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Ph.D. Holders in the Academic Library: The CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

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Introduction

Academic libraries are feeling the effects of the rapid transition prompted primarily by advances in digital technology, by shifts in campus budget priorities, and by new modes of scholarship and teaching. In redefining the scope of their responsibilities, academic libraries have found themselves needing to create and fill positions that, until very recently, few envisioned the need to create. Administrators are faced with the question of how staffing and recruitment practices will need to change in order to keep up with and direct the transition rather than be pulled along by it. Librarians and other library staff are left wondering how their own positions will evolve and whether vacant positions in their departments will be filled at all.

One recent attempt to grapple with these issues regarding academic library staffing and recruitment has been the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, now entering its fifth year. This program aims to bring newly-minted Ph.D. holders in the humanities into academic libraries with the goal of producing “a new kind of scholarly information professional.”¹ The CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program grew from a seed planted in late 2002 by Deanna Marcum, then President of CLIR. In January 2003, she convened a group of colleagues with whom she had collaborated in the past, individuals likely to be interested in the issue of cultivating leadership in academic libraries. The purpose of this meeting was to brainstorm ideas for a new CLIR program to tackle this issue of leadership. Although the desire to cultivate new kinds of leaders, along with some concerns about the relevancy of library school curricula, prompted this endeavor, the discussion became more focused on collaboration between the scholarly world and the library world. What resulted from this meeting, then, was a vision for a postdoctoral fellowship program to bring humanities Ph.D.s

into academic libraries. In February 2003, an announcement was issued to potential host institutions, making them aware of this upcoming opportunity.²

CLIR issued a press release announcing the postdoctoral fellowship program and calling for applicants in November 2003.³ The first cohort of CLIR Fellows joined their host institutions in late summer and early fall of 2004. Host institutions included Princeton University, North Carolina State University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Southern California, Lehigh University, Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, University of Alabama, University of Virginia, and Bryn Mawr College. Since that first year, eight other institutions have joined, including University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Appalachian College Association, University of Minnesota, Pepperdine University, the Claremont University Consortium, Rutgers University, and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Not all of these institutions have continued to host Fellows each year; to date, there have been as few as four and as many as ten institutions hosting first-year Fellows in a given year.

In this program, host institutions draft job advertisements for their CLIR Fellowship positions. Applicants see individual job postings or hear about the fellowship and visit the CLIR website to view all position descriptions. Then they fill out a common application, including an essay demonstrating knowledge of and interest in intersections among scholars, libraries, and scholarly information resources. As part of this application, potential Fellows indicate their top three choices of host institutions and offer very brief reasons for their choices. These applications are then vetted by the host institutions, who conduct telephone or in-person interviews with candidates. Depending on the institution, project, and funding situation, successful candidates are offered the position as a 1- or 2-year contract. The host institution pays

the salary, benefits, and professional development costs of their Fellows, while CLIR provides travel and professional development support for all CLIR-related activities, including the two-week orientation seminar at Bryn Mawr College held in July or August prior to a new fellowship year, a two-day seminar at UCLA in January during the fellowship year, and other related activities, such as attendance at ACRL when CLIR Fellows have presented on behalf of the program.⁴

Although discussions of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program have appeared in library literature, there has yet to be an in-depth examination of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, such that those who are outside the program can make informed judgments and those who have participated can take stock of how well it has accomplished what it set out to do and consider where it ought to go from here.⁵ I have undertaken in this article to fill this gap. What is evident from my examination of the program is that CLIR Fellows adapt quickly, innovate effectively, and provide knowledge and expertise suited to fit the new roles the library is likely to play in the future. In fact, having recently finished dissertations, CLIR Fellows know research collections, know the latest trends in scholarship, and, in many cases, come with fresh undergraduate-level teaching experience. As such, a Fellow is positioned to view the work of academic libraries from the invaluable perspective of one who is well-informed about research and instructional needs in the academy but not predisposed to favor traditional definitions of "librarian" or "library work." A survey of past Fellows and host institutions suggests that libraries ought to create jobs that serve new, evolving purposes and goals rather than making new library professionals into the image of past library professionals.

In this essay, I will provide a detailed report of the CLIR program's first four years and its outcomes, and draw conclusions about the role of this program in academic librarianship and

in higher education more broadly. The experiences of CLIR Fellows are central to this analysis as they illustrate some of the challenges that programs of this sort will present, such as the need for new human resources categories, workflows, and procedures; new ways of capitalizing on the strengths of existing library professionals and providing retraining where needed; and new strategies for educating, retooling, and involving library users (especially faculty and other advanced scholars).⁶

Overall, this report shows that there is much that has worked well in the CLIR program for all involved. There is also much that could be improved, but in spite of this needed change, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program embodies the transition that academic libraries, as a whole, are undergoing. Consequently, the academic library profession would do well to learn from the CLIR Program experience and explore opportunities to create similar programs to meet other staffing and recruitment needs within the profession.

Staffing Strategies in Academic Libraries: A Brief Overview

Academic librarians have long been concerned about the role of subject doctorate holders in the profession. Although ACRL officially blessed the Masters in Library Science as the terminal degree for the profession over thirty years ago, that decision has not laid to rest questions about the need for or desirability of library professionals who hold a subject doctorate. Nor did the decision close discussions about whether all library professionals must hold the terminal degree. The fact that these debates about librarian credentialing, skills, and education continue to surface—a 1976 article by Rush G. Miller cites already well-worn discussions—suggests that we ought to collectively identify ways to improve academic libraries and plan for

future staffing needs accordingly, rather than continue trying to settle, once and for all, the question of which degrees one must hold in order to contribute to the profession.⁷

Professional staffing needs have been addressed in a variety of innovative ways in recent years.⁸ One example is ACRL's New Member Mentoring Program, instituted in 2000, which paired new librarians with more experienced colleagues.⁹ Mentors and mentees were not based at the same institutions, thereby exposing participants to a broader variety of experiences and perspectives within the profession. Pairs met in person at ALA Annual and Midwinter meetings, and kept in regular touch via email. Networking and professional development were key outcomes for mentees; mentors likewise benefited from fresh perspectives offered by these newly-minted library professionals. One challenge was that the burden for fruitful learning outcomes rested with mentees, who had to take initiative with their mentors. For mentors, this fact ensured that the time commitment was not onerous, but for mentees who are not self-starters, this program may have proved less satisfying.¹⁰

Other programs have addressed concerns with the need for diversity within the library profession. For example, the University of Arizona's Knowledge River Program attempts to achieve the goal of promoting academic librarianship to those who might not otherwise consider that career path by recruiting Hispanic and American Indian individuals into a professional library degree program and mentoring these students into internships in academic libraries. Importantly, the authors of an article on this program caution that a well-designed residency program should not "take newly graduated students, insert them into often hostile environments, and expect them to address all the problems of diversity."¹¹ This caution highlights a crucial point: if we recruit with an eye toward encouraging diversity in the profession—diversity of racial and ethnic background, diversity of sexual orientation, diversity of education and training,

diversity of work experience—we need to understand the needs of these less traditional members and recognize the valuable contributions they can make, contributions that may challenge the profession in uncomfortable ways and improve it in unexpected ways.

