P a r t   6 .   A * C E N S U S :   R e p o r t   o n   D i v e r s i t y

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O v e r v i e w

The results of the A*CENSUS confirm that achieving diversity remains a major challenge in the twenty-first century. The numbers from this 2004 survey were not substantially different from those collected in the past.

A 1982 survey of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) membership revealed that less than 3% (2.8%) of respondents identified themselves as minorities,[1] with 1.8% identifying themselves as African American. In the A*CENSUS, in 2004, the total of all minorities was 7%, with just under 3% (2.8%) being African minorities. The responses of minorities throughout the survey generally mirrored those of all respondents.

The question of why the number of minorities in the profession remains so low cannot be answered by the data gathered in the A*CENSUS. In order for the SAA to address its goal to attract and retain a more diverse membership, other audiences need to be asked different questions. Determining the level of interest and knowledge on the part of potential entrants to the profession may

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[1] To select minorities from the A*CENSUS database, the following filter was used:

q3=1 Or q3a_1=1 Or q3a_2=1 Or q3a_3=1 Or q3a_5=1 Or q3a_6=1 Or q3a_7=1.

It was based on the following two questions:

Q3. Are you of Latino or Hispanic background? (1) Yes; (2) No; (3) Rather not say;

Q3a. Please select the racial group(s) that best describe(s) your race/ethnicity. (Select all that apply.)

1	African American	1
2	Alaska Native	1
3	Asian	1
4	White/Caucasian	
5	Native American	1
6	Pacific Islander	1
7	Other	1
8	Rather not say	

For Q3a, a "1" indicated that the respondent selected that racial group.

assist in deciding how to attract them. Minority archivists who have either dropped their SAA membership or left the profession could be polled.

Strategies for outreach to minorities include using the annual Archives Week more creatively; providing a speakers' bureau and informational packets to secondary school counselors and college and university departments of humanities, social sciences, and technology; welcoming into archival repositories children as young as age ten, at the beginning of the time in children's lives when influences on future career choices have been shown to be strong; and providing greater access to graduate archival training through such means as scholarships.

Improving diversity requires moving beyond gathering data and beginning to implement strategies for action.

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges for SAA throughout its history—and for the archival profession in general—has been that of attracting and retaining a diverse membership. It is safe to say that the recent A*CENSUS is confirmation that diversity remains a major challenge in the twenty-first century. While the data show that there have been significant shifts in gender makeup of the profession over the years, from male-dominated to female-dominated, and slight shifts in age categories, the number of nonwhite members of the profession has remained relatively low compared with growth of nonwhite entrants into other professions. This report will focus mostly on issues of diversity as defined by race and ethnicity, and will consider strategies that might be employed in future efforts to increase minority interest in the archival profession.
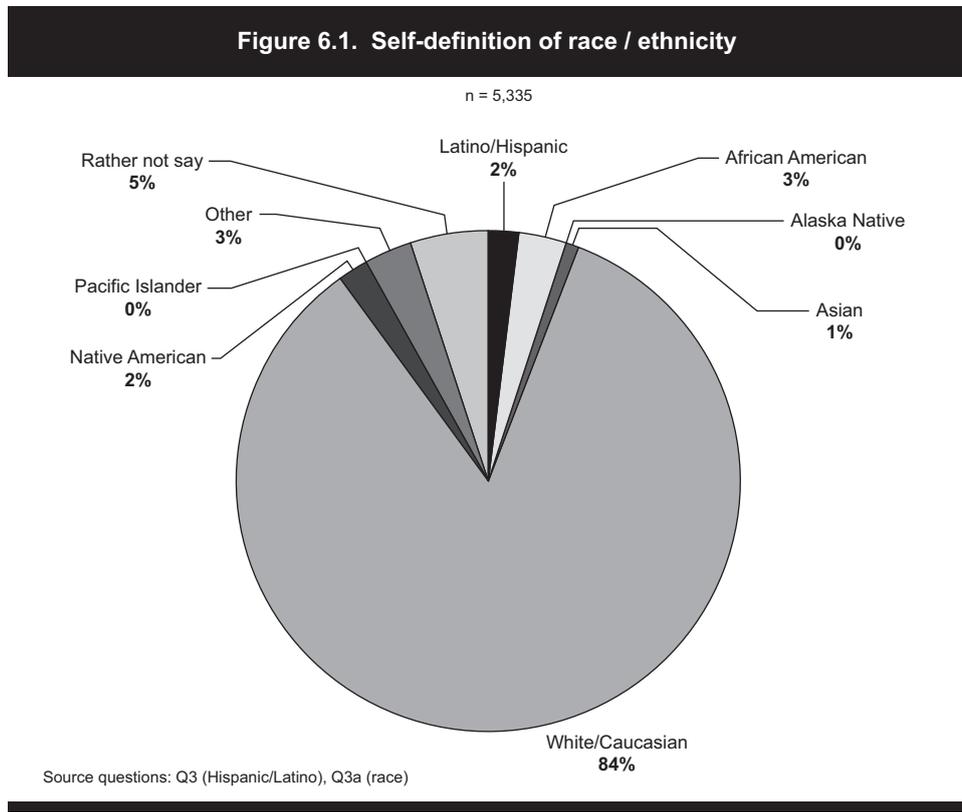
Data from the A*CENSUS survey help us to examine some of the issues of diversity within the profession:

