

Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists  
Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Task Force  
Final Report  
April 30, 2021

Submitted by Task Force Committee Members:

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## INTRODUCTION

As the stewards of recorded history, archivists in the Rocky Mountain region have a responsibility to combat social injustices and racism and strive for representative collections, ethical descriptive and collection management practices, and professional growth in these areas. The Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA) took an initial step in this ongoing endeavor by forming the Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice (DIRJ) Task Force to explore how SRMA can further support these efforts.

This report presents the recommendations of the DIRJ Task Force as related to its charge:

- Formation of a permanent Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Committee
- Educational opportunities
- Scholarship in support of archivists of color
- Recruitment to the profession and to the organization
- Outreach and engagement
- Changes in organizational policies

The recommendations are grounded in the following pledge:

*SRMA recognizes and affirms that diversity takes many forms, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender and sexual identity, and disability. We will continue to work as an organization on developing, supporting, and providing educational opportunities for anti-racist archival practices. SRMA equally pledges our support for our members from other diverse communities and to supporting archival work that includes and recognizes the multifaceted nature of diversity in our profession.*

### **Background on the Formation of the DIRJ Task Force**

SRMA issued a statement condemning racial injustice in response to the murder of George Floyd and the cumulative injustices of police brutality and systemic racism towards Black lives. In July 2020, the SRMA Board formed the DIRJ Task Force to identify long-term, sustainable actions that SRMA should take to promote diversity, inclusion, and ethical behavior, as well as to address racial justice issues in our organization and profession, now and in the future. The objective of the task force was to produce a detailed report of findings and recommendations, and present it to the SRMA board and make it available to all SRMA members no later than April 2021. SRMA President, Megan Friedel, issued a call for volunteers to serve on the task force. The email announced the task force would be up to nine members including two co-chairs. SRMA board member Aaron Ramirez (Preservation Member-at-Large) would serve as the board representative co-chair. Task force members were selected on a first-come, first-serve basis, and included eight SRMA members.

### **Work of the Task Force**

The first DIRJ meeting was held on September 18, 2020 to review the charge and create a plan to fulfill its responsibilities. Laura Uglean Jackson was selected as co-chair. The Task Force met each month virtually until April 2021. At each meeting, the Task Force discussed a component of the charge by brainstorming ideas and sharing individual experiences and expertise.

Representatives from the task force provided an update on the group's efforts at the SRMA Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Forum in November 2020. SRMA President, Megan Friedel issued a statement in the February 2021 issue of *The Rocky Mountain Archivist* (see Appendix A), which served to clarify the extent of cultures and people considered in thinking about diversity and inclusion. The DIRJ Task Force used this statement in consideration of its report.

Laura Ruttum Senturia and Aaron Ramirez created a survey on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) topics to better understand the SRMA membership's needs, and to help guide the recommendations of the DIRJ Task Force. They made the survey public through the SRMA listserv December 17, 2020, and sent a reminder on January 9, 2021. The survey closed January 13, 2021. Twenty-two respondents replied to the 12 question survey. Please find the survey questions and analysis of responses in Appendix B.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

### **Formation of a Permanent Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Committee**

Based on survey results and discussions among the committee and with others, we strongly recommend that SRMA establish a permanent Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice committee with at least one representative to serve on the SRMA board as a regular voting member. This committee should be composed of members from the general membership and should include members from organizations of different sizes and disciplines from across the SRMA service area, and if possible students, volunteers, and people from historically underrepresented groups in the archives profession. This committee will advise and advocate for a diversity, inclusion, and racial justice perspective to the organization as a whole.

