Nearly 300 librarians, library staff, and LIS students from across the country participated in the 2004 National Diversity in Libraries Conference, May 4-5 in Atlanta. The conference was co-hosted by the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, the Historically Black College and University Library Alliance and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). These ARL co-sponsored conferences began in 1998. The attendance more than doubled the previous diversity conferences. Although the conference amounted to a little more than two half-days, we were given four sessions each having concurrent topical sessions and roundtables, at least six to choose from in each of the four sessions.

Keynote speaker was Raymond Santiago, Director of the Miami-Dade Public Library System in Florida. He talked about how libraries have not fully adapted to the cultural diversity that began noticeably in the 1970s in the United States. Santiago defined staff diversity as the first recognition of diverse user populations, collection development as a balancing act between an outline of knowledge and ethnicity, and, with respect to access, argued against the trend toward regional concentrations and called for reintroducing the small neighborhood libraries. Although he was speaking from a public library perspective he spoke about recruitment and having some success with interns (LIS students) but mostly spoke about encouragement and supporting continuing education and celebrating any educational accomplishment of the staff. He mentioned there were some forty languages represented in Dade County. He encourages his staff to celebrate everything and marvels on days when the library is decorated and redecorated the following day in support of yet another event or occasion.

The closing speaker was Francine Henderson, administrator of the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture & History in Atlanta. She spoke to the importance of being around people of different cultures. She recalled how she and her ex-husband learned about different cultures in Africa by talking to people and just “hanging out” with them. They had previously assumed because they were black they would not be considered foreign but were taken aback when they were treated as strangers. That may have been naïve still that’s how they learned to appreciate diversity in a broad sense.

One session, named Working to Learn, Learning to Work, was a description of the Chesapeake Information and Research Library Alliance, CIRLA Fellows Program. About ten libraries in the Chesapeake Bay area work together to encourage staff to go to library school and to help library students find work in libraries while in school. Apparently, the program was still in the recruitment phase at the time of the conference and was looking at this fall semester to implement. This was not residency program but a way to recruit for librarianship and support diversity at the same time.
Another session, two librarians from the University of South Florida had a round table discussion, *Special Collections as an Integral Part of a Library’s Diversity Initiative*. The discussion was about making the community aware of the ethnically diverse collections a library owns. They encouraged advertising what the library owns to the public. They talked about how this can help with development and encouraging the community to use library materials and donate materials. They talked about the sense of pride in community and how many people are unaware the university library has this type of material.

*Summer Jobs 101* was a session given by three librarians who had all been in residency programs just out of library school. Their work and focus was on introducing underrepresented ethnic groups to librarianship by giving them summer jobs in the university library. One library was going into their third year in the program. They discussed their development of the programs and what they might do instead with the next group or what they felt had been successful.

*How to Know if it’s Real: Assessing Diversity and Organizational Climate* was about assessing a library’s accomplishments in diversity. One reason given for auditing/assessing for diversity was: “Foster work environment where employees are valued for uniqueness and personal contributions. Create a more productive environment/atmosphere.” The presenter quoted a co-worker as saying, “Constructing and implementing diversity initiative involves continuous experimentation, assessment, modification and innovation. Assessment of diversity is an ongoing lifetime process of improvement.”

*Quality Services to Library Users When One Size Does Not Fit All* gave tips for addressing diversity issues not only in staffing and collections, but also in services, facilities, and culture and climate. The presenter emphasized that “What we need are diversity initiatives that are not about counting the numbers or tokenism but are concerned with bringing people of diverse characteristics into the academic community and providing them inclusive space.”

In Staffing: *Fostering Diversity in Library Staffing/Recruitment/Retention* the presenter talked about the need for diversity at every level in the workplace. She raised questions for each of us to measure and evaluate our progress:

What am I doing to foster diversity?
Is my staff aware of what I’m doing to foster diversity?
Is there something written in our strategic plan about diversity?
What have we done about what we have written?
Are we satisfied with what we’ve done?