- What is the status of minority membership in the profession?
- How do minorities enter the profession?
- What are the types and levels of positions held by minorities?
- What type of training do most minorities receive prior to entering the profession?
- What questions could have been asked in the A*CENSUS survey to get a more accurate picture of the profession's lack of diversity? To what audience(s) should these questions have been posed?
- What strategies should SAA adopt in its efforts to attract more minorities?

In order to answer the questions, responses to the survey will be reviewed and wherever possible, compared to earlier data, similar professions, and other relevant factors.

What Are the Numbers?

The numbers that resulted from the A*CENSUS were not significantly different from statistics that were collected in years past. In 1982, a survey by David Bearman reported that less than 3% (2.8%) of SAA's members identified themselves as minorities, with 1.8% identifying themselves as African Americans. When the A*CENSUS was conducted, in 2004, the total of all minority groups was 7%; for African Americans, it was just under 3% (2.8%). However, it should be noted that there were two categories in which respondents could identify themselves: "Hispanic or Latino" background and "race/ethnicity." Respondents were encouraged to check all that applied to them, including African American, Alaska Native, Asian, White/Caucasian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Other. There was also a category for "rather not say." These choices must be considered when analyzing the data because respondents may have checked more than one category, which means that some percentages may add up to a number

Figure 6.1. Self-definition of race / ethnicity

n = 5,335

Rather not say 5%
Latino/Hispanic 2%
African American 3%
Other 3%
Alaska Native 0%
Pacific Islander 0%
Asian 1%
Native American 2%
White/Caucasian 84%

Source questions: Q3 (Hispanic/Latino), Q3a (race)

other than 100% (Fig. 6.1; see also Table 3.3.10 in Part 3, A*CENSUS: A Closer Look, Section 3, Demographics).

To say that these numbers are no surprise is an understatement. The results from the A*CENSUS simply confirm what we have always known—that there are very few minorities in the profession, with the largest identifiable group being African Americans at 2.8%. Other questions of the respondents revealed more information regarding ages, type of positions, and training. The persistent question of why the numbers of minorities in the profession are so low is one that cannot be answered from any of the data gathered through this effort.