One argument for recruiting Ph.D. holders to academic librarianship has been a need for in-depth subject or language expertise; certain programs have been developed to address this specific concern. Because it has become challenging for academic libraries to fill librarian positions requiring such expertise, the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU-Boulder) Libraries teamed up with the campus' Graduate Teacher Program to develop a new recruiting program. According to an article by Sean Patrick Knowlton and Becky Imamoto, the resulting Provost's Fellowship Program introduced graduate students—particularly those at the masters level—to the academic library profession by matching them with volunteer library mentors and having them participate in group sessions and library activities for 150 contact hours in a semester.¹² Training in academic librarianship was built into the mentoring feature of the program. Fellows came out of the program with on-the-job experience as well as knowledge about the faculty tenure system in place at CU-Boulder Libraries. As a recruitment effort, this program appears to have been successful; however, its goals are limited in focus. The program committee turned away applicants who did not express clear interest in academic librarianship as a career possibility and intentionally funneled participants toward library school.¹³ Thus, the effects of a program such as this remain within the library profession rather than simultaneously recirculating back into academic departments, as happens with the CLIR Fellowship Program by virtue of the fact that many participants return to the faculty career track after their fellowship.

Considering the strengths and drawbacks of these and similar programs, then, a need clearly exists for the development of a program that will recruit and mentor academic library

professionals with deep subject expertise. Data from a survey of Ph.D. holders in academic librarianship by Thea Lindquist and Todd Gilman suggests that there is a correlation between a weak academic job market and the numbers of Ph.D.s entering librarianship.¹⁴ However, survey responses also suggest that these individuals entered the profession for a variety of reasons, not simply because they failed at securing tenure track teaching positions. For Ph.D. holders who had earned or were in the process of earning their doctorates when they opted for a career in academic librarianship, most appear to have been working in libraries before making the switch. Say the authors of the survey, “this finding suggests that exposing more advanced-degree holders to the profession tends to result in more entering it.”¹⁵ This idea is one that prompted programs like the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.

The Lindquist and Gilman survey also brings up a key question that is addressed by the CLIR Program; that is, which credentials ought to be required for holding an academic library position? After analyzing the results of their survey, the authors conclude that “Those who think that nearly every doctorate holder seeking work in an academic/research library requires an ALA-MLS should think again.”¹⁶ As their evidence shows, for a significant number of Ph.D.-holding librarians, the lack of a professional library degree has not hamstrung their careers. Nonetheless, the presence of a Ph.D. does not, in and of itself, mean a librarian will become a leader in the profession and in extending the reach of libraries on campus. Lindquist and Gilman discovered that a large number of their respondents seem to have eschewed supervisory roles in favor of continuing in subject specialist capacities—positions that most directly utilize skills and expertise gained during their doctoral training.¹⁷ It is possible that some of these librarians took less traditional leadership roles within their libraries. Nevertheless, what remain unclear are the reasons why these librarians passed on supervisory roles and whether they would have more

readily moved into leadership roles with additional mentoring or professional development opportunities along the lines of the CLIR Fellowship.

The CLIR Fellowship Program: Methods for Collecting Data

After considering the need for innovative staffing strategies in academic libraries, and informed by the strengths and weaknesses of the programs addressed above, I undertook an analysis of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program to determine the role it has played thus far in addressing the future of academic libraries. I surveyed CLIR Fellows and interviewed selected participants in the program, including Fellows, their direct supervisors, and host library administrators. For the survey, I attempted to contact all past and present Fellows. Of the 29 CLIR Fellows to date, I was able to locate contact information for all but one individual. Of the 28 Fellows then invited to participate, 22 completed the online survey, resulting in a 76 percent response rate. I conducted the survey using Zoomerang© software, a product to which my institution has a license.¹⁸ The survey consisted of 34 questions covering Fellows' experience of the postdoctoral fellowship, career aspirations, motivations for participating, skills and experience, perceptions about the "librarian" role, and demographic information. Although I devised the survey to suit the goals of the present article, I did model some questions on the survey instrument used by Thea Lindquist and Todd Gilman in their recent study of Ph.D.s in academic librarianship, mentioned above.¹⁹

Given the relatively small number of research subjects and the fact that most questions allowed respondents to select multiple answers and offer prose comments, I opted not to use a statistical analysis program beyond the tabulation and graphing provided by Zoomerang. My goal for this study was not to provide detailed statistical information but to identify broad themes

and trends, and to elicit information about the experiences and perspectives of CLIR Fellows—to begin to sketch a picture of the fellowship program for others in the profession and provide an opportunity for reflection to those who have participated in the program. The survey and results are archived in the University of California’s E-Scholarship Repository.²⁰

To this same end, I conducted interviews with a broader cross-section of program participants, including four past Fellows and three present Fellows, four direct supervisors of CLIR Fellows, and two library administrators from host institutions. I solicited these interviews by asking survey respondents to volunteer, by asking them to suggest direct supervisors and administrators to interview, and by directly inviting particular individuals myself, given my knowledge of their experiences or unique perspectives. I attempted to get representatives from a variety of contexts: CLIR Fellow placements at large universities and small colleges, and placements within main library units (e.g., collections, reference) and elsewhere like special collections or digital humanities units; those individuals who were the only CLIR Fellow at their institution and those who were placed alongside other CLIR Fellows at their host institution; Fellows who were pursuing librarianship and Fellows who were pursuing tenure-track faculty careers; fellowship assignments with very well-defined structure or projects and fellowship assignments with looser definition; direct supervisors and library administrators from a similar range of settings and experiences. These interviews were conducted in person or over the phone and typically lasted 30-45 minutes. I generally followed an interview protocol of 10 questions but allowed the conversations to develop more organically, depending on what seemed most important to the interviewee. The interview protocol is also archived in the University of California’s E-Scholarship Repository.²¹

Experiences and Outcomes

Host Institutions: Motivations for Participating

What prompts libraries to sign on to host CLIR Fellows is not always evident, but it appears that the decision typically has come from the top—from a dean or provost or university librarian who thought that it was a good idea. This is not to suggest that such decisions were capricious or unilateral, but I did not hear of any cases where line librarians or other staff members urged their administration to participate. It makes sense that participation would be prompted by top administrators since these individuals are more likely to have heard of the program from their peers and typically hold the purse strings that wind up funding the CLIR Fellow.

Each host institution decides how many fellowship positions to offer and how to craft the position postings for the recruitment process. To date, host institutions have taken different approaches to designing the position announcements, or rather, to imagining the role CLIR Fellows might play in their libraries. Some have identified discrete projects or responsibilities within the library for the CLIR Fellow to complete during his or her tenure, such as participating in a digital project or performing a specific research project for the library. Other institutions describe the position in less bounded terms, hoping that opportunities to utilize particular applicants will present themselves during the application and vetting process. What these latter institutions hope for are self-starters with expertise and skills that complement the collections and services of the library and its campus.