Recommended charge for the permanent committee:

- Review recommendations from this document and prioritize next steps. Implement recommended actions from other sections in this document.
- Think about long-term planning and objectives for the committee's activities.
- Work closely with the program committee/member at large to recommend DEI topics and speakers at the annual conference and for continuing education opportunities throughout the year.
- Have a representative on the existing scholarship committee
- Work with the membership chair to recruit new members from the archives and allied professions as well as students (undergraduate and graduate) and volunteers in archives.
- Hold the SRMA board and membership accountable to the SRMA pledge on diversity

### **Educational Opportunities**

This section includes the Task Force's recommendations regarding opportunities for SRMA members and non-members alike to expand skill sets, further understanding, and increase confidence when discussing, working, and generally improving in the areas of diversity, inclusion, social justice, and anti-racism. Recommendations are for regular SRMA conferences

as well as continuing education throughout the year, and include suggested timeframes and person or body responsible for implementation.

### SRMA Annual Conference

We strongly recommend that SRMA make equity, diversity, and inclusion part of every SRMA conference, no matter the topic. Suggestions for making this possible include:

- Recruiting diverse speakers (e.g. at least one speaker/panelist from a traditionally marginalized community) by:
  - Requiring an inclusivity statement for conference proposals that addresses the diversity of the speakers, institutions, and/or topic (*immediate, Board*)
  - Continue covering registration costs for conference speakers, including lunch.
  - Consider paying for travel expenses or offer a per diem for speakers traveling from out of town, or for speakers from traditionally marginalized communities (*midterm, depending on funding, Board*)
  - Expand the call for proposals to those living and working outside the Rocky Mountain Region. The program coordinator(s) could prioritize SRMA members and those from Colorado and Wyoming to ensure members are represented. (*immediate, Board*)
- At least one conference component/session with a DEI-lens (recognizing this would be somewhat dependent on the topic/theme of the conference). (*immediate, Board*)
- Offering a virtual component at every conference to increase the pool of attendees and make the conference more accessible. This could also increase the pool of possible speakers. (*midterm, Board*)

### Continuing Education Throughout the Year

There are many workshops and webinars available for SRMA to host (see Appendix C for examples). We suggest offering existing content from experts, rather than asking SRMA leadership or members to create new content. Recognizing the volunteer-nature of the continuing education coordinator and capacity of members' professional growth and resources, we recommend offering one DEI continuing educational opportunity per year, at least to start. SRMA should offer these opportunities at cost; that is, at an estimated price point that will cover the costs of hosting (typically speaker fees, per diem, lunch for participants). Offer a variety of choices from year to year. (*midterm, education coordinator and permanent committee*)

- SRMA could host free webinar watch parties where participants watch the same webinar and then have a discussion afterward. Alternatively, participants could watch a webinar on their own time and then attend a scheduled discussion. This suggestion may overlap with recommendations under outreach and engagement. (*midterm, education coordinator and permanent committee*)

- Another possibility is to partner with regional library and archives organizations to cover specialized topics such as records management, museums, etc. (*long-term, Board, permanent committee, education coordinator*)

### **Scholarships in Support of Archivists of Color**

SRMA should consider committing scholarship funds in new ways to support new or prospective archivists from traditionally underrepresented groups.

- SRMA should fund scholarships for professional training or conference attendance, but funds should not be limited to only applicants who are trained archivists or who are graduate students enrolled in an MLIS program. Scholarships could possibly fund any aspect of archival, museum or information science study or continuing education (classes, workshops or conference attendance.) Broaden the advertising and promotion of scholarship opportunities to higher education departments outside of just SRMA members and institutions with MLIS programs. (*midterm, permanent committee*)
- SRMA should fund professional training in a paid internship in an area library or archives supervised by professional staff. Since archival work experience is sometimes a barrier to completing higher education or finding an entry level professional job, a SRMA scholarship could make a difference by paying an intern to learn professional skills while at the same time providing a local archives an intern to complete limited term projects. See [Northwest Archivists' Archivist-In-Residence](#) program for a similar model. (*long-term, permanent committee*)
- Simplify and shorten the scholarship application. (*midterm, permanent committee, scholarship subcommittee*)
- Consider free annual SRMA memberships for any SRMA scholarship awardee. (*immediate, Board*)
- Add a line to the annual membership renewals form allowing members to donate and support the SRMA scholarship and/or internship fund. (*immediate, Board*)

### **Recruitment**

SRMA's recruitment efforts should increase diversity and equity of the field, and encourage and promote new professionals from underrepresented communities and cultures to join the profession. The following bullet points are recommendations for projects and programs that SRMA may pursue. Actualizing successes in this area will not be instantaneous; therefore, we recommend taking a long-view on recruitment efforts.