The Accidental Archivist

One fact that the A*CENSUS results clearly showed was that most minorities were "accidental archivists." When responding to the question, "What led you to begin working in your first archives related job?" minority respondents answered in the following way (Fig. 6.2):
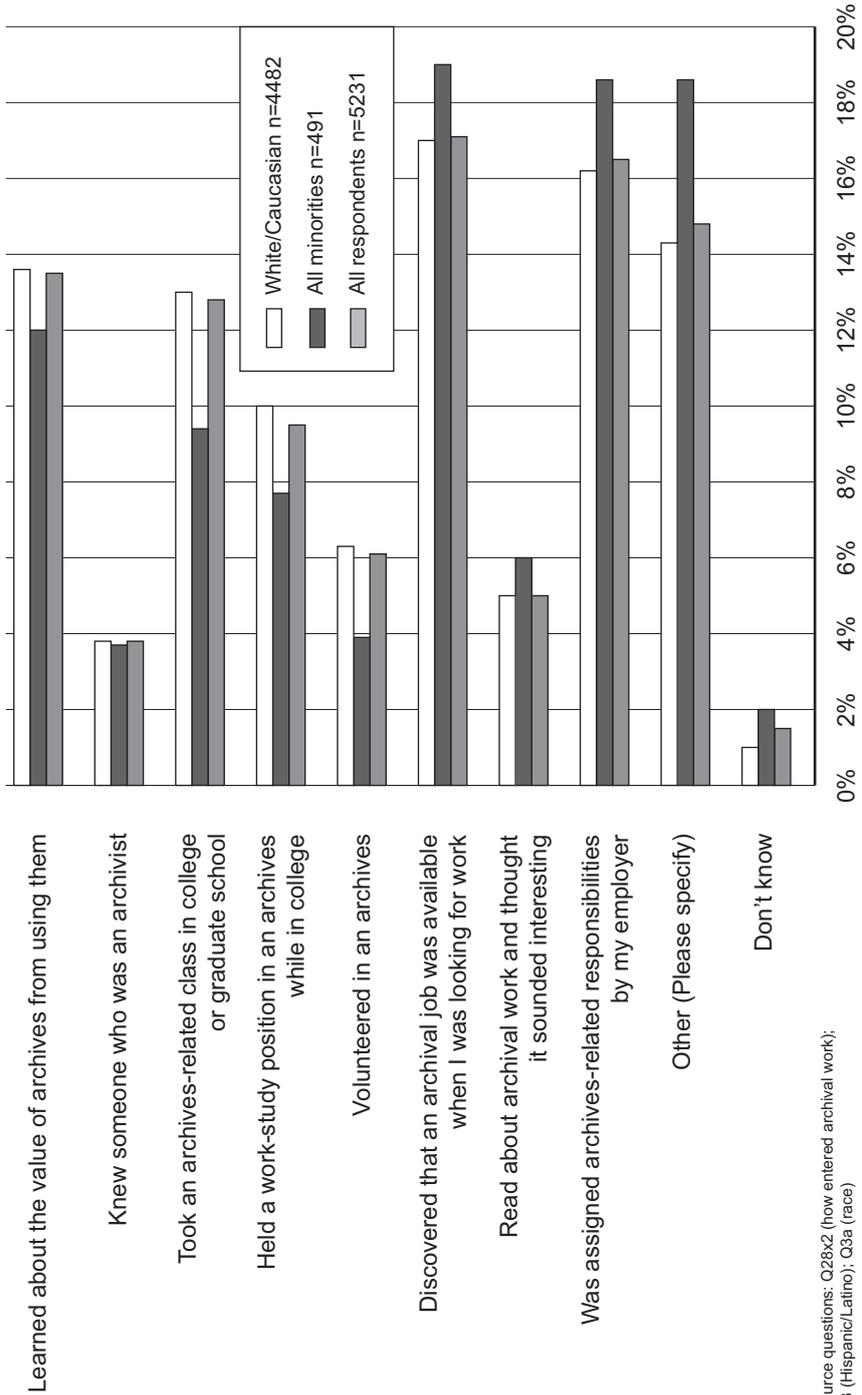
- Discovered the job was available while looking for work: 18.9%
- Was assigned archives-related responsibilities by employer: 18.5%
- Other: 18.5%

However, it could be said that the majority of archivists are "accidental archivists" because these same three answers were the most often given by all respondents. The question then becomes, What does it say about a profession when the majority of its professionals enter accidentally rather than purposefully?

