiana Black Librarians Network (IBL), American Library Association (ALA), Indiana Library Federation (ILF), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Association of College and Research Libraries, Medical Library Association (ACRL), North Carolina Library Association (NCLA), Society of American Archivists (SAA) (see table 4).

Fifty-two respondents answered this question as "No." Although this number is a small percentage of this survey, it is worth looking at the possible reasons why survey takers answered "No." There could be various reasons why the answer is "No," such as the cost of the conferences or less support from the institutional level. Therefore, the article's authors suggest scholars do more research and look at some possible reasons to encourage more involvement in professional library organizations.

Table 4		
4- Do you participate in library organizations?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Yes	97	27.32%
No	52	14.65%
If yes, please indicate the ones that you are a member of	206	58.03%
Total	355	

The fifth question was a gender question. According to this question, the majority of survey respondents were female. The data collected from this survey cannot be generalized to the entire population of African American librarians. Perhaps, not many gender-diverse or African American males took the survey when the survey was circulated.

Table 5		
5- What is your gender?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Female	307	86.24%
Male	46	12.92%

Non-binary/third gender	3	0.84%
Total	356	

The sixth question asked the survey taker's age range. The majority of survey takers were between the ages of 30-50. The 20-30 age range is the lowest group. The age group 50 and over consists of over a quarter of the responses (see table 6). Overall, the table shows that African American librarians come from diverse age groups.

Table 6		
6- What is your age range?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Between 20 and 30	29	8.15%
Between 30 and 40	89	25.00%
Between 40 and 50	99	27.81%
Between 50 and 60	75	21.07%
60 and over	64	17.98%
Total	356	

The seventh question of the survey asked to determine the types of degrees that the survey takers had. The majority of respondents indicated that they have a professional library degree. 31.55% of respondents indicated that they had second master's degrees, and 9.30% indicated doctorate degrees. The education field is changing as the disciplines become more interdisciplinary to accommodate library professionals. The authors suggest that perhaps it would be necessary to do further research about the types of areas of second degrees that the respondents were getting to determine the direction shifting in the profession (see table 7).

Table 7		
7- What professional degrees do you have? (Select all that apply)		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Bachelor's Degree	231	65.07%
Master's Degree in Library Field	322	90.70%
Second Master's Degree	112	31.55%
Third Master's Degree	6	1.69%
Doctorate Degree	33	9.30%
Total	355	

Question eight was asked to find out if the survey takers received a degree from an HBCU. 73.88% of respondents said they do not have a degree from an HBCU. 93 people out of 356 said that they had a degree from an HBCU. This is a lower percentage compared to the overall number of respondents. For the people who said yes to this question, it is unknown if they have a library degree from an HBCU. Accordingly, the authors suggest that this is another area for researchers to investigate which HBCU universities were historically known to give library degrees and look at the changes since then (see table 8).

Table 8		
8- Do you have a degree from an HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities)?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Yes	93	26.12%
No	263	73.88%
Total	356	

Question nine was about the job roles of the survey participants. Forty-three survey respondents out of 356 said that they are serving as library directors in their libraries, and 7 of them are serving as library deans. In addition to the table below, 31 survey takers out of 83 who had additional comments also mentioned that they carried management positions with leadership capacities in the comment section. According to the low result of leadership percentage for this question, the authors suggest looking more closely to see if there is a gap in the leadership area for African Americans in terms of the library director and library deans. Therefore, the authors invite scholars for further investigation and research to look at the reasons and underlying factors why this percentage is low (see table 9).

Table 9		
9- Which one of the following roles do you hold?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Library Director	43	12.08%
Library Dean	7	1.97%
Librarian	223	62.64%
Other (Please specify)	83	23.31%
Total	356	

In question ten, the authors asked to find out the underlying motivation that led the survey takers to choose librarianship as a profession. One hundred three people who responded as "mentorship influence" and 101 responded as "service to the community" were the top two responses. "Passion in research" and

"undergraduate education faculty influence" were the additional two reasons that

indicated why they chose librarianship as a profession (see table 10).

Table 10		
10- What/Who influenced you to become a librarian?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Mentorship influence	103	29.43%
Service to community	101	28.86%
Passion in research	68	19.43%
Undergraduate education faculty influence	33	9.43%
Total	350	

In addition to the above quantitative responses, there were 138 additional

comments to this question. The comments to this question show that family,

community service, mentorship, and paraprofessional positions such as student

assistant and volunteer jobs are motivating factors when choosing librarianship as

their profession. Below are some quotes from the survey takers regarding their

journey or stories about entering the profession:

> "Community service has always been a part of my family, church, and
> sorority life."
> "Worked at the library as a work-study student but really had no intention
> of staying in the field. I had some really good mentors who not only talked
> me into it but helped move me along in different positions in the library."
> "My desire to help others with their research and reading needs drove me
> to become a librarian."