CLIR Fellows: Experiences and Outcomes

Compared with those of host institutions, CLIR Fellows' reasons for applying to the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program were more straightforward. CLIR Fellows came into the postdoctoral fellowship program for a variety of reasons, but in the survey half of respondents reported interest in a library career as one contributing factor. Slightly less than half of CLIR Fellows entered their fellowships with prior library work experience. Only a third of CLIR Fellows reported pursuing the fellowship, at least in part, because they were unable to find a tenure-track teaching or research faculty job. Specific job advertisements attracted a third of Fellows to the program; having run across the fellowship announcements in places like the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, a number of applicants felt that a specific project description "was tailor-made for me." Geographical location was also a factor for Fellows who did not want to relocate due to family circumstances. One Fellow noted a slightly different appeal in the job advertisement to which she responded: "I saw the announcement for the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship and got interested in part because of my work with online resources and in part because it is so difficult to find postdoctoral fellowships in the humanities." Since this individual had already taken a somewhat less conventional route to her Ph.D., she had already assumed she would not be following the usual faculty career track. For her, as for others as well, academic librarianship was definitely not a substitute for a tenure-track faculty job, but a strategically pursued career track, and this opportunity helped to identify and shape that less standard career track.

Once their fellowships are underway, CLIR Fellows collectively engage in a wide range of activities. Most CLIR Fellows to date have engaged in digital projects and/or special projects, such as exhibit curation, conference planning, or projects for library administration. Some Fellows also did collection development, instruction, subject area research, rare books/special

collections/archives processing and management, and library-related research. A few did reference. Other activities included writing grants, doing liaison work, making public presentations, and publishing their library-related research.²²

The survey also revealed that very specific, bounded projects or positions have tended to be more popular with Fellows, especially those who are not necessarily planning to pursue an academic library career. The expectations are clear and the outcomes are measurable. Keeping the CLIR Fellow position posting loosely defined in order to allow for a wider range of applicants can also work well but can prove to be unsettling for some Fellows. In these positions, Fellows must take more initiative, must be willing to live with less structure, and must be prepared to communicate with their supervisors about their own needs and project ideas. Because some Fellows in these positions participate in ongoing activities more than bounded projects, it may be challenging to figure out how to identify and measure outcomes. I will speak more to these challenges later in this essay.

In the survey, I asked what skills or experience Fellows felt that they brought to their fellowship positions. Nearly all CLIR Fellows reported having utilized their advanced research skills and ability to work with faculty during their fellowships. Most Fellows also drew upon their in-depth subject knowledge and expertise. Almost half of Fellows brought digital technology skills or administrative skills to bear in their activities. Less frequently, Fellows utilized non-English language skills, their ability to work closely with IT staff, or their experience in the area of grant writing/development. Many commented that teaching experience came into play during their fellowships, as did communication/presentation skills, as well as previous understanding of academic libraries and of the graduate student experience. **[INSERT FIGURE 1]**

Not surprisingly, CLIR Fellows also acquired a wide variety of skills and knowledge in the course of their participation in the program. Unlike the batch of skills/expertise they reported having brought to the fellowship, which was heavily weighted in two or three areas, the skills and knowledge acquired during the fellowship was spread fairly evenly among eight or nine areas. Between 40 percent and 70 percent of Fellows reported learning the following: digital resources creation/management, scholarly communication issues, library instruction/teaching experience, collection management, library administration, development/grant-writing, cataloging and metadata, and reference services. Approximately one third of Fellows gained knowledge about library facilities and space planning. One reported having learned Library IT systems. Other survey comments mentioned learning about academic politics, digital preservation, the library profession, library bureaucracy, and management skills. **[INSERT FIGURE 2]**

CLIR Fellows gained the knowledge and skills listed above mostly through on-the-job training and mentoring. Comments indicated that some of this on-the-job training was more formal—workshops and training/instruction sessions offered to librarians—while some of it was less formal, including “figur[ing] it out” on the fly, doing “research and lots of reading,” and “shadowing librarians in almost any department [the Fellow] had interest in.” For one CLIR Fellow, “conversations with colleagues were most important, and remain [the] most important source of information.” Another Fellow identified conference attendance as a learning opportunity.

For those Fellows who were embedded in library departments—as opposed to digital humanities centers, for example—one of the most valuable aspects of learning on the job was becoming familiar with institutional politics. While politics are endemic to any organization or

campus unit, and most Fellows come through their doctoral training with plenty of experience with academic department politics, the one- or two-year experience helped Fellows learn what to expect and how to negotiate challenging relationships within their library. One Fellow gave the example of learning to negotiate effectively with library information technology (IT) staff. She observed that librarian-IT collaboration “is a relationship that often has not worked out well” in libraries but is something that can be learned. With fewer preconceived notions about how things *ought* to work, Fellows may actually be in a better position than traditionally trained library staff to navigate these challenging relationships.

Navigating library politics and the fellowship experience overall seems to have been easiest for those Fellows who had dedicated mentors, whether that mentor was a direct supervisor or another colleague. Mentoring played a key role in sustaining some Fellows and has become somewhat more institutionalized with each passing cohort. Those Fellows who had mentors reported that this support was crucial to their success in the program. What this mentoring looked like may have been very different from campus to campus, depending on the types of training and guidance Fellows needed. Those who did not receive much, if any, real mentoring reflected after the fact that having a supportive mentor would have helped. One Fellow who did have a mentor at her host institution also suggested that there are different levels of mentorship needed: a direct supervisor or “on-the-ground” mentor to consult on daily issues and tasks; an administrative mentor “to oversee our work in a meaningful way”; and a CLIR mentor. Currently, Elliott Shore, Dean of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, acts as a CLIR mentor to all Fellows. For their part, direct supervisors came to realize the need for mentoring of CLIR Fellows and expressed interest in having more direction from CLIR on the

needs of its Fellows as well as more formal mechanisms in place for mentors to communicate with each other about their experiences on an ongoing basis.

In some ways, mentoring suggests inculcation *into* a community of practice. However, for many participants, the “outsider” status of CLIR Fellows is a valuable resource to be tapped and retained; in other words, the goals of this mentoring should probably not be to make CLIR Fellows “one of us.” Here, “outsider’s perspective” refers to the perspective of a scholar and a library user; of one not traditionally trained or credentialed; of one who, though respectful of the traditions and track record of the profession, will not take all of its goals, practices, and assumptions without question.

