

# Attainment of Academic Library Leadership by Asian Americans: Challenges and Development

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## **Purpose of the Study**

Studies on Asian American librarians have pointed out that Asian Americans are disproportionately underrepresented in library leadership positions.<sup>1</sup> The problem, however, is that none of these studies provides an in-depth analysis of Asian Americans in academic library leadership positions. This paper concerns the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in leadership positions (dean/director, associate dean/director, and assistant dean/director) in American academic libraries. Specifically, it explores (1) the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in academic leadership positions, (2) the strategies that these individuals employed in order to gain academic library leadership positions, (3) the leadership attributes that aspiring Asian American academic leaders need to develop in order to attain academic library leadership positions, and (4) the roles that library organizations and higher education institutions can play in advancing Asian Americans' academic library leadership.

## **Literature Review**

The literature on Asian American library leadership is scarce. In fact, after conducting numerous literature searches, I found only one doctoral dissertation and two articles that deal with some aspects of Asian American library leadership. The first work under review is a doctoral dissertation. In that dissertation, Jian-zhong "Joe" Zhou stated that "there has been no previous study on lack of AAPI (Asian

American/Pacific Island) librarian leadership positions."<sup>2</sup> Zhou's study examined the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in library leadership positions in U.S. academic, public and research libraries. The study consisted of two parts: Part I surveyed the members of the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA). Part II surveyed Asian American librarians in leadership positions. Eight participants participated in Part II of the study, three of whom are academic library chiefs. Zhou found that "although AAPI librarians are more educated than general credentialed librarians, and have published more, with similar years of experience, their probability to be represented at the top leadership level is one third of Whites and one half of Blacks."<sup>3</sup> The major contributing factors to this phenomenon include cultural backgrounds, racism, lack of unity among Asian librarian organizations, and lack of mentoring and networking opportunities. Zhou was particularly concerned with the lack of unity among Asian American librarian organizations. He stated that "the lack of unity weakens the political power and dampens the voice of AAPI librarians."<sup>4</sup> Zhou also found that "the three current AAPI ARL chief librarians are not actively involved in either CALA or APALA."<sup>5</sup> To increase the number of Asian Americans in library leadership positions, Zhou suggested that Asian American librarians create one library association representing all Asian American librarians; establish an outreach and advocacy committee; create a list of AAPI chief librarians; develop leadership development programs focusing on

developing the soft skills needed for strong leaders; support higher education bills and policies; and attain additional advanced degrees.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to Zhou's work, there are two articles on Chinese American librarians. The first, written by Wendy Tan, examined the Chinese American library leadership. Tan asserted that Chinese American librarians have been denied library leadership opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, she did not place all the blame on external factors. In fact, she attributed this phenomenon to many aspects of Chinese culture. Tan wrote, "Traditionally, Chinese culture tends to nurture followers not leaders, and to a great extent molds Chinese people's personalities."<sup>8</sup> To alter this situation, Tan suggested that Chinese Americans adopt American leadership practices.<sup>9</sup>

The other work is a two-part article, written by Lian Ruan and Jian Anna Xiong, concerning work experience, managerial and leadership positions, job satisfaction, challenges, etc., of the members of CALA. In the area of library leadership, Ruan and Xiong found that "none of the respondents manage over one hundred people. This means that Chinese American librarians have not reached high ranking managerial positions to oversee a large group of employees."<sup>10</sup> They attributed this situation to the following factors:

To sum up, the survey showed that Chinese American librarians tend to settle down at a library soon after graduation... It seems that having a stable job is most important to the majority of Chinese American librarians. They tend to feel satisfied and continue to be good workers and meet libraries' requirements without asking for reward. They will give a little effort to seeking job changes internally and externally, or asking for a change in job titles due to increased responsibilities, or talking to supervisors about career advancement, or seeking mentors.<sup>11</sup>

To become library leaders, Chinese Americans, the authors suggested, must adjust their traditional at-

titudes. At the same time, they must also make themselves "more outgoing, more open and direct about opinions, and more participatory by offering ideas."<sup>12</sup>

The literature on Asian American academic library leadership is indeed scarce. Not a single study has been devoted to the topic. The work conducted by Zhou was limited with regard to Asian American academic library leadership because only a very small number of Asian American academic library leaders participated in the study. The other works focused on Chinese Americans. Asian American academic librarians who come from other parts of Asia, such as South and Southeast Asia, and Asian-born American librarians have not been adequately examined.