Some keywords are repeated within these 138 text box responses; therefore, some

patterns are designated. Research (13), mentor (10), community (12), service (6),

family (6) are the most repeated keywords within the comment responses. The

numbers in parentheses indicate how often these words were repeated in the

overall text box responses. The rest of the questions also have keyword analyses

presented numbers in paranthesis. In addition to the above keywords: second

career, archives, supervisor influence, and entry-level paraprofessional jobs were

indicated as other reasons for entering the profession.

In question eleven, the authors were asked to look at survey takers' input

about the significant trend and themes for the future of librarianship.

Technological advances (with 101 responses) and open access with 89 responses)

received the top responses (see table 11).

Table 11		
11- Of the following, which would you choose as the most important trend/theme for the future of librarianship?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Intellectual Freedom	41	11.58%
Technological Advances	101	28.53%
Library Programming	61	17.23%
Open Access	89	25.14%
Data Analytics	23	6.50%
Other (please explain further)	39	11.02%
Total	354	

There was a total of 39 additional comments to this question, some of them shown
below:

> "I think Open Access and data analytics may be important in the future.
> However, I believe that storage issues, new resource sharing management
> systems, and working with vendors and publishers to reduce the cost of
> serials (Big Deals) are a future trend that more and more libraries are
> discussing and reviewing."

"Digital inclusion: I think as more content is born-digital (including job applications), the difference between those who 'know how to navigate the digital environment and those who don't become even more drastic."
"Real efforts at diversifying librarianship and addressing micro and macro aggressions, bias (Conscious and unconscious) and racism."

Survey respondents' comments show that some terminologies are repeated in addition to the question's original options. Equity and inclusion, community, and open-access diversifying librarianship were the most repeated keywords from these respondents, in addition to data analytics, information literacy, and technology. The responses to this question show that the profession's future is changing. The authors advise the young generation entering the profession to improve their skills in these highlighted areas and be aware of the challenges mentioned above, such as insufficient support and budget.

In question twelve, the authors wanted to find out the challenges that African Americans face at their libraries. The top two responses were budget (105) and staffing (82) issues. However, insufficient support and salary equity received their fair share of responses (see table 12).

Table 12		
12- What do you see as the most important challenge you face at your library?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Budget	105	29.43%
Staffing	82	23.16%
Salary equity	39	11.02%
Insufficient support from stakeholders	61	17.23%
Professional development	18	5.08%
Keeping up with changing technical requirements	31	8.76%

Keeping up with policy changes	11	3.11%
Total	354	

There were 81 additional comments to this question. Below are some of the comments:

> "I left an ARL library due to extreme bullying and mobbing that focused on racist themes and stereotypes."
> "Our predominantly white and female profession can be a place of extreme discomfort and agony for BIPOC librarians. This is horrible for the profession."
> "I think insufficient support from stakeholders covers a lot of the other issues libraries face such as budget, staffing, professional development (often libraries can't afford to send staff) and changing technical requirements."
> "Staffing and salary equity go hand in hand…."

Budget (23), staffing (12), and stakeholder (11) terms were the most repeated ones among the 81 comments for this question. In addition to these mostly repeated keywords, additional repeatedly commented areas created a pattern: library programming, lack of leadership, maintaining electronic resources, education of stakeholders, and microaggressions. There are also correlations and relationships between terminologies. For example, "staffing" and "salary equity" are often used in the same comment, as well as "relevancy" together with "technology," "cultural competency" with "collection development," "community engagement" with "programming," "diversity" with "inclusiveness."

Question 13, it is asked if survey takers contribute to the collection management area. The majority of people (169 responses) said yes to this question, "contributing to the collection." However, 102 people said they do not contribute to this task in their libraries (see table 13).

Table 13

13- Do you contribute to the collection management in your library and improve African American literature?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Yes.	169	47.74%
No.	102	28.81%
Sometimes.	82	23.16%
Total	354	

One hundred twenty-five survey takers commented on this question (approx. five pages long).

Below are some text box responses:

> "Our community is predominantly African American, so we make sure to purchase those items we believe our patrons want and need entertainment and educational purposes."
> "I often look at what I've seen at exhibits and book fairs/shows to see what we may need to order for research. I always play a part in curating local authors who want to add their self-published titles to the main collection, and many of them are A.A."
> "Each librarian is assigned a section for collection development. However, the selections we make for the collection are scrutinized by the singular collection development librarian, who has the final decision on whether or not our book selections are ultimately ordered. Essentially, we make suggestions, but we have no true power to purchase and select books at my institution."

