

## **“But Do They Really Want *Me*?”: Reflecting on the Language of DEIA Adopted in Entry-Level Job Postings for Special Collections Librarians in 2023<sup>1</sup>**

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*This study evaluates the extent to which job descriptions for special collections librarians reflect organizational values surrounding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). In early 2024, the authors began by reviewing thirty randomly selected advertisements posted to the RBMS News Blog in 2023, using a newly devised DEIA Assessment Checklist. This paper summarizes past practices and common pitfalls in the recruitment of diverse candidates through job descriptions. Considering the key legislative and political changes in early 2025, the authors also seek to guide institutions unable to openly adopt DEIA language on alternative ways to portray organizational values in the recruitment process.*

### **Introduction**

For the past two decades, the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) has promoted special collections<sup>2</sup> librarianship as an attractive career option for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and “historically underrepresented” people.<sup>3</sup> RBMS identified diversifying the profession as a goal in its 2003 “Diversity Action Plan.”<sup>4</sup> In 2020, ACRL released the Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians, which connects diversity to the

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1. A version of this paper was presented by the authors, under the title, “But do they really want ME?": An Exploratory Diversity Audit of Job Postings,” as part of the RBMS 2024 conference.

2. Throughout this article, “special collections librarianship” encompasses work in any library or institutional archives, rare books, and manuscripts collections.

3. The term “historically underrepresented,” in the context of education, describes individuals belonging to “groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination,” including ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals; among others (Emory University Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance, “Common Terms: Historically underrepresented,” <https://equityandcompliance.emory.edu/resources/self-guided-learning/common-terms.html>).

4. “RBMS Diversity Action Plan,” *RBMS.info*, June 23, 2003, [https://rbms.info/diversity/rbms\\_diversity\\_action\\_plan/](https://rbms.info/diversity/rbms_diversity_action_plan/). It is also listed on RBMS's “About” page: “Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion,” RBMS, <https://rbms.info/about/#diversity>

professional responsibility to “represent . . . marginalized voices.”<sup>5</sup> Library professional organizations established Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives, yet many of their goals remain aspirational. Furthermore, with the flurry of anti-DEIA legislation and executive orders in early 2025, these goals are now under scrutiny and attack, forcing institutions to recalibrate how they approach DEIA in their staffing efforts.<sup>6</sup>

RBMS’s Membership Survey conducted in 2015 indicated that 9% of members identified as BIPOC, whereas 87% identified as White. This survey also noted that “diverse respondents have lower representation in administrative positions.”<sup>7</sup> Surveys in archives convey a similar challenge: only 11% of respondents to the 2022 A\*Census II: Archives Administrators Survey were BIPOC,<sup>8</sup> whereas the A\*Census II: All Archivists Survey recorded a respondent pool of 16% BIPOC/84% White.<sup>9</sup> In addition, only 16% of BIPOC respondents agreed with the statement, “I feel represented by the membership of the archives profession.” The survey further revealed a significant 44% of BIPOC respondents felt the profession had not “adequately addressed [DEIA] issues.”<sup>10</sup> These results indicate broader systemic challenges for these predominantly White fields to make industry-wide improvements.<sup>11</sup>

This paper examines job descriptions, which often serve as a primary source of information for BIPOC candidates, and which, we contend, merit scrutiny by employers who seek to reflect equitable values and diversify their staff. We ask two fundamental questions: 1. How well do job descriptions demonstrate DEIA values in our profession; and 2. What are the common pitfalls in creating job descriptions? To address

5. “ACRL Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians,” *RBMS.info*, June 19, 2020, [https://rbms.info/standards/code\\_of\\_ethics/](https://rbms.info/standards/code_of_ethics/)

6. Maggie Hicks, “The New Anti-DEI Bureaucracy,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 21, 2024, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-new-anti-dei-bureaucracy>; Erin Gretzinger et al., “Tracking Higher Ed’s Dismantling of DEI,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 20, 2024, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/tracking-higher-eds-dismantling-of-dei>; Tracy Richelle High et al., “President Trump Acts to Roll Back DEI Initiatives,” *The Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance*, February 10, 2025, <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2025/02/10/president-trump-acts-to-roll-back-dei-initiatives/>

