

Minority Groups in Libraries

The Statistics Canada 2001 Census data confirms the trend to an increasingly diverse population. 43% of Toronto's population are visible minorities and 49% were born outside of Canada. The advantages of having a library workforce that is reflective of the community served is widely accepted, but presents particular challenges for the library profession as a result of the low representation of minority groups in LIS programs and in the field.

- The total number of ALA accredited MIS degrees awarded in 1998-99 was 5,046. The ethnic origin of the graduates is as follows: 20 First Nation; 143 Asian or Pacific Islander; 201 Black; 144 Hispanic; 3,964 White; and 98 International students. Minority groups represent a total of 13% of all those awarded MIS degrees from ALA accredited LIS schools. Similar statistics are not available for Canadian graduates.
- ALA has a scholarship program, the Spectrum Initiatives, for minority groups. No similar scholarship program exists in Canada.
- Of the 2000 MIS graduates who found full time permanent jobs in the year 2000, 11.5 % identified themselves as members of a minority group. A point of some significance is that minority graduates of ALA-accredited LIS schools posted an 11.1 % salary gain in 2000. This increase may be attributable to a greater percentage of placements in academic and special libraries, which continue to provide the highest average salaries for minority graduates.^{xx}
- While the TPL Board adopted a new Employment Equity Policy in February 2002, implementation has been on hold, since resources required to proceed have not yet received budget approval. The policy recommends conducting a voluntary employment equity survey of both the existing employee workforce and applicants. It also requires the establishment and maintenance of a confidential employment equity database. The survey and the database are key components in measuring demographic representation of minority groups in the workforce.