When asked if "Archives was their first career," 67.3% of minorities answered no, compared to 61.9% of white respondents. This still points to the fact that most archivists had other career plans and entered archives following another choice of employment. The fact that both groups answered this question in almost equal—and large—numbers indicates there may be some other issues that should be raised regarding how the archival profession is perceived (Fig. 6.3, Was archives your first career?, in Appendix K).
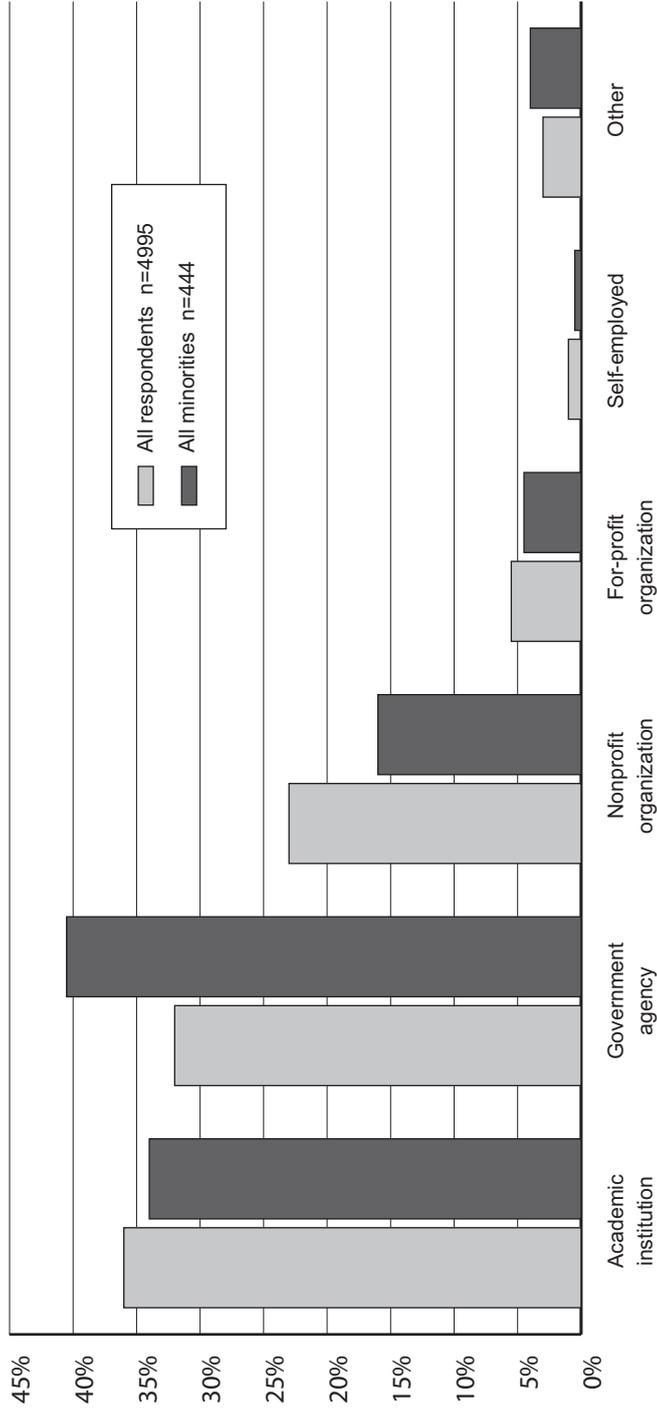
The A*CENSUS data indicated that, by far, government was the largest employer of minorities in the profession, with 40.5% of minorities indicating that they worked in the public sector, compared with only 31.6% of all respondents. The second largest percentage of minorities, 34.5%, worked at academic institutions. This percentage is almost equal to that of all respondents, at 35.9%. A closer look would reveal that most minorities were employed by federal and state government entities. The large percentage of minority archivists hired by government and academic institutions may be attributed to the size of these organizations, the number of jobs available, and equal opportunity requirements, more than other factors (Fig. 6.4).