## Research Questions

What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in academic library leadership positions?

1. What strategies did the participants employ to attain academic library leadership positions?
2. What are the essential academic library administrative and leadership skills that aspiring Asian American academic librarians need to develop in order to attain academic library leadership positions?
3. What roles can library organizations and higher education institutions play to advance Asian Americans' academic library leadership?

## Methodology and Research Design

To answer the proposed research questions, I developed a survey to gather information from Asian American academic library leaders pertaining to the obstacles they faced, the strategies they employed in the pursuit of their library leadership career, the library leadership skills that aspiring Asian American academic library leaders need to develop, and what roles library organizations and higher education institutions can play to advance Asian American academic library leadership. The study population was

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composed of Asian Americans who have held or who currently hold library leadership positions in American academic libraries. The terms Asian American (AA), Asian Pacific American (APA) or Asian, Pacific Islander American (APIA), which are used interchangeably in this study, includes native-born Asian Americans and immigrants coming from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. The survey, approved by the Institutional Review Board of Wilmington University, contained 17 questions. To garner greater participation, the survey was designed to allow the participants to complete it either (a) by filling out the web-based survey, or (b) through a face-to-face interview.

To recruit participants, I sent the letter of invitation to the potential participants via electronic mail. The invitation included (a) a description of the purpose and parameter of the study; (b) the URL to the survey; and (c) the Informed Consent Form. If the participants agreed to participate in the survey, the participants had to contact me to obtain the password to the survey. Before completing the survey, the participants had to read and accept the Informed Consent Form by clicking the “accept” button. The survey was designed in such a way that if the participants failed to “accept” the Informed Consent Form, they would not gain access to the survey.

Twelve Asian American academic library leaders, five women and seven men, participated in this study. The participants included three retired deans/directors/university librarians; seven directors/deans/university librarians, one associate dean/associate director/associate university librarian, and one assistant dean/assistant director/assistant university librarian (interim). The participants represented a wide spectrum of higher education institutions, including community colleges, Ivy League institutions, and small as well as large private and public universities. Geographically, the participants represented the following regions of the country: the Northeast (4), the Middle Atlantic (1), the Southeast (2), the greater Midwest (3), and the West (2).

## Results and Analysis

### *Research Question 1*

What factors contribute to the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in academic library leadership positions?

#### *Racial Barriers*

The linkage between racial barriers and leadership advancement of minorities, including Asian Americans in all fields, is well-documented.<sup>13</sup> E. J. Josey and Ismail Abdullahi wrote:

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 African Americans and other minority groups have slowly progressed beyond the discriminatory barriers. It is true that we rarely observe overt discrimination in this country. However, there is subtle discrimination, and there are covert sophisticated forms of racism which arise, as mean-spirited and destructive as the overt form. Subtle discrimination institutionalizes discriminatory practices within the organization's policies and structures, even as those policies seem to emphasize equal treatment with both formal and informal social systems of the organizations. In many instances, the minorities who work in the organizations are still considered to be marginal and are not truly welcome into the inner circle of decision-making.<sup>14</sup>

Writing on library leadership among Chinese Americans, Wendy Tan wrote:

One aspect of Chinese American librarianship that has not been discussed, but in some respects is paramount, is the rare presence of leadership. The notion that the United States is a place of equal opportunity to all citizens is well supported by historical documents. Nevertheless, when it comes to career opportunities and job markets, many minorities cannot help but wonder why there seem to be so many inequalities.<sup>15</sup>

The majority of the participants in this study believed that racial barriers have been a major factor in preventing Asian Americans from attaining leadership positions in academic libraries. “Being a person of color in the United States,” as one participant stated, “is definitely a barrier.” Another participant stated:

Besides the language barrier, many of us also experienced racial discrimination in varying degrees and forms. In the 1960s, the situation was much worse. To be a library administrator, especially in the higher positions, Asian Americans face many obstacles, including the so-called ‘Glass Ceiling’ along with others.