7. Elspeth Healey and Melissa Nykanen, “Channeling Janus: Past, Present, and Future in the RBMS Membership Survey,” *RBM: a Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 17, no. 1 (2016): 60, 79. At the time of this writing, the results of the 2023 RBMS Membership survey were not yet publicly available. See Rebecca Bramlett et al., “Moving Forward: Membership and the Future of RBMS,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 26, no. 1 (2025): 50–51.

8. Makala Skinner and Ioana G. Hulbert, “A\* CENSUS II: All Archivists Survey Report,” *The American Archivist* 86, no. 1 (2023): 261.

9. Skinner and Hulbert, “A\* CENSUS II,” 19.

10. Skinner and Hulbert, “A\* CENSUS II,” 57, 61.

11. The RBMS Surveys did not ask respondents to self-identify as a person with a disability and/or chronic illness, though SAA surveys did. See Melanie Griffin, “‘Some Days my Work Is Unbearable:’ The Impact of Chronic Illness and Disability on Recruitment and Retention for Workers in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 26, no. 1 (2025): 12–34.

these questions, we begin with the study's literature review and methodology. Next, we lay out the criteria developed for evaluating individual job postings, before summarizing our findings and illustrating them with examples. The paper concludes with reflections on pathways toward inclusive and inviting job descriptions, as well as alternative options to build more diverse special collections staff.

## Literature Review

Our research on job postings builds upon previous studies providing insight into BIPOC candidates' challenges in the hiring process, and how employers may make improvements by signaling DEIA in job postings.<sup>12</sup> Slow progress toward workforce diversity results directly from systemic issues. Hodge asserts that the library profession cannot live up to its Code of Ethics until it achieves "workforce diversity on par with our communities;" only then can libraries provide "equitable, culturally relevant, and inclusive" services.<sup>13</sup> However, as organizations work to achieve this, they often fail to prioritize BIPOC workers' voices. Galvan points out that the performative process of library recruitment, defined by White, middle-class culture, often disproportionately burdens BIPOC candidates by, for example, perpetuating alienation or the notion that BIPOC candidates are merely "diversity hires."<sup>14</sup> VanScoy and Bright revealed BIPOC librarians often feel like the "only one" in libraries, and harbor feelings of isolation and otherness.<sup>15</sup> Participants of their study report emotional labor, pressure to take on DEI responsibilities, microaggressions, and race-based discrimination.<sup>16</sup> Warren considers barriers for Black archivists seeking employment, arguing that institutions must value Black archivists as knowledge producers instead of mere data points.<sup>17</sup> These studies inform our close reading of job postings from our dataset.

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12. This paper focuses on a single year's job postings and engages more specifically with the issue of DEIA, whereas Crocoll and Hansen provided a broad overview of job postings over the course of nine years. See: Ikumi Crocoll and Kelli Hansen, "An Analysis of RBMS News Blog Job Advertisements, 2013–2021," *RBM: a Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 25, no. 2 (2024): 115–132. Amy VanScoy and Kawanna Bright, "Articulating the Experience of Uniqueness and Difference for Librarians of Color," *The Library Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (2019): 289–295; Carmen Cole and Emily Mross, "Ensuring More Inclusive Hiring Processes," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 22, no. 3 (2022): 507–515, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/pla.2022.0037>; Kristyn Caragher and Tatiana Bryant, "Black and Non-Black Library Workers' Perceptions of Hiring, Retention, and Promotion Racial Equity Practices," *Journal of Library Administration* 63, no. 2 (January 25, 2023): 137–178, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2022.159239>.

