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## From a University Press--Diversity in Publishing

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for many of staff. However, once it actually happened, everybody was very happy. The staff all understand that they are working as a team. They pull together, and if one person is having a bad day, everyone else will step in and do what they need to do. It's been a really good experience morale-wise.

#### **How do you communicate with your colleagues in other buildings?**

Email and telephone communication is encouraged. Staff in all the branch libraries are encouraged to call or email either the department or the manager. **Rodriguez-Atkins** says her staff does not do a lot of Skyping for meetings. Technical processing does Skype with Material Selection when they need to actually show them material. They have electronic meeting abilities, but feel that face-to-face interaction with people within the organization is more important. They have also started to do more e-meetings with the library association and with people outside their particular site, and there is a staff development day once a year where everybody from all the locations comes together for a full day of workshops and activities in one location.

#### **But you must have to have meetings with your supervisor and the other supervisors?**

The Material Services unit is composed of Material Selection, Acquisitions, Cataloging, Technical Processing, and Interlibrary Loan. There are three managers who all report to a division director. There are regular manager meetings about every other month when the managers discuss issues that are coming up for the library system as a whole and planning and preparing for various actions that are coming, such as when a branch will be closed for a period of time to have carpet replaced. They also discuss where there are issues with each of the different departments and how other departments can help address them. **Rodriguez-Atkins** also says that the library staff and managers at different branches are encouraged to job shadow in our offices and visit our offices. If there's a bigger issue going on in one of the libraries, she will visit that library to see what needs to be done. She is trying to make her unit more visible with the branch libraries and do more outreach when time allows. If either the Technical Processing Manager or **Rodriguez-Atkins** needs to interact with their director, she's always willing to come by their building and visit with them or to let them go visit her.

#### **Conclusion**

**Rodriguez-Atkins** says that working with the architect to design an off-site place just for Material Services was a great experience overall. It was a once in a career experience. "For us, very often you know with technical services nobody asks you what you need, they tell you what you get. It was such a great experience to be asked what we needed." 🐾

## From A University Press — Diversity in Publishing

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The *#WeNeedDiverseBooks* hashtag just celebrated its first birthday. The Diverse Books movement was developed in response to the lack of diversity in the children's book panel at the **2014 BookExpo America** ("It was 30 authors that were all white, and the only diversity was the Grumpy Cat," says **Ellen Oh**, co-founder of We Need Diverse Books). The 2015 panels at **BEA** were more diverse in makeup, but the movement organizers say the conversation is just beginning. Publishing, both in terms of the books that are published and the people who work to publish those books, still has a long way to go when it comes to reflecting the multicultural society in which we live.

Over the years, I've thought about this issue in relation to our university press community (and publishing more generally). On the whole, we are a very homogenous group, and I am not sure this has changed much in my 22 years in publishing. There are surely many reasons for this, but I do wonder if part of the issue is that publishing is still basically an apprentice system, whereby people eventually get paid jobs in publishing after unpaid work or internships. By its nature, this system trains only those who can afford to work for free, and that will limit the diversity, socioeconomic and otherwise, of future publishers. In response to this, three years ago our press made a proposal to the Mississippi-based **McRae Foundation** to fund a stipend for interns, either college students or recent graduates, to encourage more young people to consider a future in publishing.

Diversity within our staffs is key, but as publishers we can and should also be looking for diversity in the ranks of our authors and the subjects in which we publish. About seven years ago, our press began a series in *Caribbean Studies*. Shortly thereafter, we were fortunate enough to be part of a **Mellon Foundation** grant for *Folklore Studies in a Multicultural World*, a joint project with the **University of Illinois Press** and the **University of Wisconsin Press**. We used **Mellon** funds to begin attending the annual meeting of the **Caribbean Studies Association** in order to promote the series and augment our acquiring efforts in this growing field.

Two of our editors just returned from this meeting (held this year in New Orleans, which I have often heard described as the northernmost point in the Caribbean), and the first thing they mentioned is the great diversity of scholars working in this field. The majority of potential authors our editors encountered were of African

ancestry, whether African American or Afro Caribbean, including Mississippi's series editor, **Anton Allahar**. Our editors also spoke with authors of Indian ancestry, and one of the most interesting aspects of *Caribbean Studies* is the fascinating mix of cultures and languages in the area, including people of African, Indian, Native, and European descent, who speak English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and other languages.

The result is a marvelous diversity of authors we publish in this area, a diversity that is further augmented by the press's focus on civil rights and African American history in other areas of our list. Upon his return from the **Caribbean Studies Association** meeting, I asked our editor-in-chief, **Craig Gill**, about the diversity he experienced at the meeting, and how it might translate to other parts of our communal work. He commented, "One way to increase diversity in publishing, among authors and in academia more generally, is to make an effort to explore areas where diversity naturally occurs for reasons of geography, history, and subject matter. If a press limits itself in pursuing new subjects, it will also limit itself in other ways."

It is not always easy to walk the talk of diversity, for it requires constant attention and cultivation, for staff, authors, and subject matter alike. Scholars want to place their work where there is a longstanding commitment to their subject matter, to publish where their mentors publish and where they see outstanding and new scholarly work being done. Cultivating these authors and subject areas does not happen overnight, but ongoing attention and outreach do eventually yield results.

And the same may be true for our staffs. It is up to us to do more to reach out to diverse communities, to actively seek out bright young people to mentor and to introduce to the work of publishing (and librarianship), and to work to see that the people who publish scholarship reflect the diversity of the scholarship being published. What additional programs can we create that will result in our readers and patrons seeing themselves and their own particular communities reflected in the content we produce and in the people who help them access that content? As with so many issues in publishing, there is more work to be done. But if the end result is that we better reflect and serve our communities, then the continuing conversations and subsequent work to produce tangible results are more than worth it. 🐾

