Successes and Struggles in Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Members

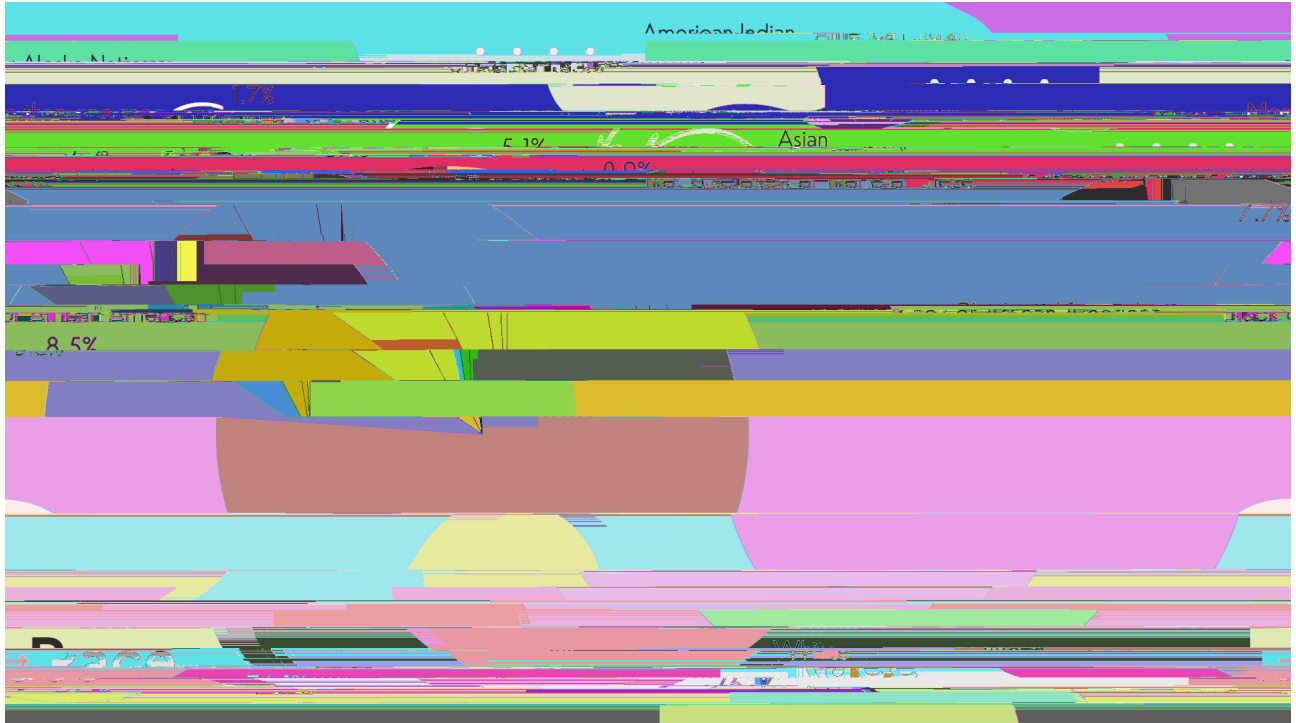1. My group has a plan with measurable goals to attract and retain diverse members with clear timelines.
2. My group has a plan for the recruitment and retention of diverse members.
3. My group has a plan to recruit diverse members, but it does not include retention.
4. No specific plan in place for recruitment or retention of diverse members.
5. We have no retention or recruitment plans for any type of member.
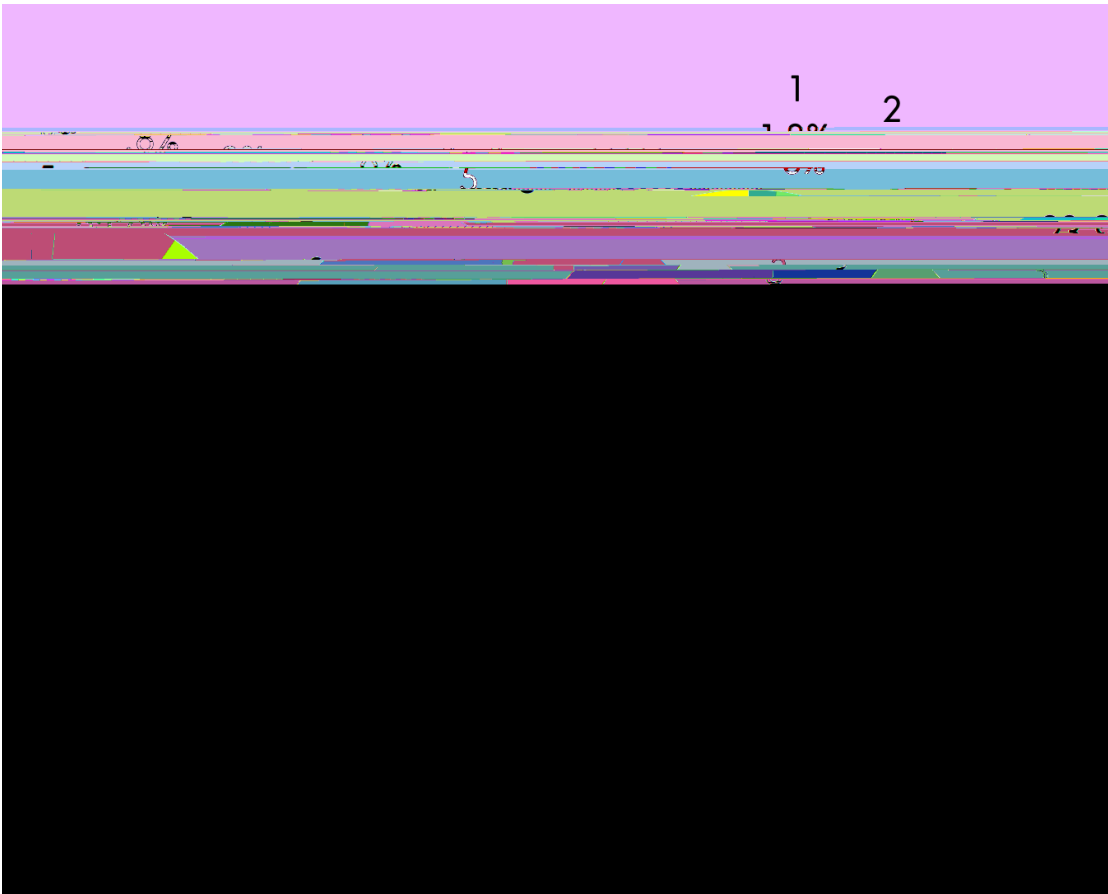
What We Learned