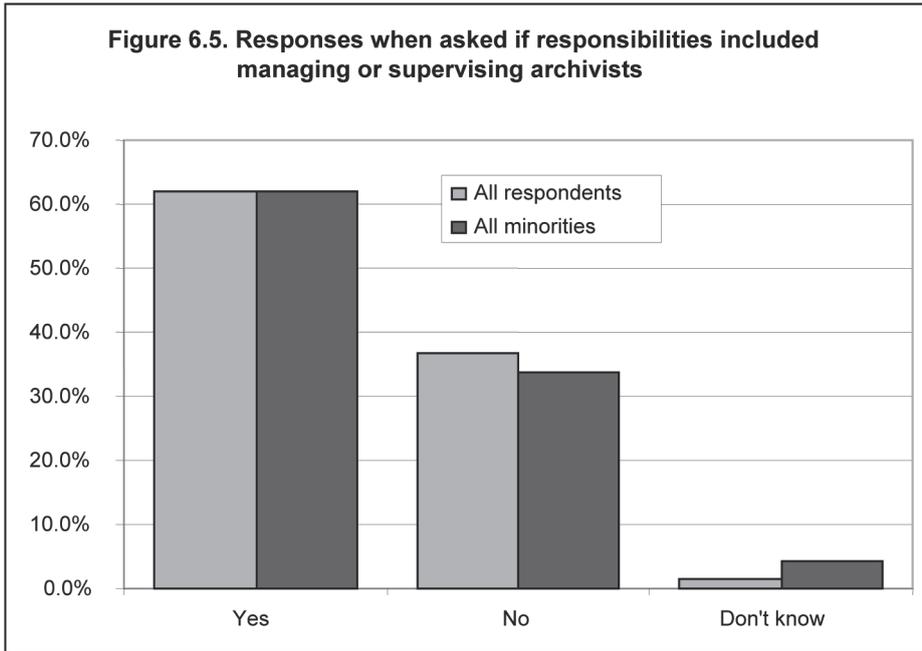## Figure 6.2. How respondents entered archival career

White/Caucasian n=4482
All minorities n=491
All respondents n=5231

Learned about the value of archives from using them

Knew someone who was an archivist

Took an archives-related class in college or graduate school

Held a work-study position in an archives while in college

Volunteered in an archives

Discovered that an archival job was available when I was looking for work

Read about archival work and thought it sounded interesting

Was assigned archives-related responsibilities by my employer

Other (Please specify)

Don't know

0%   2%   4%   6%   8%   10%   12%   14%   16%   18%   20%

Figure 6.4. Current employers, all respondents and all minorities

Legend:
- All respondents n=4995
- All minorities n=444

Categories (x-axis): Academic institution, Government agency, Nonprofit organization, For-profit organization, Self-employed, Other

Y-axis: 0%, 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25%, 30%, 35%, 40%, 45%

Source questions: Q21 (current employer); Q3 (Hispanic/Latino); Q3a (race)

Figure 6.5. Responses when asked if responsibilities included managing or supervising archivists

Source questions: M1 (manager); Q3 (Hispanic/Latino); Q3a (race)

The percentage of minorities in supervisory positions was almost equal to that of all respondents, with 62% of minorities in supervisory positions and 61.9% of all respondents indicating that they were supervisors (Fig. 6.5, Responses when asked if responsibilities included managing or supervising archivists, at www.archivists.org).