Text box responses to this question also show that some terminologies are repeated, and there are some connections between them. Acquiring items from non-traditional ways such as self-published authors, donations, additional research, and liaison duties involving collection management were mentioned the most. Here are some terminological correlations used in the same comment: diverse & authors/books, African American literature & history, studies, materials, authors, and African American experience.

Question fourteen was about the challenges respondents have been experiencing during their professional careers. Professional disrespect (123) was the highest response. Low pay (109) was the second-highest response. However, bad working conditions (47) and racial discrimination options (44) received their fair share of responses, followed by comments (see table 14).

Table 14		
14- Which challenges have you experienced the most in your professional career?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Professional disrespect	123	35.65%
Low pay	109	31.59%
Bad working conditions	47	13.62%
Racial discrimination	44	12.75%
Total	345	

Although question 14 had the top five challenges listed, the comments from the survey takers show that there are additional challenges related to/correlated with these challenges.

The comments to this question were approximately 7.5 pages long (136 respondents). It is one of the longest comment sections among the questions.

Below are some text box responses from the survey takers:

"Microaggression and lack of respect for my expertise."
"I have experienced professional disrespect that was fueled by racial discrimination."
"People are surprised that I am intelligent, that I hold a full-fledged librarian position, that I can write a scholarly article or present a scholarly presentation. Having views disregarded unless championed by a white person."
"I'd say being a young black woman, I've had to prove my competency often. It's gotten better as I've made my mark in the field and got a job at another institution. I get it more from faculty and students who don't

expect me to be the librarian or defer to a white male or older colleague. People on campus don't believe I'm faculty when I go to exercise privileges associated with being faculty."
"I had a hard time picking between 'Professional disrespect' and 'Low pay' primarily because the two feed into each other. There's a general disrespect for the department (Acquisitions and Collection Management) I work in, which is partly why the pay is lower than other library faculty/staff of the same rank."

Discrimination (20), microaggressions (6), gender (8), and race (10) were the most repetitive keywords from 136 survey takers who commented on this question. There are also correlations between these terminologies that are used in the same comment repetitively, for example, gender & gender orientation, gender gap, gender bias, disrespect & bad working conditions & low pay. The repetitiveness of these terms indicates obvious patterns of challenges that the survey takers have been facing.

In question 15, the authors asked survey-takers to rate the library profession in general diversity and inclusion activities. The majority of responses said it is fair and poor (see table 15).

Table 15		
15- How do you rate diversity and inclusion in the library profession in general?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Excellent	2	0.56%
Very good	18	5.07%
Good	45	12.68%
Fair	147	41.41%
Poor	143	40.28%
Total	355	

Below are some selected comments from the survey-takers (6 pages long) from

105 respondents.

> "It's a wildly undiverse field with no real strategy to address it."
> "From the statistics, it does look like it is getting better. Being the only
> POC on staff and trying to represent your community is pressure enough,
> but I felt like more was always expected of me than from my white
> coworkers. And they always wanted me to come up with
> recommendations for A.A. materials and minority programming. I just
> wanted to see them take the time out to do their own research."
> "Black people are over-represented in lower classifications such as pages,
> custodial staff and security and under-represented in management
> positions."
> "I think it depends upon what part of the country you are in. For example,
> if I was still working as a librarian in the Midwest, my answer would be
> poor. But if you are more racially/ethnically/etc. diverse part of the
> country, then it is probably fair to good."
> "The same issues that were present when I first started in 1992 are the
> same, only the vernacular has changed. The same old statistics rolled out
> that show the profession is still very white. A lot of talks, but not a lot of
> really hearing what we say."
> "I see the diversity and inclusion, and I suspect it is better than what I see
> because not all diversity is visible; however, I do not think we represent
> the populations we serve in proportionate numbers."

Diversity (40), inclusion (28), and people of color (10) were the most repeated

keywords in this question's comment section. There are also correlations between

terminologies that are used in the same sentence structure. These are diversity &

inclusion, fair & poor, profession & white, ethnically & racially.

In question 16, the authors asked the respondents if they engage in

diversity and inclusion activities in their libraries. Although 95 people said "No"

to this question, most respondents said yes or sometimes. From the comments

sections, it is clear that some people who responded "No" might not have been

responsible in their job to create such activities "directly" or might not have had

the opportunity to do so (see table 16).