Some Fellows come into the program planning to return to the faculty track afterward. For these Fellows, their outsider status may get reinforced on the job and in their interactions with other Fellows and with CLIR. One Fellow, whose project did not involve “traditional” library functions or services, said that she never got past thinking about the library as a user rather than as an insider. Given her own career goals, this way of thinking was not necessarily a problem for her but she wondered whether CLIR or her host institution would consider her a success in the program. Even one Fellow who completed an MLIS after her fellowship noted that this outsider status probably shaped her career plans in a significant way since she now does consulting. Mostly, Fellows saw the outsider’s perspective as a unique contribution of the program. A Fellow explained, “The ability to look at library issues from a multiplicity of perspectives serves the profession well” in terms of being able to spur innovation in productive directions. As a direct supervisor put it, “Libraries need a broader sense of diversity, not just racial and gender diversity, but also a diversity of perspectives” and bringing CLIR Fellows into our libraries is one of many ways to achieve this.

CLIR Fellows: Career Opportunities Post Fellowship

The main worry for early critics of the CLIR program concerned the question of what happens when Fellows finish the program; however, concerns that the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program would hasten a flood of Ph.D. holders into the academic library job market should be alleviated by actual outcomes to date. Of the 22 Fellows who responded to my survey, less than half reported having been hired into library jobs; three of these individuals have professional library degrees in hand or are in the process of getting them. Four Fellows reported being hired into tenure-track faculty positions. Seven respondents said that they had neither library jobs nor tenure-track faculty positions. Most of these individuals appear to be working in areas that may be characterized as “other academic”—adjunct teaching, university IT/instructional technology, consulting in a library setting, and freelancing (this last item may not be in an academic setting).

Former CLIR Fellows working in library jobs, with or without the professional degree, are engaged in a broad range of activities. Half of these individuals perform reference service as part of their duties. Around one third are involved in collection management, instruction, administration, scholarly communication, outreach (e.g., department liaison), and rare books/special collections/archives. Only one individual reported being involved in development. Other areas noted in comments include digital projects, access services, and project management.

Only a little more than one third of CLIR Fellows report that they are actively pursuing a library career. The same number assert that they are not on the academic library track. The rest of the respondents are currently undecided. This overall response illustrates the fact that CLIR Fellows go in different directions and that the fellowship ought not to be viewed solely as a

librarian recruitment program. For those respondents who are pursuing an academic library career, the most common factors influencing CLIR Fellows' decisions to do so, by far, were that they wanted to become scholar-librarians—i.e., librarians who pursue independent scholarship—and that they enjoyed library work. For half of respondents, having more job options and increased geographic mobility were contributing factors. Some Fellows noted having wanted to stay in academia in a capacity other than as teaching faculty. Only one respondent reported having chosen librarianship due to lack of success on the tenure-track faculty job market.

[INSERT FIGURE 3]

How has the fellowship experience affected alums' post-fellowship job or career plans? For Fellows looking to enter the faculty track, the experience was extremely positive. Humanities postdoctoral fellowships are relatively rare but increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for securing a tenure-track job, so just having a postdoc from a major university gives candidates an edge in the academic job market. Another Fellow who landed a tenure-track faculty position pointed out that improving one's chances on the academic job market is not the only benefit of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship to future faculty members: from his perspective as a soon-to-be junior faculty member, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program was a great opportunity because one gets so many things in the fellowship experience that one cannot get in graduate school, including grant-writing experience, contacts with the publishing world, scholarly communication expertise, and so on. "It's good to have time to pause and develop these contacts and perspectives. Senior faculty know this stuff, but not usually junior faculty."

CLIR Fellows and the Professional Degree

Some critics of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program will undoubtedly want to reopen the debate about whether participation in the program is enough to turn a Ph.D. holder into an academic librarian. Importantly, most CLIR Fellows do not see this program as an automatic “in” or shortcut to a librarian career. That is, they do not assume that the fellowship *necessarily* equips them to become library professionals. Whether or not a particular Fellow is prepared for an academic library career without the MLIS depends upon the individual, her/his prior library experience, and the shape of her/his experience in the fellowship. It also depends upon a Fellow’s career goals, including the nature of the work she/he wants to do in libraries or in academia.

Significantly, those Fellows who did pursue the library degree during or after their fellowships felt like the CLIR experience equipped them in important ways. One such Fellow said that her library school emphasized the idea that things are changing in libraries so one needs to be prepared to adapt to new technology, and so on. She asserts, “The CLIR experience covered that really well and maybe better than library school.” Likewise, another Fellow who attended library school after her fellowship agreed that there are things one cannot learn easily in library school, such as understanding relationships among library personnel. One needs to be in the library environment to really understand these dynamics. Yet, she admitted, the fact remains that CLIR Fellows are likely to have trouble finding jobs without the library degree, but in some ways the focus on whether or not CLIR Fellows can qualify as *librarians* misses the point: “I’m not sure that ‘librarian’ defines what we do—the word seems bound to a physical place and libraries are [moving away from or do more than] that. I prefer ‘information professional.’ . . . The tide may turn as digital scholarship becomes the norm and experience may begin to make more difference [on the job market] than whether you have a degree.”

A lot seems to hinge on this term, “librarian.” When asked the extent to which they came to see themselves as librarians, survey respondents reflected some ambivalence. Of the 22 respondents, two answered “completely,” 12 answered “somewhat,” and eight answered “no.” This ambivalence or diverse response is a good sign since CLIR’s original mission was to produce “a new kind of scholarly information professional.”

Interestingly, direct supervisors tended to agree that they themselves would hire CLIR Fellows, in spite of the fact that they may not have received “well-rounded” library training in the course of their fellowships. In at least some situations, the fact that these highly-skilled individuals were quick studies, full of ideas and relevant knowledge, carried more weight than credentialing. One supervisor was more cautious, suggesting that CLIR Fellows can be trained as librarians by the time they finish a fellowship but that the Fellow needs to decide early on that this is a goal so that the experience can be shaped accordingly. Nevertheless, said another supervisor, the academic library profession still struggles with the question of credentials, background, and training; this program provides a way to have this conversation in a more systematic, formal way because there is “something to point to” when talking about the question of credentials.

The Fellowship Program: Early Challenges and Strategies for Improvement

Growing Pains

As with any new program, there were also aspects of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program that didn’t run as smoothly as they could have. As an enthusiastic proponent of the program, I hesitate to draw attention to these early growing pains but also know that it is crucial to reflect on these early problem points so that program participants can work purposefully to

overcome them. Furthermore, many of the problems or challenges experienced by CLIR Program participants are not unique to the program and will be instructive others in the academic library world. A number of the problems that arose relate to a lack of preparation on the part of host institutions or a disconnect between the position as envisioned beforehand (by CLIR Fellows or by the host institution) and the actual reality as it played out. After describing these problems, I will spend time noting strategies for addressing them going forward.

Some CLIR Fellows were reminded that job advertisements do not always match the reality of the position, which can be problematic or helpful, depending on the situation. On the one hand, there were Fellows, like one whose job advertisement sounded “tailor-made,” who discovered upon arrival that the project advertised did not actually match its description and had a much different focus, requiring a different set of skills and activities. On the other hand, there is the instance of another Fellow who was attracted to the placement she eventually got because of its emphasis on electronic resources and teaching. When she arrived at her host institution she discovered that the assignment was vague; there was no mentor available for her first month and no office space set aside for her. As she got going, this vagueness amounted to flexibility, which worked in her favor since she could, as an outgoing self-starter, get involved in a wide range of activities throughout the library.