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In the median age range of 50-54, minorities came close to mirroring all respondents, with 16.6% falling in this range, compared to 17.7% of all respondents. In the 35-39, 45-49, and 55-59 age ranges, the percentages of minorities were slightly greater than for all respondents (Fig. 6.6, Ages of all respondents and all minorities, in Appendix K).

A slightly larger percentage of minorities, 21.2%, indicated that they planned to end their careers in three to nine years, compared to 20.2% of all respondents and the same proportion of white respondents. Because the largest percentages of these respondent groups were primarily clustered in the 50-54 and 55-59 age ranges, this is not a surprise (Fig. 6.7, In how many years do you expect to retire? at www.archivists.org).

**Figure 6.7. In how many years do you expect to retire?**
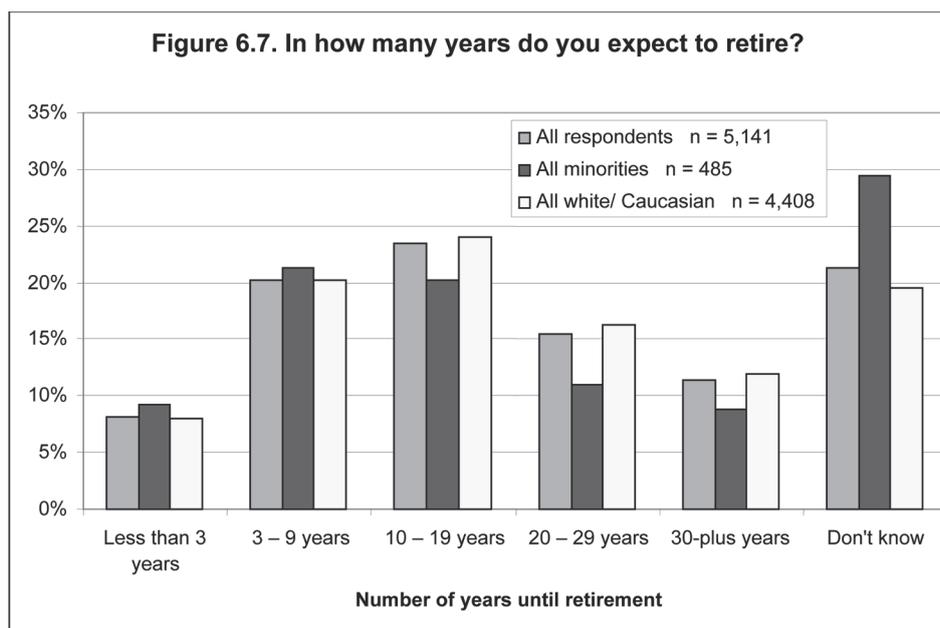
Source questions: Q33 (when expecting to leave archival work); Q3 (Hispanic/Latino); Q3a (race)

Training and Education

Although there is great disparity in the numbers of whites and minorities in the archival profession, there is less of a difference in the area of training and education. Of those citing graduate school as their primary source of education, the response from "all respondents" was 35.1% and from minorities, 29.1%. The percentage of minorities indicating a reliance on continuing education was 22.3%, compared to just under 20% of all respondents. Of no surprise was the response in the category "Other," which was 23.2% of all respondents and almost 27% of all minorities. This category included comments such as "on-the-job training, internships, volunteering, institutes, and other work experience" (Fig. 6.8).

The lack of access to graduate archival programs may be reflected in the answers regarding the primary source of archival training and education. With the emergence of new graduate programs in archival management over the past two decades, future surveys will no doubt yield a different profile. However, for the present, continuing education clearly plays a large role as a foundation for training within the archival profession.