13. Twanna Hodge, "On Being Black in Librarianship," *I Love Libraries*, July 15, 2020, <https://ilovelibraries.org/article/being-black-librarianship/>

14. Angela Galvan, "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, (June 3, 2015), <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship/>

15. VanScoy and Bright, "Articulating the Experience," 289.

16. VanScoy and Bright, "Articulating the Experience," 289–295.

17. Kellee E. Warren, "We Need These Bodies, But Not Their Knowledge: Black Women in the Archival Science Professions and Their Connection to the Archives of Enslaved Black Women in the French Antilles," *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 776–794.

To increase equity in hiring practices, researchers have proposed various strategies for employers. Smith et al. recommend creating “diversity indicators” in job descriptions, such as flexibility in required qualifications,<sup>18</sup> which may include allowing professional experience to substitute for academic degrees. Chun and Evans’ study similarly emphasizes flexibility as a means of discouraging pre-existing hiring standards and practices.<sup>19</sup> Bledsoe and Frederick’s review of job descriptions for DEI librarians proposes adopting antiracist language and reflecting a “change orientation.”<sup>20</sup> Most postings reviewed for this study adopted these strategies to varying extents.

### **Assessment Criteria for Special Collections Librarian Job Postings**

Drawing on the literature, we created an eleven-point DEIA Assessment Checklist (Checklist). By no means exhaustive, the Checklist was initially prepared as a resource of criteria for employers to adapt within their institutions. Following key legislative and political changes in early 2025, however, we recognize that not all institutions can adopt these criteria explicitly. Nonetheless, hiring managers may still find the Checklist useful as they devise new ways to portray organizational values to attract diverse candidates, in and/or beyond job descriptions. Our eleven assessment criteria for Special Collections Librarian Job Postings were:

1. Emphasizing current institutional DEIA culture with a change orientation;<sup>21</sup>
2. Avoiding generic DEIA statements while discussing antiracism, or acknowledging the history of inequality and the necessity of combating it;<sup>22</sup>
3. Adopting gender-neutral language;<sup>23</sup>

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18. Daryl G. Smith et al., “Interrupting the Usual: Successful Strategies for Hiring Diverse Faculty,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 75, no. 2 (2004): 133–160.

19. Edna Chun and Alvin Evans, “Building an Inclusive Talent Proposition: Recruitment, Hiring, and Search Committee Development,” in *Conducting an Institutional Diversity Audit in Higher Education: A Practitioner’s Guide to Systematic Diversity Transformation* (Stylus, 2019): 107–116.

20. Kara Bledsoe and Jennifer K. Frederick, “Advancing Strategy through Staffing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Library Leadership Roles,” *Ithaka S+R*, August 17, 2021, <https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/advancing-strategy-through-staffing/>

21. Bledsoe and Frederick, “Advancing Strategy.”

22. Bledsoe and Frederick, “Advancing Strategy.” See Frames 2 and 4 in: Joint ALA/ARL Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Task Force, “Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework,” August 2022, <https://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/edi/racialequityframework>

23. Keahi K. Adolpho et al., “Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion in Academic Library Hiring,” in *Toward Inclusive Academic Librarian Hiring Practices*, eds. Kathryn Houk, Jordan Nielsen, and Jenny Wong (ACRL Publications, 2024): 97–110.

4. Providing an accurate pay range;<sup>24</sup>
5. Providing a land acknowledgment, or referencing reparative actions taken to honor Indigenous communities and their lands;<sup>25</sup>
6. Inviting applicants from various academic disciplines and non-traditional backgrounds; center actual skill set/knowledge combinations;<sup>26</sup>
7. Highlighting that hiring from underrepresented groups benefits the professional team and overall profession;<sup>27</sup>
8. Emphasizing that diverse users deserve diverse special collections workers;<sup>28</sup>
9. Connecting necessity of having diverse perspectives and lived experiences represented in the professional team to ethical special collections' collection development challenges;<sup>29</sup>
10. Consistently adopting clear language for what diversity means to your organization;<sup>30</sup>
11. Bringing transparency to the core job requirements and helpful qualifications.<sup>31</sup>