These disconnects between job advertisements and reality illustrate a common theme expressed in interviews with CLIR Fellows, direct supervisors, and administrators—recognition that a program like this requires even more preparation on the part of a host institution than that required for bringing a new librarian or staff member into an existing position. This needed preparation on the part of the host institution goes beyond figuring out where the CLIR Fellows will sit, although more than one Fellow was taken aback to find that their host departments

“seemed almost surprised to see me,” or had no office space available initially. For one supervisor, the problem of receiving CLIR Fellows was not so much a supervisory one—he had discussions early on with his most recent Fellow about expectations for the fellowship—as a bureaucratic one: CLIR Fellows did not fit neatly into the library’s human resources framework so it was sometimes difficult to determine the employee category to which CLIR Fellows belonged. In contrast, another supervisor’s library had already hired two humanities Ph.D.s without library degrees, so there was already a framework within which to accommodate CLIR Fellows in the library. To be sure, the size and entrenchment of the existing bureaucracy will increase the amount of advanced planning and preparation needed before Fellows arrive.

Of course, all new programs have a learning curve involved and certainly many of us have faced a disconnect between an advertised position and the actual needs and experiences of a job, regardless of field or profession. Nevertheless, new host institutions would do well to learn from peer institutions that have already hosted CLIR Fellows in order to get a sense of what is involved in bringing Fellows on board.

Sometimes, the lack of preparation on the part of the host institution had to do with identifying the kinds of activities and projects CLIR Fellows should do. Indeed, one supervisor admitted, “It took me a while to wrap my head around what we were going to do [with the Fellows].” As noted earlier, some host institutions benefit from keeping position descriptions in job postings for the fellowship more loosely defined—they can get a pool of applicants with broader ranging areas of expertise and interests, and in this way, make room for highly motivated individuals who bring their own innovative project ideas to the table. However, a number of Fellows, particularly those in their host institutions’ first cohorts, echoed a current Fellow who said, “I think [the host institution] could have thought more carefully about how they were going

to use me.” For one supervisor, problems figuring out how best to use Fellows came about as the result of poor communication— “the administration not laying the groundwork for the program, not being clear about its expectations, not communicating enough to staff and colleagues in the library and in the host department. People receiving the CLIR Fellows didn’t have enough information about them and what they themselves could do to participate in the process of incorporating Fellows into the library and library projects.” Fellows sometimes met with resistance from some of the very colleagues who might have been in the best position to capitalize on collaborations with them. As with other library decisions that may challenge existing staffing expectations—e.g., reorganizing a unit or creating an entirely new position—a crucial factor in the success of such change is to give others in the organization an opportunity to buy into the project by allowing them to identify ways in which this new individual or position or reorganization could improve the work of the library, identifying projects or goals that could be accomplished with this new change in place that could not have been accomplished without it.

Thus, libraries need to think carefully about how to utilize CLIR Fellows in ways that capitalize on their unique sets of expertise and perspectives. One Fellow reported feeling like she was given assignments or tasks during her first year that amounted to “paper-pushing.” Fortunately, this particular Fellow was able to work with her supervisors to shift the focus of her fellowship, but this example should remind host libraries to utilize CLIR Fellows not only as extra pairs of hands during tight staffing times but also as agents of change.

Even with a lot of advanced planning on the part of the host institution, there may still be lingering tension between the host institution’s desire for flexibility and CLIR Fellows’ need for direction and/or support. From the perspective of one library administrator, being less specific about what the library wants CLIR Fellows to do “forces them to learn about the organization, to

figure out what we do and how, and then to figure out what to do [during their fellowship]. I want the individuals to explore.” She admits, though, that the success of this approach does depend upon the individuals involved: “We rely on CLIR Fellows to say what they would like or need... The challenge for CLIR Fellows at our institution is to have them figure out on their own what to do, to have self-starting approaches.” Another administrator also valued keeping the fellowship more loosely structured, at least in terms of providing specific training or instruction to Fellows. At his institution, “the thinking behind this loose structure was that learning on the job was better than a lot of formal training.”

For one Fellow, flexibility of this sort was a benefit but she noted that it does mean the Fellow has no defined identity as a postdoc, which may be unsettling to some participants. As mentioned earlier in this essay, another risk is that, in the case of appointments that favor a jack-or-jill-of-all-trades approach rather than a specific project—where Fellows take on a variety of tasks and activities that librarians and other staff do not have the time to take on—host libraries may not as readily recognize the significance of Fellows’ contributions. Libraries, like the corporate world, are trained now to think in terms of deliverables and the significance of “extra time” and “extra pair of hands” can be difficult to quantify. Similarly, another Fellow worried that placements with less clearly articulated focus or structure cater to a certain personality type (e.g., the most outgoing) or someone with clear library-oriented career goals. This situation runs the risk of neglecting others who come with equally important sets of strengths or goals but who do not thrive in such a loosely-structured environment.

This presents host institutions wishing to preserve flexibility with a delicate balancing act: Ideally, suggested one direct supervisor, CLIR Fellows should have more clearly defined projects in mind without those projects being set in stone before they arrive. The goal of the early

months or first year of the fellowship should be to mold these project ideas to suit the needs of the library or campus. So while flexibility is an attractive feature of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, it should go hand in hand with careful consideration of what or who may get lost in the shuffle and what steps can be taken to ensure that the flexibility and structure complement each other rather than work against each other.

Similarly, there should be careful consideration of the working environment that the Fellows will be entering, including organizational politics in the library and across campus. As noted earlier, Fellows encountered campus and library politics during their appointments—a valuable learning experience but one that occasionally comes at some cost. One Fellow's main project was compromised from the start by the campus's fraught relationship to the project's subject matter. The effort needed in order to build the networks and resources to tackle the original project would have exceeded the abilities of any one person or short-term effort. The revised project ended up being much different and ultimately less satisfying for the Fellow. Another Fellow entered a host organization that was in "a time of intense transition," a situation that magnified the uncertainty of the Fellow's expected role. Other Fellows encountered turf wars of varying degrees that sometimes made it difficult to get projects off the ground.