In this section we present different strategies, successes, and struggles we heard about during our project. While we attempt to distill some common themes for our readers, we need to again note that we spoke to many people representing all types of libraries and roles living through very specific and varied situations. From this we were reminded that libraries and the communities they serve are vastly different in details that may seem small but have large impacts. The information we provide may or may not resonate with you. It may be inspiring or it may bring attention to the reasons why some strategy or tip would never work for a given situation.

Repeatedly we heard from our participants that the opportunity alone to talk about their situation and what was working or not was helpful to them. Knowing this, we hope you find some small bit of information that is helpful in the following section, but we encourage you to find ways to connect with your library peers to have ongoing discussions around these topics in order to fine tune ideas and strategies to progress your specific goals while finding the support to help you continue. Our project team had little prior knowledge of the resources available from United for Libraries. We learned in our initial research they provide many of the resources study participants asked for. Based on our survey results, many participants were not members of United for Libraries so were likely unaware of those resources as we were. For this reason, we highly recommend a review of the benefits of United for Libraries membership to see if it is a good fit for you or your state.

Note: Below each theme are specific examples from respondents. Some are paraphrased for length or clarity, while those in quotes are direct wording from the speaker.

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"Questions are being asked and assumptions are being brought forward to spark the group to think a little more about who is not at the table and why, and what we're losing because of that."

"People are more open to sharing opinions and ideas. If your board is reflectivefle

Better relationship between lib6

Struggle is to be expected. You're not going to make change if everything is docile and quiet. Be mission driven. Think about your mission, vision, and what you stand for. We all need to row in the same direction. Remember what you stand for.