## Methodology and Data Collection

Entry-level position postings are “gateways” diverse candidates encounter when entering the library profession, establishing portfolios, and becoming change agents. They are also a key means by which an institution conveys and achieves its DEIA goals. However, postings are ultimately marketing tools, used by an institution to achieve its goals and best interests, and, intentionally or not, job postings can mislead candidates. For example, postings may list a considerably broad pay range, which attracts well-qualified candidates, yet early-career applicants may only receive a salary offer in the lower range. This disconnection between advertisement and candidates' expectations<sup>32</sup> suggests a larger methodological challenge for evaluating an institution's

24. “RBMS policy requires that all position announcements include salary information (minimum, range, or maximum) as advised by the Association of College and Research Libraries' *Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians*. Position announcements that do not include salary information will not be posted” (“RBMS News Blog,” *RBMS*, <https://rbms.info/blog/category/news-events/>). See: Carolina Hernandez, “Need Not Apply: Identifying Barriers to Application in Academic Librarian Job Postings,” *Forging the Future: The Proceedings of the ACRL 2023 Conference* (2023); Louise L. Lowe et al., “Post-Pandemic Perspectives on Academic Librarian Recruitment Practices,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 50, no. 6 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2024.102977>.

25. For more information on taking reparative action, see also: David X. Lemmons et al., “Beyond a Land Acknowledgement: Taking a First Step Towards Reparative Action,” *Journal of Radical Librarianship* 10, (2024): 81–90.

26. Smith et al., “Interrupting the Usual.”; Chun and Evans, “Building an Inclusive.”

27. “Diversity,” *RBMS*, <https://rbms.info/diversity/>

28. Hodge, “On Being Black.”

29. David Macaulay, “Applications of Diversity Language to Descriptions of Collection Development Activities at Academic Libraries: An Exploratory Analysis of Strategic Plans and Diversity Information Webpages,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 49, no. 4 (2023): 102–139.

30. Dustin Fife et al., “Leader Responsibility for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice in Academic Libraries: An Exploratory Study,” *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 47, no. 4 (2021): 102–161.

31. Mimosa Shah and Dustin Fife, “Obstacles and Barriers in Hiring: Rethinking the Process to Open Doors,” *College & Research Libraries News* 84, no. 2 (2023): 55.

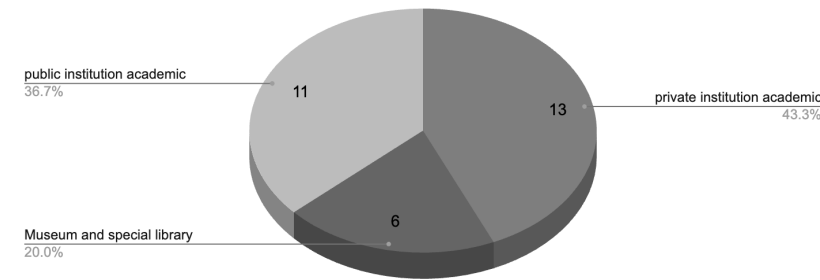
32. Lowe et al., “Post-Pandemic Perspectives.”

DEIA efforts solely based on job postings. In practice, candidates should look beyond job descriptions to develop a full understanding of the work environment, including pay equity, belonging, and support structures.

This study explores the adoption of DEIA verbiage in entry-level job descriptions for special collections, based on a sample of thirty jobs posted to the *RBMS News Blog* in 2023.<sup>33</sup> We began by considering all 179 job postings posted that year, then narrowed our focus to only postings with requirement of a Master’s-level education (but not explicitly more) and a maximum of three years’ experience. Thus, the original dataset narrowed by 23%. The remaining 136 positions were chronologically numbered and imported to Google Sheets. To enable closer reading and to complete the study in a reasonable timeframe, we further limited our study sample to thirty, selected by applying the “randomize” function (RAND) (see Appendix A). Our dataset covers three institution types: private institution academic (43%, or 13); public institution academic (37%, or 11); and museum and special library (20%, or 8) (see Figure 1). Institutions spanned sixteen US states. Job categories included “Archivist” (27%, or 9); “Librarian” (27%, or 9); “Curator” (24%, or 8); and “Cataloger” (15%, or 5).<sup>34</sup>