As archival graduate programs continue to grow in numbers, some thought should be given to more aggressive recruitment in regions in which minority demographics are high. A shift in the target audience for recruitment of undergraduate students in colleges and universities in the South, Pacific

Figure 6.8. Primary source of archival training
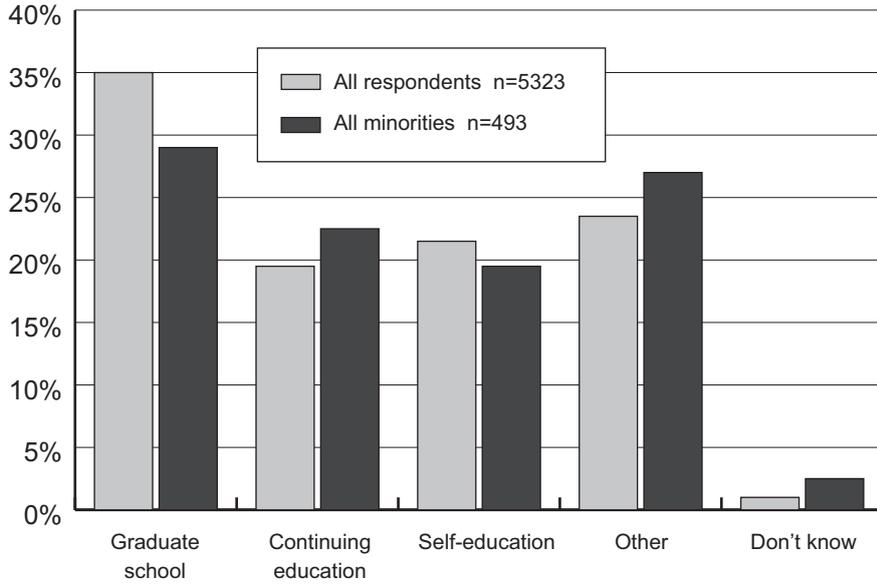
Source questions: Q9 (primary source of training/education); Q3 (Hispanic/Latino); Q3a (race)

Northwest, and West Coast would yield a different result compared with recruitment efforts in the Northeast and Midwest.

Conclusions and Strategies for Future Growth

The data gathered from the A*CENSUS survey confirm the previously recognized fact that we are not gaining very fast on the diversity front.

It is difficult to get answers to solve a problem unless the right questions are asked of the most appropriate audiences. It is unlikely that we will ever be able to determine the interest or lack of interest of certain groups in entering the archival profession unless questions are posed to persons who are outside of the profession. The A*CENSUS survey was targeted to members of SAA and members of the archival profession in general. Therefore, it is not likely that such an effort would reveal the results that we may need to determine the level of interest of others, including minorities, in the archival profession. Determining the level of knowledge about the profession on the part of potential entrants to the profession may provide a starting point for developing the

kind of information that influences the way people think about archives and archivists.

In addition, the A*CENSUS failed to ask questions that would reveal relevant information about the level of satisfaction of career choices from minority respondents or, for that matter, from others. The closest we came to determining the level of job satisfaction was in a question regarding how many archivists "planned to leave the archival profession for other careers." The answer gives us all something about which we can be proud. Most archivists—79.7% of all respondents and 73.5% of minority respondents—indicated that they planned to remain in the archival field. While we may draw many conclusions from this statistic, it would seem that there is a fairly high level of job satisfaction among those in the archival field (Fig. 6.9, Do you plan to leave archival work for a new career? in Appendix K).

A good audience to have targeted for additional information may have been minority archivists who have either left membership of the organization or who have left the profession altogether. Questions posed to this group may have provided some clues for solving the riddle of why there are so few minorities in the profession.

It is more important, however, to consider the issues contributing to the lack of public awareness. Given a list of professions and occupations such as teacher, doctor, lawyer, firefighter, or even librarian, most people will have some idea of what they do. How many blank stares have *you* gotten at a party when you answered the question, "What do you do?" The fact that there is an abhorrent lack of knowledge about who we are and what we do continues to be a major drawback for recruitment for the profession in general. While other professions have launched major public awareness campaigns, we are hiding in the stacks waiting to be discovered by the best and brightest students. It is the responsibility of professional organizations as well as archival institutions to make drastic changes in our attitude, and to remedy the lack of action in this area.