Some participants felt that racial barriers continue to exist even today. One participant stated:

Racial barriers and discrimination are common in academic libraries, which make it very difficult to become library administrators ... Many teaching departments in universities and colleges all over the country have selected Asians as chairs and deans, and a few Asians have become presidents of academic institutions. There are only a few Asian Americans who have succeeded to become library administrators.

It is worthwhile to note, however, that not all participants in this study experienced racial discrimination. In fact, a very small number of the participants believed that being a minority is an advantage because many higher education institutions have been attempting to increase the representation of minorities in leadership roles at their institutions.

### *Lack of Leadership Qualities*

According to scholars, there is a perception that Asian Americans do not possess leadership skills.<sup>16</sup> In fact, studies of Americans’ perception of Asian American leadership qualities have consistently shown that Asian Americans lack leadership skills. This perception, unfortunately, has been one of the most dam-

aging factors concerning the leadership advancement of Asian Americans. For example, according to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, “Co-workers do not consider Asian Americans to be threats to their jobs, but neither do they consider them to be tough enough to be groomed for leadership.”<sup>17</sup> Concerning this topic, one participant stated:

There is still discrimination in libraries, albeit more subtle than overt. I’ve experienced it often, especially in regard to Asian American women not being viewed as leadership materials ... So my belief is that I have to work twice or three times as hard as some others have to obtain the same visibility in libraries. For this reason, too, I earned my Ph.D., because I was determined to overcome ANY obstacle standing in my way for more advancement.

Similarly, another participant mentioned, “I have had hard times getting interviews for administrative positions.” Despite Asian Americans’ contributions in many areas, from science to medicine to higher education, the perception that Asian Americans do not possess leadership qualities continues to exist in the minds of many American corporate and higher education leaders.

### *Asian American Cultural Values*

While racism, stereotypes, etc., play a crucial role in impeding the leadership advancement of Asian American academic librarians, other factors contribute to this phenomenon as well. Interestingly, among these are Asian American cultural values. It is not surprising because studies have shown that in many respects, Asian American cultural values play a major role in impeding the leadership advancement of Asian Americans.<sup>18</sup> In this study, some participants believed that several Asian American cultural values (e.g., respect for authority, aversion to conflict and competition, not losing face, etc.) may have impeded the leadership progress of many Asian Americans. According to one participant, “They are a double-edge

sword. While our tendency to be respectful earns us the reputation of being ‘nice,’ the same trait could be viewed as being weak and indecisive.” Another participant stated:

Due to their cultural background, Asian Americans in general (first-generation immigrants in particular) are reserved by nature. For example, traditionally, Chinese Americans value harmony and adhere to the doctrine of the “mean.” Since they feel that their hard work speaks for itself, they often hesitate to take credits and/or to boast their achievements. That puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to promotion, merit increases, and applying for upper-level positions with administrative authority.

Some of the participants, however, stated that Asian American cultures play less of a role in inhibiting their career advancement in library leadership. According to one participant, “Certainly, my cultural heritage and a Chinese-American background were essential ... However, I do not believe that cultural values played a major role to enhance or impede my progression.” Similarly, according to another participant, “I do not believe I carry any specific Asian American cultural values that have impeded my leadership progression.”

### *Undervalued Occupation*

The library profession has been one of the lowest paid and least prestigious professions in the United States.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, over the decades the library profession has not been able to attract some of the best and the brightest people into the profession. Asian Americans, like their native-born American counterparts, have shied away from the library profession. In fact, recent data showed that Asian Americans favor the disciplines or professions that bring them the greatest financial rewards and prestige. Asian American cultural values place an enormous emphasis on occupational prestige because selecting a prestigious profession brings honor and prestige to the family. In

many cases, Asian American parents exert a great deal of pressure on their children to pursue prestigious and high-paying professions. One participant stated:

I mentioned the possibility that Asian American cultural values may not consider library positions as a primary career path. In my own case, family members questioned my choice, especially given my engineering degrees and education... It is worth noting that I was born in Asia, I left when I was 4 years old, and grew up in Western cultures.