Confusion or lack of clarity about the nature of the CLIR Program probably lends itself, in at least some cases, to uncertainty about how best to utilize Fellows. Said one direct supervisor, "As it stands currently, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship is not so much a postdoctoral fellowship as it is 'work study'; it is not structured like a postdoc in an academic department." Work study implies doing work *for* rather than work *in*, completing tasks that are already in place rather than rethinking the ways things are done. Another supervisor shared this concern about putting CLIR Fellows to the best use possible. To his way of thinking, it is not a

good use of postdoctoral fellows to have them doing a standard library job, but if a library wants to use them in this way, it must be very clear about that so that it attracts suitable Fellows. Even still, that “standard” work should lead to something newer or better, such as a closer connection with academic departments. A third supervisor pointed out that for host libraries, the key benefit of participating in the program is that the Fellow has the time and perspective to seek out new projects and forge new or strengthen existing relationships on campus. Says this supervisor, if her library hired a CLIR Fellow for a humanities librarian position, “we would not expect this person to do the same things as an MLIS-holding applicant. CLIR Fellows are well-suited to the changing environment in academic libraries; libraries ought to be making their jobs fit the changing environment rather than molding new library workers to fit the existing job descriptions.”

Regardless how CLIR Fellows get utilized, the biggest issue by far for hosts, and by extension for Fellows, is funding. Most, if not all, program participants—Fellows and hosts alike—agree that two-year appointments are optimal. Unfortunately, many host libraries cannot commit two years of salary and benefits up front, and due to their budget calendar, may still be making funding decisions in late fall or early winter. Thus, they may offer Fellows one year with the possibility of a second year. Anyone who has recently earned a Ph.D. knows that most academic job postings hit in the fall, so Fellows who are not assured of a second year may find themselves in the position of having to start job hunting while still in the first months of their fellowship. For the CLIR Fellows who are given one-year contracts with the possibility of a second year, the uncertainty about appointment extensions is extremely unsettling. Furthermore, even without the distraction of job hunting, it is difficult for CLIR Fellows to know what kinds of projects to take on if they do not know whether their appointment will end in one year or two.

Happily, CLIR is already taking steps to secure outside funding in order to encourage more campuses to participate and enable more host institutions to commit up front to two-year fellowship contracts.

Most participants agree that the learning curve is steep. Consequently, both libraries and Fellows should expect and plan for an introductory learning period – this period can be a source of frustration, especially since Fellows can end up feeling like they are “spinning their wheels” for the first months of their fellowship. This is the point at which many participants saw mentoring as critically important. What’s more, says a Fellow from an early cohort, Fellows are encouraged by CLIR to see themselves as potential change agents in academic libraries and the academy but then shortly into the fellowship “you have the realization that you really don’t know what the hell you’re doing.” For this reason, she encourages Fellows to recognize that this introductory period can be unsettling but is a necessary stage of the fellowship experience. Likewise, a direct supervisor suggested that libraries need a certain length of association with a CLIR Fellow to really get things done and gain a proper understanding of what the Fellow can contribute to the organization. This introductory period may be shorter for some and longer for others, but in any case, the host institution and Fellow will need to work to get past this period. Unfortunately, though, this means that Fellows may not be ready even to identify viable projects until almost half-way through their first year, which in turn means they may not have the time to complete anything of significance unless they are given a second year. Furthermore, because some host libraries make the second year contingent upon demonstrated successes in the first year, Fellows may find themselves in an even tougher situation.

If a CLIR Fellow goes on the job market during the first year and is able to secure a tenure-track position right away, a library can still be left feeling like it has received an

inadequate return on its investment. Of course, the question remains whether the goal of the fellowship should be to produce results—deliverables—or to transform the Fellow herself, that is, to create the potential for a new kind of scholar or new kind of library worker. Is it possible to succeed at the latter without accomplishing the former? Here again, it may be helpful for all CLIR Program participants at an institution to reflect together on the goals of the program, especially the goal to create a new kind of scholarly information professional. For instance, participants should ask if there are ways that the host library can continue to benefit from the Fellow after she or he has moved on. Can the host library work with the Fellow's new hiring institution to establish mechanisms by which to continue collaborations, to launch new projects, or to build scholarly networks between institutions?

Strategies for Moving Forward

To sum up, survey and interview respondents had high praise for the program and high hopes for its future, but also offered suggestions for improvement as the program enters its fifth year. As one Fellow pointed out, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is itself a work in progress. When asked what they wanted for the future of the program, some participants enthusiastically called for “more of the same!” while others called for expansion—bringing in a greater number of Fellows, increasing the number of host institutions, or including disciplines beyond the humanities. Despite the opportunities that the program currently offers, improvement is needed to ensure that the program plays the most effective role possible in academic libraries and in the academy more broadly.

Host institutions need to recognize the amount of preparation it takes to really capitalize on the opportunity presented them through participation in this program. Many conversations

need to happen *throughout* a host library before the Fellows arrive and perhaps even before the library posts its position announcement. The library needs to be sure that everyone in the organization knows why CLIR Fellows are there and how to make the most of their presence so that Fellows end up doing relevant, innovative things that do not amount to change for the sake of change but do take the library in the direction it wants to go. Having these preparatory conversations throughout the organization can also maximize the extent to which library units and departments can collaborate with Fellows to help achieve the library's goals. CLIR can keep leading this process by continuing to offer direction and resources to host institutions as they grapple with questions or issues that arise before, during, and after a fellowship year. For example, some direct supervisors expressed interest in establishing a formal evaluation process at the close of each fellowship year to help them make necessary changes for the upcoming year.

During the application process, the program does need to be better advertised in order to draw a larger pool of applicants. CLIR is already keenly aware of this need—having had to revise and extend its most recent call for applications due to insufficient numbers of responses—and is already taking steps to address it. Academic libraries throughout North America could help by announcing the program to graduate students on their campuses, and by bringing the program to the attention of campus career centers, even if these libraries are not themselves hosting Fellows.

CLIR is also revamping the process by which applications are distributed to potential host libraries (see note 3). Because applicants are not usually familiar with the libraries to which they are applying, they may not realize that a particular institution and its collections may fit their scholarly interests or expertise like a glove. It is not that applicants do not do their homework; it is that many libraries have hidden collections of which applicants as well as other

host institutions would be unaware. In the current application distribution process, institutions listed as top choices on an application may snap up the candidate before other institutions have a chance to point out the opportunity for a closer match of interests.

Involving faculty and other campus units in the process of planning for and/or vetting potential Fellows was another recommendation offered by a number of program participants. This is a suggestion at which at least some host libraries may balk, particularly if they are hoping to retain control over decisions about which CLIR Fellow projects would best serve the library. Here I would reiterate the observation that libraries are evolving past their walls, their staffing lines, and their funding structures. A project that seems outside the library's purview today may become its bread and butter tomorrow. Incoming generations of scholars will need to learn about text encoding and metadata, if not how to do it. Scholars will have to learn about and utilize open access publishing mechanisms for their own work. Scholars will need to know and participate in data preservation, even if they are humanists. Partnering with faculty and other research units on campus ensures that knowledge gets produced in ways that can be manipulated, disseminated, and preserved to the fullest extent. For their part, libraries can push scholars to think in terms of digital projects that are not just one-offs that benefit a single scholar's research but projects that, as the Mellon Foundation's Donald Waters put it in a recent conversation with CLIR Fellows, *build* a field of study by enabling multiple scholars collectively to further knowledge in their area of research, or perhaps by opening up new paths of inquiry previously unavailable to the field.²³ Furthermore, even if host libraries end up disagreeing with faculty about which potential CLIR Fellow is the best candidate for the incoming cohort, it is in these negotiations that we are forced to articulate our priorities and goals, and consider options we may not have thought of on our own. As many CLIR Program participants agreed, this diversity of opinion is a good thing.

