**CAUT Librarians' Committee Discussion Paper
on Aboriginal and Visible/Racial Minority Librarians**

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*This paper is to promote discussion within CAUT and does not necessarily reflect
the views of the Canadian Association of University Teachers*

Background

"To thrive in increasingly diverse scholarly and learning communities, research libraries need a diverse workforce of professionals, especially leaders" writes Kaylyn Hipps in the June 2006 issue of *ARL*. (Hipps 1) Academic libraries need to better reflect the diverse community that they serve and broaden the number of perspectives represented in academic library decision-making, administration, and library services. Diversity enhances the quality of the education that students receive. (Winston 240) As academic librarians we are committed to the principles of equity and support diversity.

Representation

The Future of Human Resources in Canadian Libraries (also known as the 8Rs Report) reports that "visible minorities are not well represented in Canadian libraries, comprising only 7% of the professional librarian labour force (compared to 14% in Canada's entire labour force)." Aboriginals are not well represented in the Canadian labour force but "they are even less visible in the library community in all sectors and at all occupational levels." In Canada "the largest proportion of visible minorities are found in nonprofit and for-profit special libraries (11% and 10% respectively)." (8Rs Research Team 44) We need to take proactive steps to address the documented under representation of visible minority and aboriginal librarians employed in college and university libraries in Canada.

Goals and Objectives

Academic libraries need to have clear goals and objectives as to how they want to pursue diversity. They need to undertake initiatives and develop programs designed to increase diversity. These will include recruitment strategies and activities, increasing awareness of diversity, and retention of and support for under represented groups. As is articulated in the CAUT Policy Statement on Equity, "the commitment to equity begins with the acknowledgement of inequity and demands a proactive approach to redress the effects of systemic discrimination. In the university environment, systemic discrimination has manifested itself in barriers to access, employment, inclusion, respect and acceptance." (CAUT Policy Statement on Equity)

Recruitment

There is a need for compliance with the Federal Contractors Program where employers are required to certify in writing their commitment to employment equity. However these 'certification' agreements are unenforceable if breached. CAUT "believes that the employment equity obligations in the Federal Contractors Program must be enforceable" and has called on the Government of Canada "to amend the Employment Equity Act to ensure that the Federal

Contractors Program is capable of being enforced by a timely and public complaint process." (CAUT Policy Statement on the Federal Contractors Program)

A key element of recruitment strategies and activities are affirmative action plans. Affirmative action requires taking proactive steps to eliminate discrimination. Affirmative action plans outline hiring priorities, membership and procedures for Search Committees, guidelines regarding recruiting and interviewing, and information on support and retention. It should be noted that the 8Rs report points out that "the limited sector variation in visible minority and aboriginal representation does not correspond with whether or not institutions have a hiring policy designed to recruit professionals from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds… For example, compared to the total institutional sample where only 28% have such a policy, 77% of CARL libraries report having a diversity policy, but their visible minority representation does not significantly depart from other sectors. These results suggest not only that libraries without diversity policies should consider implementing such a policy, but that those with a policy should look closely at how it is being implemented." (8Rs Research Team 45)

All issues with respect to affirmative action need to be reexamined during every round of collective bargaining and language around affirmative action in collective agreements needs to continue to be strengthened. As is stated in the CAUT Policy Statement on Equity, "realizing equity is both an individual and a collective responsibility. Academic staff associations must take a leadership role in its realization by negotiating equity provisions in agreements respecting terms and conditions of employment." (CAUT Policy Statement on Equity)

Education

Activities that increase awareness of diversity include diversity sensitivity/training workshops for all staff, diversity climate surveys, exit interviews, and equity audits and collection of statistics. The need for current and detailed statistics is important in order to reveal the extent of the problem and affirmative action plans need to be revised to address any concerns.

Library associations in Canada at the national, provincial and local levels need to be lobbied to take up the issue of diversity, to provide leadership on equity issues as well as develop formal education and training programs. Unlike in the United States there are currently no caucuses or conferences (such as the ALA Office for Diversity and ALA Committee on Diversity or the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color) in Canada that specifically target and provide support to librarians from visible minority backgrounds which contributes to feelings of isolation on the part of members of these groups.

Retention and Support

Research shows that factors that contribute to a high attrition rate for minority faculty and librarians are isolation and lack of support. While much attention is paid to recruitment of diverse employees, little or no attention is paid to retention. Few libraries have formal programs for diverse employees. Linda Musser writes that "retention is an ongoing process requiring continuous and sustained effort rather than a periodic activity. It requires a sustained organizational commitment, not easily achieved by a task force or committee." (Musser 63) Retention strategies that can be used are mentoring, promotion opportunities, equitable salaries, support for research and a supportive environment.

With respect to mentoring there may be no natural match for a minority or aboriginal librarian and therefore the creation of a mentoring relationship may need some assistance on the part of the organization. There appears to be a lack of promotion opportunities for minority librarians. According to the 8Rs report "visible minorities are less likely to be working as senior administrators, and this is the case for all but the government sector." Data indicates that minority librarians seem to be unable to move beyond entry-level positions. (8Rs Research Team 44) Inequities in salaries need to be addressed. As is evident from data presented in Feminist and Equity Audits prepared by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences there is a significant wage gap between visible minority faculty when compared to all faculty at Canadian universities and that this is even larger for visible minority women. (Canadian Federation for the Social Sciences and Humanities) As is pointed out in "Closing the Equity Gap: A Portrait of Canada's University Teachers 1996-2001" visible minority university teachers earn well below the average salaries of all professors and are more likely to experience unemployment. (Canadian Association of University Teachers)

 With respect to scholarship, as is pointed out in the CAUT Policy Statement on Equity, "when assessing scholarship for career decisions, recognition must be given to different and diverse experiences of various marginalized groups. Diverse substantive contributions to knowledge must be welcomed in the university. Diversity demands representation of difference in terms of vision, values, cultural mores, methodologies and epistemologies in critical analysis." (CAUT Policy Statement on Equity) There is a need for the development of more formal support programs for minority and aboriginal librarians within organizations. And finally there must be support for diversity across the organization, from the level of peers and colleagues to the level of top and middle management.

Approved by the CAUT Librarians Committee, March 2008.

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