Furthermore, it is not only that the library profession has had difficulty in attracting the best and brightest Asian Americans into the profession, but it also has had difficulty in attracting Asian Americans to senior management positions. One participant noted that there are “not enough Asian American librarians interested in administrative positions.”

### *Ethnic Career Traps*

Until recently, the majority of Asian American librarians have worked mostly in America’s Asian subject libraries. They were recruited to work in these libraries because of their Asian language skills. While many of these Asian American librarians have made significant contributions to their institutions and the library profession, their leadership career advancement has been severely impeded because working in these areas exposed Asian American academic librarians to limited leadership experiences. One participant stated:

Most of my experience with Asian Americans working in the academic and research library field, with rare exception, is that their special language abilities attracted them to the library profession. Unfortunately, working in this area does not necessarily align with promotions to administrative positions. Working in an East Asian library at a university will not provide exposure to supervision, financial management, systems technology, or other managerial experience

that would provide opportunities in leadership advancement.... Perhaps the very language facility that brought Asian Americans into library work is also a barrier to advancement.

In addition, there have been a good number of Asian American technical services librarians. They have also faced limited opportunities for leadership advancement. One participant stated:

Historically, most Asian American librarians were female and a majority of them worked in technical services. The nature of one's job is a determinant in his/her career development. Thus, while many of them were promoted to line-management positions because of their technical expertise, they usually have had fewer opportunities (as compared to their colleagues in public services) to gain administrative experience.

Working in Asian subject libraries and in the library technical services areas, which are often referred to as "ethnic career traps," has severely limited the opportunities for leadership advancement for many Asian American academic librarians.

## **Research Question 2**

What strategies did the participant employ to attain academic library leadership positions?

### **Motivation**

Given these challenges, what strategies did the participants employ to attain academic library leadership positions? One of the most recurring themes in responding to this question is the desire to make a positive impact on people's lives. One participant stated:

No, I did not plan on becoming an administrative leader, but wanted to remain in levels that required more hands-on librarian work. My epiphany to aspire to higher levels came later, when I had the unfortunate experience of re-

porting to a person who happened to be White and male and who was less qualified than I was to be a library leader. This occurred at a mid-career point about five years ago, and inspired me to step up to the plate and try to attain these leadership positions myself, rather than be at the mercy of others. I quickly realized that senior-level administrative positions offer many opportunities to affect even more lives in a positive way, if done well.

The desire to improve the organizations is another critical factor in their pursuit of academic library leadership. One participant stated:

I've been interested in continuous improvement. I believe that innovation and organizational change are needed for academic libraries to position for the future. The culture of status quo that generally exists in libraries is a barrier to organizational growth. I wanted to be in a leadership position so I could help revitalize the organizational structure, streamline operations, enhance user services, and align library goals with the college's mission and vision.

In the end, it is the gratification that comes from successfully meeting these challenges that made their efforts worthwhile, as one participant stated in the excerpt below:

It's very hard work, considering the tremendous odds against you, stereotypes, budget woes and overall perception of the library work and Asians. However, it's gratifying to know at the end of the day that you are making a difference to people's lives, to the community and to the institute you serve.

### **Mentor Support**

In this study, several participants revealed that mentors played a pivotal role in their career. One participant stated:

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Right from the start, I was encouraged by mentors, including professors, while I was in library school. I also sought out mentors for their advice on careers ... (name omitted) was very helpful in encouraging me to pursue a library administration career.

Another participant elaborated on the importance of encouragement by mentors:

I did not know if I was good enough for administrative positions when I was at a LIS program. It happened by chance in a late time when I started thinking about moving up the professional ladder ... Several mentors who were library directors/deans encouraged me to pursue the direction. These mentors include (name omitted), former dean at (institution omitted) and (name omitted), former dean at (institution omitted).