A final point that bears reiteration is mentoring. Consensus among participants is that mentoring plays a key role in ensuring that Fellows are able to make the most of their fellowships. However, it is not enough to provide either someone to show Fellows the ropes or to give top-level support; it is important that this mentoring occur at two or three levels, including the supervisory level, the administrative level, and the fellowship level (i.e., CLIR). Moreover, Fellows need direction on daily activities, but more importantly for the academic library and academic faculty professions, Fellows also need guidance on the challenge of becoming leaders and innovators.

What Fellows themselves need to do is approach this fellowship as an ongoing commitment. “Once a CLIR Fellow, always a CLIR Fellow” should not be merely a quip to entice alumni back to Bryn Mawr College each summer for the program’s annual orientation/reunion. It should also be a reminder to stay involved—to build networks of scholarly professionals and library professionals, to be leaders in national initiatives, to continue collaborating with Fellows past and present on projects to spur on the creation, dissemination, and use of innovative scholarly information resources.

Conclusion: Doing the Work of the Library

As we can see from the experiences of the first four cohorts of CLIR Fellows, the roles these individuals have played in libraries fall along a broad spectrum. At one end, there are Fellows doing what might be considered “traditional” library work—sitting on the reference desk, buying books and monitoring approval plans, and teaching library instruction sessions. These activities would seem to support the status quo, though granted these individuals may not do them in the same ways that a more traditionally trained librarian might do them. At the other end

of the spectrum are Fellows who are involved in activities that look very little like “traditional” library work, though some librarians are already doing them: they are creating digital manuscript collections, tagging XML documents, doing subject-specific research and teaching, writing grants, advising scholars on copyright issues, and helping scholars to create open access journals. They are also working in academic departments and other research units outside the library, such as digital humanities centers. In between the two ends of the spectrum are a host of activities that are less easy to categorize as traditional or non-traditional, in part because a lot of librarians may already be doing them or would do them if they had the time or training.

Benefits of the CLIR Model

Roles in academic libraries are becoming less clear, the deeper we go into the digital turn, the 21st century, or however you want to characterize the present paradigm shift. The nice thing about initiatives like the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program is that they enable libraries to experiment with defining new roles and new ways of accomplishing the work of academic librarianship. After all, thanks to their outsider’s perspective, Fellows typically have more fluid assumptions about library structures and services, so they are well-suited to such experimentation. This program can, as one administrator suggested, provide structured occasions for libraries to reflect on what they do, to identify their needs, and to determine the kinds of people they need to fill those needs.

As an embodiment of change in academic libraries, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program and its Fellows thus far have succeeded in spurring on new projects and giving new life to existing ones, as well as generating new ideas and solving problems across institutions. As a model for recruitment and staffing, the CLIR Program accomplishes two other very important

things: cultivating new leaders and fostering a devotion to academic libraries that exceeds the bounds of the profession itself.

The program produces new leaders by taking highly skilled and articulate individuals, giving them broad exposure to the issues and challenges facing academic libraries, encouraging them to think, study, and write, giving them on-the-ground opportunities to learn, and giving them connections within the profession and beyond. CLIR Fellows are likely to be better networked with existing leaders in the profession and with funding organizations and other resources than most recent library school graduates; networking opportunities are built into the CLIR Program, such that Fellows meet with the likes of Deanna Marcum (Library of Congress), Clifford Lynch (Coalition of Networked Information), Charles Henry (CLIR), Donald Waters and Susan Perry (the Mellon Foundation), and a variety of top library and library/information studies school administrators.

The program fosters devotion to academic librarianship by making Fellows invested in resolving the challenges faced by academic libraries and respectful of the knowledge and expertise of their colleagues. While MLIS degree programs instill devotion within up and coming librarians, the CLIR Program instills this devotion in individuals who are potential librarians, library staff, faculty members, campus administrators, and other members of the scholarly community.

In addition, the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program demonstrates that the work of academic libraries is larger than the library organization itself, and includes a broader range of people than just traditionally trained librarians and other non-professional library staff. Such may always have been the state of affairs, but the culture of the discipline-based academy has worked to reinforce the apparent division of labor among academic departments, other academic

units such as research centers, campus administrative units, and the library. This assumed division of labor has pigeon-holed librarians and other library staff into a service role in the minds of scholars and perhaps also in the minds of some library professionals and administrators. While service is indeed a *good* thing, and is intrinsic to librarianship, it does the academy a disservice to restrict the library's role to one of *servicing* scholars. Library professionals can and should be active collaborators in the research and knowledge production processes. Library professionals can and should be active in changing the academy when such change is called for, as in the need to promote the value and prestige of open access scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Similarly, faculty and students can and should be involved in the growth of the library and not merely to the extent that they make purchase requests, participate in focus groups, or respond to LibQual+™ surveys.

What programs like the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program do is help to create symbiotic relationships between academic libraries and scholars, that is, relationships that are mutually beneficial and mutually reinforcing. Like a process of cross-pollination, the program carries the work of the library throughout the campus community. At the same time, the program brings the work of scholars into the library profession in concentrated ways; many librarians have come to the profession with advanced degrees, so this is not entirely a new thing, but what the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program does is to give these scholar-librarians occasions in which to reflect purposefully and engage in dialog about this cross-pollination. These discussions provide opportunities to capitalize on ideas that arise and to create projects designed to be implemented within and across libraries and campus units.

One way that CLIR is seeking to capitalize on these ideas and cross-pollinations is to create a collegium of scholars and librarians in order to facilitate new forms of scholarship and to

cultivate new kinds of information professionals and new leaders for 21st-century academic libraries. This collegium program would provide structured occasions in which scholars, librarians, and other members of the campus community can meet to reflect on the work of libraries and the needs of scholars. Out of these meetings could grow project ideas, funding proposals, new initiatives, and inspired collaborations.

A risk of a program like the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship, as with other leadership programs, is that it will seem elitist; only a chosen few are given the privilege of stepping back from the daily grind to think through big issues, to take initiative to launch major profession-changing projects, or to network with other movers and shakers. However, the CLIR Program can be taken as a model to be applied in a variety of ways throughout the profession, allowing much broader participation in these exciting programs, and enabling us to address other emerging needs in the scholarly information universe.

The CLIR program model consists of a number of key elements: cross-institutional conversations and collaborations; focused seminars in which to reflect, debate, and problem-solve; institutional support to enable projects to be put into motion and to facilitate applications for external funding, if necessary; infrastructure to sustain these new relationships over time and space; a diversity of perspectives among participants. Any alternative application of this model should include each of these elements.