Eight postings from the initial dataset did not meet the criteria for entry-level positions and were replaced, again using the same RAND function as in the original pool (see Appendix B). Furthermore, when postings appeared truncated (e.g., ending abruptly, providing no duties) on the *RBMS News Blog*, we discovered full-length postings on third-party sites, which were treated as preferred information sources.<sup>35</sup>

**FIGURE 1**  
**Institution Types for Job Postings within Sample**



33. “RBMS News Blog,” <https://rbms.info/blog/category/news-events/>  
34. Three positions’ titles overlapped categories (e.g., “Librarian and Archivist”). Both categories were counted in such cases.  
35. Expanded positions were located on “Society of American Archivists,” <https://www2.archivists.org/>; and “The Chronicle of Higher Education,” <https://jobs.chronicle.com/>

The authors independently reviewed the thirty posts using the Checklist, and recorded sentences from each posting that successfully or unsuccessfully embodied Checklist criteria. Then, we convened to discuss observations across posts that are summarized in this paper.

## Results

Any job description combines the efforts of hiring managers, human resources departments, and other stakeholders. This section summarizes the appeal and success of certain institutional end-products that reflected the early development of anti-DEIA legislation before 2024, when some libraries began to face content restrictions.

We identified three areas where many postings succeeded in reflecting DEIA values. First, all thirty postings (100%) both adopted gender-neutral language and provided a pay range. Secondly, most postings (67%, or 20) demonstrated some flexibility regarding the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS)<sup>36</sup> requirement. Finally, 13% (or 4) of postings actively encouraged applicants with less traditional backgrounds.

We also observed three common issues among postings. First, a majority contained general DEIA claims and neither discussed nor acknowledged the need for institutional-level change. “Antiracism” appeared only twice (7%).<sup>37</sup> Second, zero (0%) postings included a statement about Indigenous communities—despite many institutions’ formal land acknowledgements, and the fact that some special collections librarians include these in their email signatures and professional communication. Though some critique land acknowledgements as performative and propose that institutions focus on reparative actions instead,<sup>38</sup> the absence of statements may reflect impediments to centering Indigenous communities in library work. Third, few postings connected institution-level DEIA efforts to special collections’ memory work, which may signal an insufficient infrastructure. This illustrates a necessity to clearly state how diverse special collections workforces empower diverse users, prepare organizations for ethical questions, and contribute to the profession’s progress and wellbeing.

## Examples

Postings cited here are snapshots in time, reflecting the wide array of local and historical contexts in 2023. We share examples to demonstrate common approaches to

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36. Here, representing such degrees, variously abbreviated as MLS, MLIS, MSLIS, MSI, MI.

37. Extended to mean an institutions’ acknowledgement of past injustices, and usage of antiracist vocabulary.

38. See: Lemmons et al., “Beyond a Land Acknowledgement.”



attract diverse candidates, not to discredit or defame. The first three examples demonstrate success in portraying DEIA values.

The following posting advertises a rare books librarian position at a public university in the West:

All candidates should be prepared to discuss how they see themselves contributing to the University's equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. The library serves an increasingly diverse constituency of patrons, and our employees, services, collections, and policies should honor and reflect this diversity. We are therefore interested in candidates who have experience with historically excluded groups and who are committed to advancing our mission to provide equitable access to information resources.

This post connects patron diversity to staffing needs, actual collections, and library policies. It also acknowledges historically excluded groups and the search for a candidate who upholds the institution's stated commitments.