Furthermore, mentorship provides mentees with library experience and leadership opportunities. One participant stated:

What really made a difference for me was the help of a couple of powerful library mentors and sponsors who gave me more high-level leadership opportunities. For example, I was given the chance to be promoted internally into an Associate Dean level role, and this gave me the added experience of beginning to have tenure-stream faculty report to me. This role also helped me join the senior administrative table, where broad-scale planning and budgeting were being accomplished.

It has been suggested that mentors from the same race and ethnicity might form a closer mentor-mentee relationship. However, as this study has shown, many of the participants were successfully mentored by people of different genders and other races, including African Americans.

### *Practical Library Experience*

Another important factor was the practical library leadership experience they acquired over the years. One participant stated:

I did not plan to be a library administrator. My first position was in cataloging. It was my keen interest in professional development that led me to learn various library functions and to pursue formal and informal education in library and other fields. Over the years, I've served in nearly all positions in our library and gained managerial experience along the way. Fortunately, the dean position allowed me to apply what I had learned to enhance library services for the academic community.

Another participant discussed different aspects in gaining library leadership experiences. The participant stated, "I learned the path through practical work at several academic libraries ... I went through the process of leading small departments to large departments and finally to the dean's position." Many of the participants were also willing to work their way up from the bottom to the top of the organization. One participant stated:

We need to acquire as much as possible appropriate library experience from the bottom up. In my own case, I worked up from being a student assistant, to a librarian trainee, assistant department head, department head, special collection librarian, head of technical services, assistant head librarian, head librarian, director of a library and information center, associate library director, library dean, etc. In every position that I held, I tried my best to gain new knowledge and skills as well as the abilities in library administration which were necessary to move upward.

The same participant stated that "my advanced education (M.Ed., M.L.S., and Ph.D.) combined with my actual library work in key administrative positions

during my first 10 years of library work were the most important leadership development programs that I had in my early library career.”

### *Professional Activities*

Anderson, in a study of the UCLA Senior Fellows Program, found that “senior fellows totaled more than twice as many professional activities as the ACRL matched group of 50, and nearly three times as many as the ACRL control group of 152.”<sup>20</sup> The same study also found that the senior fellows are two or three times more active at the top levels of leadership.<sup>21</sup> The participants in this study have also been active in professional organizations. One participant stated:

I was very active at a point in my career, never missing an opportunity to serve in LLAMA, Council, etc. I served on a number of NISO and ISO committees on library statistics and measurement. I was also active in IFLA, especially in the area of library statistics. Serving as the Director of the National Agricultural Library, I was very involved with national and international agricultural library organizations (USAIN, AgNIC), etc.

The participants valued their service to the profession. They believed that it provided them the opportunities to network, to learn leadership skills, to contribute, and to influence professional organizations. One participant stated:

Holding leadership roles in professional associations is one of the most important elements in the development of my library career. I was very active in ALA, ACRL, IFLA, ARL, etc., and held various key positions. The effect of networking with other library leaders at the state, national, and international levels was of great importance in my library career.

Furthermore, the participants have also been active in the area of service at their institutions. On

participant stated, “I was very active also in holding leadership positions in committees and task forces at several universities where I worked.”

### *Professional Development*

The master’s degree in library and information science is ill-equipped to prepare for leadership and management positions. According to one participant, “My library science training was insufficient for administration.” As a result, many of the participants took part in professional development activities offered by library and other professional organizations, including leadership development programs offered by the ALA Emerging Leaders, the ALA Spectrum Scholar Leadership Institutes, and the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute for Academic Libraries, the Frye Leadership Institute, the Simmons MLIP Program, ARL Visiting Program Officer, and ARL RLLF. Five of the participants attended the Frye Leadership Institute, one of the major library leadership development programs in the country. In addition, they also attained advanced degrees. In fact, seven of the twelve participants hold doctorate degrees. The participants believed that participation in leadership development programs and attaining advanced degrees, especially doctoral degrees, have not only enhanced their leadership and management skills, but also helped them attain library leadership positions.