Alternative Applications of the CLIR Model

I can envision a number of alternative applications. For starters, we could create programs for new MLIS graduates that are modeled on the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program structure and focused on academic libraries, giving these newly minted librarians as

much exposure to and involvement in scholarly collaborations as possible. Additionally, CLIR Fellows could partner with LIS faculty to design courses on advanced research in the humanities or other fields in order to benefit current MLIS students. Several past CLIR Fellows are already pursuing ideas for such courses at their current institutions.

Another idea is to create programs for library staff that do more than allow individuals to view a webcast or presentation and then have a discussion before returning to their desks. Rather than be viewed as “professional development”—though undoubtedly all of these programs I am suggesting, including the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, qualify as professional development—such programs should be goal-oriented with real opportunities to follow through on projects that emerge. To this end, a program would need to be focused on a key issue or challenge such as space planning, digital preservation, cataloging and metadata issues, open access scholarship, and so on.

An idea that might address staffing issues and create a more flexible workforce for the profession would be to establish a broad-reaching network of staff exchange programs. Scholars frequently move to other institutions as visiting professors or visiting scholars, thereby reinvigorating their own work and possibly filling a position left vacant by another faculty member’s sabbatical or research trip. Occasionally, librarians and library staff may wish to work at another institution, either because personal circumstances require them to be away from home for a time, or because they find colleagues or programs at other institutions that are engaged in the kinds of projects they themselves would like to be able to launch at their home libraries. For their part, academic libraries may wish to bring in specific individuals who can provide a particular set of skills or expertise on a short-term basis. With exchange infrastructure in place,

libraries could be more nimble about setting up temporary positions that benefit the host institution and provide opportunities for visiting colleagues.

Programs of the kind I am proposing will only succeed if libraries and campuses that host them learn from the experience of the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. For instance, host institutions will need to build flexibility into their human resources structures and procedures. They will need to think through the long-term benefits of these programs so that short-term impacts—provision of funding, administrative support, appropriate cyberinfrastructure, and workload coverage for participating staff members—do not become insurmountable hurdles.

With programs like these in place, the profession will create productive dialog as well as occasions for collaboration across academic libraries, such as across ARL (Association of Research Libraries) and non-ARL host institutions, an example offered by one library administrator. We need more discussions within the profession about visions of our collective future, specifically focused on ways in which CLIR Fellows—and other future leaders—can help us get there. Even if we recognize that there is no “there” there and that we will be constantly needing to renew this vision over time, we can collectively shape our own future.

Notes

¹ Council on Library and Information Resources, “News Release,” *CLIR*,
<http://www.clir.org/news/pressrelease/2003postdoc.html>.

² This history is gleaned from various conversations with early participants in the planning process and from internal documents provided by CLIR.

³ Council on Library and Information Resources, “News Release,”
<http://www.clir.org/news/pressrelease/2003postdoc.html>.

⁴ The application and hiring process described will change slightly beginning with the sixth application cycle. The program will move to a model akin to the Fulbright scholarship program in order to better accommodate the calendars of the academic job market and the academic library fiscal year.

⁵ For examples of positive contributions, see James G. Neal, “Raised by Wolves,” *Library Journal* 131, no. 3 (2006): 42-44; Daphnee Rentfrow, “Postdoctoral Program Bridges Library, Faculty,” *CLIR Issues*, no. 53 (October 2006),
<http://www.clir.org/pubs/issues/issues53.html#postdoc>; Alice Schreyer, “Education and Training for Careers in Special Collections: A White Paper Prepared for the Association of Research Libraries Special Collections Task Force,” November 2004,
http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/sctf_ed.pdf; Elliott Shore, “CLIR Fellows Share Experiences as 'Hybrid' Professional,” *CLIR*, no. 61 (February 2008),
<http://www.clir.org/pubs/issues/issues61.html#fell>; Christa Williford, comment to Association of College and Research Libraries blog, October 19, 2006, <http://acrlog.org/2006/10/16/clirs-program-a-real-or-imagined-shortage-of-academic-librarians/>.

⁶ I was a CLIR Fellow in the third cohort, based in the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA. Like some of my colleagues, I learned about the postdoctoral fellowship by accident; I had been working part-time at an academic library while finishing up an interdisciplinary dissertation on U.S. social movement history and literature, and my supervisor's boss put the call for applications on my desk. After one year as a Fellow, I became a humanities librarian at Young Research Library where I do department liaison work, collection management, reference, instruction, digital projects, scholarly communication projects, and some research. Though no longer in a fellowship position, I remain involved in the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, collaborating with other Fellows on a variety of projects, helping to orient new Fellows, and continuing the always invigorating discussions about academic librarianship that I began during my Fellowship year.

⁷ Rush G. Miller, "The Influx of Ph.D.'s into Librarianship: Intrusion or Transfusion?" *College and Research Libraries* 37, no. 2 (1976): 158-159.

⁸ As academic libraries struggle to remain relevant to users, some libraries have opted to try new staffing strategies in order to improve outreach to students. For example, Utah State University created a Library Peer Mentor Program in 2004 in which undergraduates (LPMs) collaborate with librarians to provide reference service and instruction to their peers. Unlike the typical student worker positions within libraries—in access services or interlibrary loan departments, for instance—these paid positions entailed ongoing seminars in addition to training. See Wendy Holliday and Cynthia Nordgren, "Extending the Reach of Librarians: Library Peer Program at Utah State University," *College and Research Libraries* 66, no. 4 (2005): 282-283.

⁹ Jeffrey S. Bullington and Susanna D. Boylston, "Strengthening the Profession: Assuring our Future," *College and Research Library News* 62, no. 4 (2001): 430-432.

¹⁰ Bullington and Boylston, 432. ACRL now offers the ACRL Dr. E. J. Josey Spectrum Scholar Mentor Program aimed at recruiting and retaining librarians of color.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/proftools/mentorprogram.cfm>

¹¹ Rebecca Hankins, Michele Saunders, and Ping Situ, "Diversity Initiatives vs. Residency Programs: Agents of Change?" *College and Research Library News* 64, no. 5 (2003): 309.

¹² Sean Patrick Knowlton and Becky Imamoto, "Recruiting Non-MLIS Graduate Students to Academic Librarianship," *College and Research Libraries* 67, no. 6 (2006): 564.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 566.

¹⁴ Thea Lindquist and Todd Gilman, "Academic/Research Librarians with Subject Doctorates: Data and Trends 1965-2006," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 8, no. 1 (2008): 31-52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁸ For more information about Zoomerang surveys, see <http://www.zoomerang.com>.

¹⁹ Todd Gilman kindly provided me with a copy of their survey instrument.

²⁰ <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uclalib/pubs/clirpostdoc/>

²¹ <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uclalib/pubs/clirpostdoc/>

²² An updated list of links to CLIR Fellow projects is available from the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program website at

<http://www.clir.org/fellowships/postdoc/postdoc.html>.

²³ Conversation with Donald Waters, Bryn Mawr College, July 25, 2008.

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