Table 16		
16- Do you engage with library users in creating diversity and inclusion activities?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Yes.	155	43.79%
No.	95	26.84%
Sometimes.	103	29.10%
Total	354	

Below are some comments from the survey takers:

"African American Read-Ins and diverse voices book displays."
"Collaboration with other campus departments re: events and programming; collection development; student outreach; committee work; incorporating ethnic diversity in visual and written course content."
"Teaching classes on equity and inclusion."
"Global reading initiatives, Monthly cultural identity reading lists, Class unit on a social justice action."

One hundred and fourteen survey takers commented on this question (approx. five pages long). Text box responses show that there are some terminologies repeated. These are program (50), diversity (30), community (12), activity (25). The correlations between terminologies that are used in the same sentence also show the type of diversity and inclusion activities. Below are some of the keywords used together by the commenters: diversity & programs, book discussions/displays, reading (initiatives), inviting guest speakers, and collection management.

In question 17, the authors wondered what primary advice the survey takers would give to African American librarians who are entering the profession.

The first two options were the majority of responses, while the options "joining professional associations" and "improving research and writing skills" followed these top responses (see table 17).

Table 17		
17- What would be your primary advice for African American librarians who are just entering the profession?		
Answer Choices	Response	%
Gain experience prior to and during library school	117	33.05%
Seek mentorship	123	34.75%
Join professional associations	46	12.99%
Improve technical skills	26	7.34%
Improve research and writing skills	35	9.89%
Total	354	

Below are some survey takers' responses:

> "A mentor will help to provide guidance, support, and a safe space for open discussion of issues and considerations unique to being a Black librarian in an overwhelmingly white field."
> "You need a mentor (several over the course of a career). I don't think I can stress this enough. Also, pick something and become the best at it. Expertise is a great way to distinguish yourself. Also, make professional development a habit. This will help you develop wide-ranging competence. When it is your time to lead, you will be more confident and a better boss."
> "It's really all of the above. I didn't intend to work as an academic librarian, so I never really considered research skills. Even if a person works as a public librarian, the research and writing skills, especially in terms of scholarly research and grant writing, are essential for marketability."

Ninety-one survey takers commented on this question (approx. five pages long).

Text box responses show that there are some terminologies repeated: skills (18), mentor (55), career (11), and networking (4).

In question 18, it was asked, "What is your most important accomplishment(s) in your career?" The responses to this question exhibit the accomplishments of recent African American librarians of our time. These were approximately 11.5 pages long comments. Three hundred ten survey takers out of 354 who responded to this question made comments.

Below are some selected responses for this question:

> "Becoming a Director at an HBCU where I can mentor librarians and encourage students to pursue life endeavors."
> "Becoming a dean."
> "After over 40 years in this profession, I have accomplished quite a bit (e.g., implementing new systems, starting new services, etc.). However, I am the proudest when I think of the new employees (librarians and non-librarians) I have mentored and who continue with successful careers."
> "Being able to improve and provide better access for the African American community."
> "Mentoring other young librarians and library assistants of color and showing them that they have a lot to offer the profession and the world."

The most commented the activities and accomplishments from survey takers were: professional development activities, creating a culture that is more diverse and inclusive in their libraries, recruiting, mentoring, completing high-level education, serving in the leadership position, mentoring other librarians, accomplishing a support system for library users, promotion, tenured, collection management (building a diverse collection), remaining and entering to the profession as a goal of accomplishment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with their achievements, African American librarians play a pivotal role in the library profession. This survey reveals African American

librarians' remarkable achievements despite their many challenges, the journey upon entering the profession, and future goals, along with valuable suggestions for the next generations of librarians. The authors' goal is to contribute to the conversation on this topic and advocate for a more diverse profession. The survey results and the review of recent publications from scholars in the literature show a need for further research in this area. The education section of the literature review of this article reveals that there needs to be improvement in the efforts to recruit more African American librarians.

While this survey covers a limited range of topics, the authors have suggestions for further research:

- Each type of library (academic, public, special, etc.) could be researched within its parameters and become a candidate for future study to reveal more detailed statistics.

- It is suggested to continue research to solve problematic areas. An in-depth look at the causes of salary inequities, racial discrimination, professional disrespect, and poor working conditions is crucial to improving the library profession.

- Most importantly, it is also suggested to continue research in education of African American librarians towards the goal of creating a more inclusive and diverse profession.

The implications of data collected from this survey strongly indicate that it is time to improve the library profession's diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts which start by creating a more empowering environment for African-American

librarians and many other diverse groups. The library and information science field is one of the core fields that can improve social justice efforts and make a better humane society. The more this field improves, the better and more healing society will be in the future.

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