Another successful example advertises a curator role at a private university in the Northeast:

[Department's core initiatives:] diversifying the collection by acquiring materials in underrepresented areas, including works by creators from underrepresented communities and geographical regions, examples of lesser-known and underground print technologies, and artifacts of printing and graphic arts influenced by digital technologies [ . . . ] Additional qualifications: A demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging, and antiracism and to serving the needs of a diverse population.

The text magnifies how the institution diversifies collections and amplifies marginalized voices through its acquisitions work, which the incumbent will directly contribute to. Additional qualifications emphasize antiracism and centering diverse groups.

Postings should explicitly address preferred skills and set expectations, as does this posting for an archivist position at a private institution in the South:

Candidates need not possess every one of the preferred skills listed or perform all of the duties with equal proficiency on day one. We strongly encourage those who are passionate about supporting our mission to apply, including those from historically underrepresented groups or who have followed less traditional paths to archival work. Additionally, applicants



are encouraged to communicate in their cover letter how their experiences fulfill the required qualifications in ways that may not be obvious.

This posting encourages applicants from outside academia, including those who might have changed careers. It also provides actionable guidance to candidates as they compose their application.

The common thread between these three successful examples is an effort to elucidate what is often implied: an institution's commitment to antiracism, how the incumbent contributes to DEIA concretely, and who is encouraged to apply. Transparency and specificity distinguish them from the next few examples, whose genericisms and boilerplate verbiage undermine their efficacy to attract diverse candidates. Consider an advertisement for a curator position at a large public university in the Midwest: "[Incumbent participates] in the . . . Library's strategic plan as part of the University . . . DEI 2.0 initiative to build diverse collections and create an inclusive environment for research and study." This posting specifies neither what "participation" entails, nor how the role concretely relates to the described initiative.

Imprecision is also seen in technical services roles: a metadata librarian posting from a public university in the Midwest expects the incumbent to perform "ethical remediation" for metadata while simultaneously mentioning "EDI" only briefly under its preferred qualifications. This mismatch between responsibilities and relevant skills suggests that DEIA competency is not viewed as equally crucial to technical skills or is insufficiently integrated into the role.

Another posting for an archivist role at a private institution in the West states: "qualified individuals should be able to articulate a strong commitment to diversity, and have the ability to work effectively with individuals from different backgrounds." This description adopts generalities that downplay historical injustice. It joins several other examples in the dataset in "racial colorblindness," or, "the belief that racial group membership should not be taken into account, or even noticed, as a strategy for managing diversity and intergroup relations."<sup>39</sup> Such postings not only fail to acknowledge how race historically shaped their particular communities, but also imply reluctance to prioritize marginalized or misrepresented voices and take reparative actions.

Finally, employers must resist ableism. The following advertises a librarian position at a special library in the Northeast:

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39. Evan P. Apfelbaum et al., "Racial Color Blindness: Emergence, Practice, and Implications," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 21, no. 3 (2012): 205–209; Kimberly Diggles, "Addressing Racial Awareness and Color-Blindness in Higher Education," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 140, (2014): 31–44.

*Qualifications:* Ability to handle and move heavy books and boxes and wheel carts of books and other collection objects around campus (25–30 lbs.), extensive walking, standing, kneeling, stooping, climbing up stairs and narrow spaces; ability to work for extended periods on a computer, and tolerate moderate levels of dust and odor generated during normal collection management activities, movement of objects, and cleaning.

Describing physical movements at length suggests preference for an able-bodied candidate. “Narrow spaces” without context may imply that individuals of certain body types, or who experience claustrophobia and/or anxiety, should not apply. “Moderate levels of dust and odor” could likewise signal to individuals with asthma or other respiratory issues. Without indicating what accommodations, if any, the employer provides, this posting may discourage applicants with disabilities. It contradicts best practices for recruiting people with disabilities, including those created by SAA’s Accessibility and Disability Section: “Evaluate the job description for unnecessarily exclusionary ‘essential functions’ that rely on physical ability,” and “Express willingness to provide accommodations and indicate how an applicant can make requests.”<sup>40</sup> Last but not least, framing physical ability itself as a “qualification” is unethical. Following O’Sullivan and Alexander’s argument that “to best align with the ethics of our field . . . special collections practitioners must extend these efforts [to accommodate individuals with disabilities] beyond the minimum set by the legal mandate,”<sup>41</sup> we contend that the staffing of special collections libraries must move beyond legal compliance to values-motivated inclusivity.<sup>42</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