## **Implications**

### *Research Question 3*

What are the essential academic library administrative and leadership skills that aspiring Asian American academic librarians need to develop in order to attain academic library leadership positions?

### *Find Mentors*

Many Asian Americans, including people in leadership positions, often do not seek mentors. According to data from the American Council on Education, only 15 percent of Asian American chief academic officers have participated in leadership development programs, compared with 57 percent of African



Americans and 30 percent of Hispanics.<sup>22</sup> Aspiring Asian American academic library leaders need to find mentors as early as possible in their careers. Studies have suggested that mentors from the same race seem to be more beneficial than mentors from different races. However, mentors do not have to be the same race or gender. One participant pointed out that “most of my role models or mentors have been White, unfortunately, because I have not known enough Asian American women in leadership positions.” If, for some reason, aspiring Asian American academic librarians are unable to find mentors, they can model their library leadership careers after important academic library leaders, including non-Asian Americans. For example, according to one participant, “He does not know it, but (name omitted) has been one of my role models.”

### ***Broaden Library Experience***

Library work is segmented or compartmentalized. Each area, e.g., reference service, access service, technical service, etc., tends to work in isolation. Particularly, Asian American librarians who work in Asian libraries are even more isolated. And because of the organizational nature and subject specialty, they are not exposed to a wide range of library experiences. It is important that new Asian American academic librarians, especially those who aspire to become academic library leaders, seek opportunities to master every aspect of library operations. In addition, in order to gain a wide range of library experience, the participants in this study further suggested that aspiring Asian American academic library leaders change jobs often, about three to five years, even if it requires relocating their families.

### ***Improve Communication Skills***

When asked what some of the most critical barriers facing Asian Americans in attaining the highest levels of library leadership are, one of the participants responded “communication skills, communication skills, communication skills!” More specifically, “English,” as another participant recounted, “was the

single most important barrier for me.” The participants urged aspiring Asian American library leaders to improve their oral and written English as well as their listening skills. In particular, they pointed out the need to develop excellent presentation skills because library leaders, like leaders in many fields, are required or invited to make presentations to various constituencies. They also pointed out that aspiring Asian American academic leaders need to develop or improve their academic writing skills because many academic library leaders have to conduct research and publish in scholarly publications, in many cases, as part of their responsibilities.

### ***Get Involved in Professional Activities***

There is a strong linkage between professional activities and leadership advancement because serving in professional and civic organizations provides participants with opportunities to develop leadership skills, including team work, organizational skills, communication skills, etc. It also provides members with opportunities to build networks, to become familiar with contemporary issues facing their profession, and to develop other expertise. The participants have been very active in professional activities. They believed that being active in professional organizations have strengthened their leadership abilities and opportunities. Aspiring Asian American academic library leaders should seek committee membership in local, state, regional, national, and international library organizations. Similarly, serving on library and university committees is also important.

### ***Seek Professional Development Opportunities***

The number of Asian American faculty and professional staff in higher education has increased over the last two decades. However, the number of Asian Americans participating in leadership development programs is low.<sup>23</sup> What is surprising, however, is that the majority of the participants in this study have participated in a wide range of library leadership development programs. In fact, many of the participants have attended not only leadership development pro-

grams offered at their own institutions but also those offered by library organizations such as ALA, ACRL, ARL, LLAMA, and the Change Institute. The participants encouraged aspiring Asian American academic library leaders to attend such development programs. In addition, the participants suggested that aspiring leaders should also earn additional advanced degrees, such as an M.B.A. or a doctoral degree.

#### **Question 4**

What roles can library organizations and higher education institutions play to advance Asian American academic librarians' leadership opportunities?