We have adopted the ALA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement, and have begun Board conversations about reaching out to other segments of our community. Attracting younger Board members is our first identified task.

Assessment of board makeup

If recruiting and retaining a diverse board is step 1, step 0 is having the board understand who they are and what they look like.

Anything we can do to say, "Here's how I define the impact you're making right now and here is what we need to build upon." Instead of just blanketing advertising that you want diverse applicants when you can't define what diversity means to you in the context of your board or what impact they're making and why they're even here.

We moved to looking at diversity of experiences: work experience, knowledge and skills. Scientists, homeschooling parents, retired elected officials. We evaluated and used a matrix to assess individual skills, strengths, and backgrounds.

Collaboration with outside partners

We do a lot of informal networking with subsidized housing residents and staff and constantly encourage interested residents to join our board.

Recruiting through a leadership training program run by the local chamber of commerce has helped us.

We are working with the Trustees and Friends division of the state library association to identify folks.

Rich orientation & training

We now have a more in-depth orientation process including a "board buddy" system. This allows the new board member to have a mentor and the opportunity to ask something outside of a meeting.

When you're bringing in someone new, you need to make sure they feel included. They need to know what's going on, know they can ask questions, and feel comfortable giving input even if it might be hard for people.

If they don't know enough about what they're doing, they won't be able to advocate and make those decisions.

Asking and inviting

Reaching out specifically to individuals from underrepresented racial, ethnic, age groups.

Some participants indicated they simply shifted who they were asking and this strategy was providing enough success for their group.

Collaboration with library

Our programming is aimed at engaging underrepresented neighbors so we can follow up with them when they participate in Friends sponsored activities.

Transparency about needs, motivations, expectations

Helping the board define new job descriptions and making it clear the different skills that are valued in this role. You don't have to name it as EDI, in fact ①

Don't be afraid to look at the policies around compensation, caps on mileage reimbursement, and childcare support to see if there's room for adjustment to allow for more equitable participation for board members.

Alternate meeting times to increase accessibility for retirees and working professionals.

Explore board matching opportunities with diverse groups.

Recruit with bilingual language skills and cultural understanding.

Encourage current members to be enthusiastic about using technology and social media. It casts a much broader net and allows more inclusivity when using more of the tools that society makes a part of their everyday activities.

I have found the Government Alliance for Racial Equity's Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries white paper to be a good starting point.
https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/advancing-racial-equity-in-public-libraries-case-studies-from-the-field/

Spend time building a better board dynamic and building relationships with the community.

Inclusion to me means you welcome people but once they're there they have a sense of belonging. Have those conversations about what behaviors may unintentionally exclude those in our community?

Highlighted successes and comments identified in responses.

Recruitment and retention of people who more fully reflect our community is a big priority for us. We can't assume it will happen on its own and we have to keep working at it; otherwise, when the long serving members move on there may be nobody to replace us!

When the organization was fundraising for a little electric vehicle with pop up sides for outreach, it invited interest from younger members, particularly those interested in environmental sustainability. We are now interested in how to maintain this kind of interest and use it to support the library overall.

The fine free conversation that boards are often having has been beneficial for libraries because it is a concrete example of what equity looks like across our community and a concrete way to take action.

We noticed a lot of people of color use the business center at the library. They would make great board members, so we use the business librarian to help recruit and advertise to this group.

The library staff got together and encouraged the board to create an EDI statement with the hope of better recruitment for library positions. The staff even wrote a statement for approval but the board felt it was too controversial given the conservative nature of the town. They were open to additional drafts and were clear that diversity and inclusion are

One participant noted how the lack of perspective of community needs can cause ripple and have significant impacts.

They are somewhat isolated and don't look outwards for new ideas or new areas of growth.

We've been hit hard by the pandemic and are focused on rebuilding our general memberships first.

Other noted struggles we identified are detailed here.

Lack of term limits for board members are making it harder to invite new participation.

Aligning a program or strategy with ALA invites negative attention because of our community's perception of ALA as a biased, liberal organization.

