



**37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
**Indianapolis, Indiana, April 16-21, 2009**

**Session/Meeting Name: Reaching Out and Bringing In: Understanding and Encouraging Diversity in the Library**

**Date, Time: April 18, 2009, 2:00-3:30pm**

**Moderators: Laura Haxer**

**Recorder: Krista Ivy**

**Speakers:**

Dorothy Tao, Associate Librarian, Architecture, Planning, and Visual Arts, University at Buffalo, *Reaching Out and Bringing In: Understanding and Encouraging Diversity in the Library*

Pnina Shachaf, Ph.D., School of Library and Information Science, Indiana University Bloomington, *Are digital reference services color blind?*

Meredith Kahn, University Library Associate, Art, Architecture & Engineering Library, University of Michigan, *Intersecting Paths & Building Relationships: Outreach Programming for Underrepresented Students in Architecture & Urban Planning*

The first presenter was Dorothy Tao, Associate Librarian at the University at Buffalo. Dorothy's presentation focused on discussing three diverse populations in academic libraries; international students, multicultural students, and non-traditional students. For each category, she discussed characteristics, commonalities, and recommendations for better serving these populations. All three groups share some common characteristics, such as isolation, cultural dislocation, and real or perceived barriers between themselves and others. Tao recommended that academic librarians employ the following techniques to better serve diverse student populations:

- Create and maintain a positive learning environment
- Provide instruction on library basics, such as how to find a book and course reserves
- Employ alternative modes of communication such as email and web 2.0 to encourage feedback and interchange
- Provide library materials in multiple formats such as handouts, online tutorials, and in instruction/orientations
- Use universally relevant examples and contexts in instruction
- Employ careful listening and speaking skills
- Avoid library jargon and idioms

The second presentation was "Are digital reference services color blind?" by Dr. Pnina Shachaf, an Assistant Professor of Library and Information Science at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her presentation focused on three studies she has undertaken to determine whether the online environment lessens or increases service discrimination against minorities. The pilot study asked "do e-services provide unbiased services to diverse user groups?" and included three hypotheses; all user groups will receive a response in a timely manner(H1), all user groups will receive the same level of reliable service(H2), and all user groups will receive an equal level of courtesy(H3). All hypotheses were supported in all three studies except H1, all user groups will receive a response in a timely manner. In the pilot study which focused on ARL libraries, Ahmed and Latoya were discriminated against and received significantly different service in the amount of response time they were

provided. For example, Ahmed received 10% of his responses after 31 days in comparison to Mary who received 100% of her responses within 4 days.

The third presenter was Meredith Kahn, University Library Associate at University of Michigan. Her talk is titled "Intersecting Paths & Building Relationships: Outreach Programming for Underrepresented Students in Architecture & Urban Planning." Her presentation highlighted a new outreach program that was designed to improve services to underrepresented students as well as provide new services to the students of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at UM. After reviewing the library literature and gathering data from student interviews and surveys, it was determined that they would pursue two new services: regular office hours staffed by librarians in the Art and Architecture building and provide instruction sessions to NOMAS (student chapter of National Organization for Minority Architects) members during their regular meetings. Both services were successful. The office hours program allowed the librarians to work with the architecture students who felt their needs were overshadowed by the engineering students who outnumbered the architecture students in the library. The instruction sessions offered at NOMAS meetings were huge hits as well. During the initial presentation by Rebecca Price, the response was so positive that it went over the scheduled time. Then she was asked back to the following meeting for a more in-depth session to cover more art and architecture resources. Following their outreach success, Kahn offered advice to others who might try following in their steps. She relayed what they learned could be summarized with the three P's; partnership, patience, and persistence. All three are critical in developing successful outreach programs.