Job postings are marketing tools. As such, job seekers should not treat them as sole information sources when considering a position and employer. Given the censorship of DEIA language by federal and state legislation, the authors expect more institutions will exclude DEIA and antiracism from their job descriptions. Therefore, job seekers must consult with other sources of information to develop a fuller picture of an institution’s culture. Safe professional networks, especially spaces dedicated to BIPOC library workers, will play a key role in this new era (see Appendix C). Institutions should effectively leverage such networks to provide additional information to diverse candidates, such as DEIA information excluded from job descriptions for compliance, or an institutional contact who volunteers to connect with applicants informally, to attract BIPOC candidates. We believe that a pilot study of this model

40. See: Lydia Tang et al., “Toward Inclusion: Best Practices for Hiring People with Disabilities,” *Archival Outlook*, (July/August 2020): 4.

41. Kevin M. O’Sullivan and Gia Alexander, “Toward Inclusive Outreach: What Special Collections Can Learn from Disability Studies,” *RBM: a Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 21, no.1 (2020): 15.

42. See also Griffin, this issue.

of recruiting diverse candidates in collaboration with BIPOC librarians' organizations will provide tremendous value to both employers and the profession.

Many job postings from 2023 named various required DEIA responsibilities, yet institutions often do not provide emotional and professional assistance needed to match expectations, a reality especially detrimental to BIPOC candidates, who are often expected to produce such outputs.<sup>43</sup> Institutions must aid and advocate for BIPOC candidates undergoing this process. Leaders in the field must identify how special collections librarianship as a profession can be more welcoming and encouraging.

We must continue the conversation on DEIA and staffing in our field systematically, even—and especially—when it becomes taboo.<sup>44</sup> Special collections librarians and institutions must develop a consistent base upon which to build and uphold our professional ethics and the progress of our DEIA advocacy. More attention must be dedicated to BIPOC workers and workers with disabilities to uncover how they perceive the job search and professionalization processes. RBMS should lead efforts to bridge the gap between our words and actions, beginning today.

For employers, our study suggests that DEIA efforts be as visible and specific as possible when advertising job postings. Employers may achieve this by weaving DEIA principles into job responsibilities and requirements, and/or by circulating job postings with added information in professional spaces dedicated to BIPOC workers. Generic DEIA statements do not convey the significance of diversity in their workforce, or the expectations and support for prospective BIPOC employees. An insincere mention of DEIA in a job posting is both unethical and ineffective, as it misrepresents the nature of a role and creates the secondary issue of retention, thus failing to enrich a library's services and culture. Employers should persevere in articulating the positive impacts of having a diverse staff in creative ways, on paper and/or during the recruitment process. These benefits should always link to the institution's efforts and ability to achieve its mission. Such information will signal to BIPOC candidates that their presence is as valued by the employer as the expertise and skills they bring.

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43. VanScoy and Bright, "Articulating the Experience."

44. "Against Anticipatory Obedience," *American Association of University Professors*, January 2025, <https://www.aaup.org/report/against-anticipatory-obedience>