Strategies for Outreach

SAA, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), and state and regional archival organizations could begin the process of improving public awareness by taking full advantage of the annual Archives Week. While the average person may participate in at least one library-related event during National Library Week, it is doubtful that the general public is even aware of Archives Week. Thinking creatively and implementing new approaches to make this week-long celebration more attractive to a broader audience would go a long way in raising public awareness. These organizations can—and should—work together toward this goal.

The development of informational packets about archives careers for secondary school counselors and college and university departments of humanities, the social sciences, and technology will begin to expose students to our profession at a time when they are making critical decisions about their careers. What better recruitment tool could we ask for? This is a simple strategy that the professional organizations could undertake for greater yield. Developing a speakers bureau to take advantage of career day programs would augment any printed material. The resulting interaction would allow students to ask questions and better understand the relevance of the work we do.

The simple step of targeting colleges and universities and geographic locations that have diverse populations through some of the above-mentioned strategies might possibly yield unprecedented growth in interest among minority groups. The development of targeted training and education programs, such as the recently completed Historically Black College and Universities Archives Institute and the Native American Archives Institute (sponsored by the Western Archives Institute), are perfect examples of ways to combine outreach, education, and recruitment successfully. These institutes were successful in many ways. And the positive outcomes of providing a networking opportunity for participants and introducing them to the professional organizations, which linked them with additional learning opportunities, will have a major impact on their careers.

Archival repositories and institutions can also play a major role in a public awareness campaign. Traditionally, we have discouraged bringing children under age twelve into archival institutions. We should take into consideration that it is between the ages of ten and fifteen that children are most influenced. Moreover, it is usually around this age that the impressions that are made are the ones that greatly shape future career choices.[1] So, instead of the traditional disdain for students under the age of twelve, perhaps it is time to consider creating programs that would invite and interest this population.

Some institutions have embraced this concept with varying degrees of success. History camps are very common ways for institutions to collaborate in providing history-oriented, fun learning experiences for students. Some institutions have participated in the "Linking American History" project, which is designed to expose secondary school teachers to archival collections and to encourage the use of primary sources in curriculum development. These are just a few ideas that could be explored in our efforts to better familiarize students and teachers to archives.

Recruitment strategies are also needed. Internship programs such as the museum community's Minority Fellows Program and the American Library

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[1] *"This We Believe. . .and Now We Must Act."* National Middle School Association. Westerville, Ohio: 2001.

Association's Spectrum Scholarship have been extremely successful in attracting minorities to their professions. Simmons College is exploring the possibility of offering scholarships aimed at attracting minority students to its archival management program. A nationwide program that would give minority students a choice of the many archival graduate programs that are available is the next step to broadening this opportunity. Funding for these types of programs is generally available through a variety of sources.

Technology has provided us with the tools to bring our holdings into schools and homes through the digitization of interesting items and collections, and by building websites that appeal not just to the scholarly research community, but to the casual user as well. Still, even though it is important to appeal to a broad audience, these efforts should be developed in a professional manner, rather than in a way that will demean our work. When done appropriately, providing electronic access to the casual user can be one of the most effective ways to reach broader populations in an age when 68% of Americans take advantage of the Internet.[2]

These strategies are all within our reach and can be easily attained with planning and collaboration. Similar recommendations were made in a report of the SAA Task Force on Diversity in 1998, yet very little progress has been made toward this goal. Achieving more diversity within the archival profession is a noble goal and one for which we should strive. The time has come to move beyond surveys and reports and begin planning for positive action in order to provide substantive results.

In casting a broader net as described in the strategies outlined here, we are likely to gain in numbers, in quality, and in diversity. We are likely to become a profession that is richer for the greater range of thought, experience, and creativity that diversity can bring.

[2] Internet World Statistics, www.InternetWorldStats.com. Usage Population Statistics. July 2005.