#### **Library Organizations**

The participants believed that library organizations provide sufficient leadership development programs. One participant stated, "In my view, most of these library associations have done their best in the area of professional development for Asian American librarians." Indeed, library organizations have established many leadership development programs. However, the existing library leadership development programs have a couple of shortcomings. First, except for the ARL Leadership & Career Development Program, these programs are designed for people who have already been in high-level leadership positions. As noted, most Asian American academic librarians are in lower- and mid-level leadership positions. They do not meet the qualification requirements to participate in these leadership development programs. One participant stated the importance of creating leadership development programs tailored to the needs of mid-level Asian American library leaders as follows:

Library associations, e.g., ALA, ACRL, APALA, and CALA, should provide training programs targeting Asian American librarians at mid-level library management positions. For some reason, many Asian American librarians at mid-level library management positions do not get promoted into senior-level library management positions.

Furthermore, the participants suggested that an Asian American cultural component should be added to these programs. One participant stated, "... to be more helpful to future Asian American library leaders, a component that addresses the cultural characteristics of Asian Americans and the special challenges they face should be added." Lastly, the programs' fees are another issue. One participant stated, "Attendance of ARL and ACRL programs is costly. Without institutional support, not all Asian Americans could afford to pay for travel and registration." To increase the participation of Asian Americans in these programs, library organizations should offer scholarships to well-qualified Asian American academic librarians.

Over the past decade, Asian American librarian associations, such as APALA and CALA, have offered leadership development programs for Asian Americans. However, they are very limited in scope; they tend to focus on management fundamentals. To be more effective, the scope and breadth of these programs should be greatly broadened. Furthermore, given the special cultural challenges Asian Americans face, greater emphasis should be given to Asian American cultural characteristics. Other organizations, such as the Center for Asian Pacific American Women and Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc., have offered leadership development programs tailored to the needs of Asian American women, Asian American business executives, etc. Like these organizations, Asian American librarian associations should develop leadership development programs tailored to the needs of Asian Americans in the library profession, including academic libraries.

#### **Higher Education Institutions**

Higher education institutions can also play a major role in the development of Asian American academic library leaders. First, they must reexamine recruitment policies toward Asian Americans. Currently, many higher education institutions no longer consider Asian Americans as an underrepresented group because Asian Americans have been portrayed in the popular media as a "model minority," owing to the

economic and educational successes of some Asian American groups. As a result, Asian Americans have been excluded from policies designed to help underrepresented groups. It is true that some small groups of Asian Americans are successful educationally and economically. However, a great number of Asian Americans live in poverty.

Second, in attempting to increase minority representation in leadership positions, higher education institutions tend to focus mostly on minority recruitment. It is a sound policy. The problem, however, is that concentrating on the recruitment of underrepresented leaders discourages institutions from developing minority leaders. No institutions would put resources into developing minority leaders when they know that sooner or later the leaders they developed will be recruited by other institutions. Instead, higher education institutions should allocate resources to establishing leadership development programs for underrepresented groups, including Asian Americans.

Lastly, in recent years a small number of higher education institutions have established in-house leadership development programs (e.g., Penn State's Administrative Fellows Program, Emory's Academic Leadership Program, and Stanford's Faculty Fellows Leadership Program). These programs are designed to develop future leaders for their institutions. The problem, however, is that these leadership development programs are designed to develop future department heads, deans, etc. Some of these leadership development programs admit librarians, but usually they do not. These leadership development programs should be more inclusive by accepting librarians, especially librarians of color. In addition, higher education institutions should devote resources not only to establishing leadership development programs but also to supporting minority librarians, including Asian Americans, to attend leadership development programs outside their institutions.

## Conclusion

Unquestionably, Asian American academic librarians have faced and continue to face many barriers,

whether it is racism, sexism, the glass ceiling, stereotypes, or conflicting cultural values, in attaining leadership positions. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that these obstacles will be removed soon, because they are so complex. This study is far from comprehensive. It is hoped, however, that the information provided, which was furnished by pioneers in Asian American academic library leadership, will inspire other Asian American academic librarians to seek library leadership positions. In recent years, a significant number of these pioneers have retired or are in the process of retiring. Hence, there will be a void in Asian American academic library leadership if the next generation of Asian American academic library leaders is nowhere to be found.

## Notes

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