## Appendix A: Job Postings Selected for This Study

1. Anne Belk Distinguished Fellow for Distinctive Collections (Curator), Appalachian State University. Posted February 3, 2023.
2. Archivist for Special Collections and University Archives, Pepperdine University. Posted April 3, 2023.
3. Archivist, Judd Foundation. Posted October 13, 2023.
4. Assistant Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Posted May 22, 2023.
5. Barron Hilton Archivist for Flight and Space Exploration, Purdue University. Posted July 18, 2023.
6. Book Arts Studio Manager & Instructor, University of Utah. Posted January 6, 2023.
7. Cataloger, The Noel Foundation, LSU Shreveport. Posted February 8, 2023.
8. Collections Strategy Librarian, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Posted March 1, 2023.
9. Curator (Assistant or Associate Librarian), Baylor University (Extended). Posted October 23, 2023.
10. Curator for Pictorial Collections, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley. Posted August 14, 2023.
11. Curator of Maps and Graphics, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Posted February 8, 2023.
12. Curator, Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, USC Libraries. Posted August 16, 2023.
13. Digital Archivist, RIT Archives, Rochester Institute of Technology. Posted January 17, 2023.
14. Digital Collections Librarian/Archivist, Loyola University New Orleans. Posted April 30, 2023.
15. Ethiopic Manuscripts Cataloger, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. Posted March 12, 2023.
16. Exhibits and Engagement Archivist, University of Arkansas. Posted March 7, 2023.
17. General Cataloguer, The Historic New Orleans Collection. Posted January 30, 2023.
18. Manuscripts Archivist, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Posted April 7, 2023.
19. Metadata Librarian, University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC) University Libraries. Posted January 20, 2023.
20. Processing & Instruction Archivist, University of Richmond. Posted July 26, 2023.
21. Rare Books Librarian, University of Utah. Posted December 1, 2023.

22. Reader Services Librarian, Morgan Library & Museum. Posted May 22, 2023.
23. Reference and Instruction Archivist, Mount Holyoke College. Posted January 30, 2023.
24. Reference Archivist/Librarian for Archives and Special Collections, Harvard Library. Posted August 27, 2023.
25. Robert De Niro Curator of Film, Harry Ransom Center. Posted November 17, 2023.
26. Special Collections Librarian, Carleton College. Posted December 8, 2023.
27. Special Collections Librarian/Curator Burroughs Collection, University of Louisville. Posted February 7, 2023.
28. Special Collections Project Cataloging Specialist, Princeton University Library (Multiple Openings). Posted April 7, 2023.
29. Special Collections Reference Associate, NYU Libraries. Posted June 26, 2023.
30. Western Manuscripts Cataloger, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library. Posted March 12, 2023.

## Appendix B: Postings Removed from This Study

1. Associate Director of Special Collections and Galleries/University Archivist, Georgia College & State University. *Not entry-level.*
2. Associate University Librarian for Special Collections, Boston University. *Not entry-level.*
3. Digital Collections Coordinator, University of California, Santa Barbara. *Requiring a Bachelor's degree only.*
4. Drue Heinz Curator of Literary and Historical Manuscripts, Morgan Library & Museum. *Not entry-level.*
5. Special Collections Cataloging Specialist, University of Arkansas. *Requiring a Bachelor's degree only.*
6. Visual Books Project Assistant, University of Utah. *Requiring a Bachelor's degree only.*
7. Wilson Infrastructure Project Manager, UNC–Chapel Hill. *Requiring a Bachelor's degree only.*
8. Women's Archives Metadata Specialist, University of Utah. *Requiring a Bachelor's degree only.*

## Appendix C: Jobline Services Provided by BIPOC Librarian Organizations, Arranged Alphabetically

- American Indian Library Association (AILA): jobline service available via AILA Listserv, see the “AILA Listserv Guidelines” document on Membership page (<https://ailanet.org/membership/>).
- Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA): jobline service available via APALA Career Center (<https://apala.careerwebsite.com/>).
- Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA): jobline service available via BCALA Career Center (<https://jobs.bcala.org/>).
- Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA):<sup>45</sup> jobline service available via CALA Advertisement Posting (<https://ad.cala-web.org/>).
- REFORMA: The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking: jobline service available via REFORMA Jobs Board ([https://www.reforma.org/jobs\\_addnew.asp](https://www.reforma.org/jobs_addnew.asp)).
- We Here: jobline service available via “Submit a Job” page (<https://www.wehere.space/submit-a-job>).

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45. The two authors currently volunteer for CALA.