Difficulty in gaining consistent volunteer participation in a community that is

libraries. A specified request

Resources discovered in the process

Bertinelli, L., Jarvis, M., Kosinski, K., Wilson, T., & Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations. (2020). *All ages welcome: Recruiting and retaining younger generations for library boards, friends groups, and foundations*. American Library Association.

    This resource from United for Libraries examines how millennials and other younger generations are often underrepresented in Library boards, Friend groups, and Foundations. An insightful toolkit that aids in mastering the "ABC's of Recruitment and Retention" when it comes to engaging Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z/post-Millennials.

Reed, S., & United for Libraries. (2021, August) *Libraries*

Leadership brief: Leadership roles for trustees. (n.d.). Urban Libraries Council.
https://www.urbanlâ Counci

About the authors

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is the Materials Manager of San Francisco Public Library's Main Art & Music / Business & Technology Department. He currently facilitates a number of staff-wide trainings such as Patron Code of Conduct and NARCAN. He also volunteers providing reference services through SFPL's Jail and Reentry Services. When not in library land, he rides bikes, listens to records, and eats burritos.

is the Senior Reference Librarian at the Arkansas State Library. She loves to help people discover new resources and prepare for whatever task is before them. Her work has always been framed by how we impact our community in life and work. When not at the library, she enjoys casual outdoor excursions, staring at plants, and time with her partner, two children, and the most beautiful cat you have ever seen.

is the Senior Librarian at the Northridge Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library System. Before that, she was the adult librarian at the Studio City Branch. She came to the library world from the entertainment industry, and she is passionate about programming, outreach, and creating welcoming libraries for the entire community. She lives in Los Angeles with the two most delightful cats you've ever met.

Works Cited

Bertinelli, L., Jarvis, M., Kosinski, K., & Wilson, T. (2020). *All ages welcome.* United for Libraries, American Library Association.

Bertinelli, L., Jarvis, M., Kosinski, K., & Wilson, T. (2020, February 19). *Friends and trustees under 40: Recruit them, retain them, engage them* [Webinar]. ALA Learning. https://elearning.ala. g .Hli, L., Ja

Appendix

United for Libraries Questionnaire on Building and Sustaining Diverse Boards & Memberships

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey, which is part of a 2022 ALA Emerging Leaders Group Project.
https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/leadership/emergingleaders.

Our ultimate goal is to help United for Libraries provide information and resources that will support Library Directors, Boards, Foundations, and Friends Groups in building and sustaining diverse boards & memberships.

We will be reviewing the responses to recruit for further involvement, such as participation in focus groups or one-on-one interviews, so please let us know if you are interested. Expressing interest in further involvement does not guarantee you will be contacted. We are interested in your answers even if you do not identify yourself or you do not want to participate in future conversations.

Responses to this survey and any future data collection will be anonymized in our final reports unless you give us permission for direct attribution.

Thank you so much for your participation! If you have any questions, please contact united@ala.org.

1. What is your primary role?
   - Library Director/Librarian/Staff
   - Board of Trustees - Elected member
   - Board of Trustees - Appointed member
   - Friends of Library Board Member/Staff
   - Friends of Library General Member
   - Library Foundation Board Member
   - Library Foundation Staff Member
   - State Library
   - Consultant
   - Library Vendor/Corporate Partner
   - Library Association
   - Community member
   - Other

Focus Group and Interview Questions

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this focus group, which is part of a 2022 ALA Emerging Leaders Group Project.

Our ultimate goal is to help United for Libraries provide information and resources that will support Library Directors, Boards, Foundations, and Friends Groups in building and sustaining diverse boards & memberships. We do not yet know what our final product will look like, but we are particularly interested in case studies, stories, and examples that provide insights into how equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts can work in these groups. We welcome stories of success and failure, since as much can be learned from what goes right as from what can go wrong.

Any information you provide today, including the recording of this session (If given permission) will be shared only among our team, which includes our four members, two mentors, and Jillian Wentworth, Manager of Marketing & Membership from United for Libraries. Your responses and

11. Given that it is not oft] ive