- Identify and list barriers of access to the field. This work could be done by the permanent DIRJ committee who would then develop programs/projects to address these barriers. (*immediate - midterm, permanent committee*)
- Engage in a literature review to see what other archival organizations have done in this area. Consult with colleagues at these institutions for insights. Develop strategies appropriate for our area of influence. (*midterm, permanent committee*)
- Create a clearinghouse/database for paid diversity internships, fellowships and similar programs in our service area (*midterm, permanent committee*)

- Create a network and serve as a liaison between institutions and individuals for internship opportunities, interviews, and mentorship in our service area. (*long-term, permanent committee*)
- Conduct outreach to secondary schools and non-archives organizations to introduce the archives profession (*long-term, permanent committee*)
- Mentorship of students. Reach out to history clubs and organizations in middle and high schools, and higher education institutions (*long-term, permanent committee*)

### **Outreach and Engagement**

Suggested outreach and engagement programs include promoting the services and benefits of SRMA, tools for archives practitioners, and providing a space for discussion and community building. These recommendations may also increase awareness of archives with cultures and communities not served or largely represented in the field.

- Maintain a SRMA diversity page to provide resources and opportunities that promote DEI (*immediate, permanent committee*)
- Create an DEI toolkit for archives practitioners, including resources for cataloging/description, outreach, and administration. This could be a clearinghouse of informational resources for archives and similar organizations throughout the SRMA region looking at diversity, equity, and inclusion materials related to the archival domains, especially acquisition and arrangement and description. This could be done through a website of current links and suggested readings, with appropriate promotion of that website. (*midterm, permanent committee*)
- Take over a SRMA happy hour or host lunch and learn presentations with breakout rooms for smaller groups to speak candidly. (*immediate, permanent committee*)
- Create an article reading club with a DEI focus, allowing participants a lower bar of entry than a book club. (*immediate, permanent committee*)
- Collaborate with non-archival community organizations to build working relationships and expand greater awareness for archives (*long-term, permanent committee*)
- Sponsor discussion events after watching a movie or reading an article. Like an opt-in book club, but movies. For example, [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#). (*midterm, permanent committee*)
- Use social media to strategically promote and advocate for DEI (for example: include brief "case studies" content that illustrates an DEI challenge in archives, and how it was addressed. Essentially creating teachable moments) (*midterm, permanent committee*)

### **Organizational Policies**

Feedback from the membership and in the survey suggests SRMA should strive to make diversity, inclusion, and racial justice values that infuse the board meetings, membership

meetings, and communications such as newsletters and announcements. Among the recommendations we suggest:

- Review SRMA's bylaws and policies with a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens and work with the permanent DIRJ committee to suggest recommendations of changes. (*immediate, Board, permanent committee*)
- Use inclusive decision making in considering vendors/contractors for SRMA business and conferences. Prioritize BIPOC-owned, female-owned, small business organizations, and companies practicing ethical business practices whenever possible. (*immediate, Board*)
- Consider changes to the makeup of the SRMA board to include at least one student member or new professional. (*midterm, Board*)
- Consider creating a land acknowledgement or diversity statement to read prior to events and meetings. (*midterm, Board*)
- Keep membership fees affordable (*Board*)

## Appendix A

### Statement by SRMA President Megan Friedel

*The Rocky Mountain Archivist*, Volume 37, No. 4, Winter Issue, February 2021

I want to close by re-stating SRMA's commitment to diversity. SRMA recognizes and affirms that diversity takes many forms, including but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender and sexual identity, and disability. In the summer and fall of 2020, SRMA focused our work specifically on racial injustice issues because of the pressing need to respond, as a professional organization, to the Black Lives Matter movement and the deaths of George Floyd and too many other Black members of our communities. We will continue to work as an organization on developing, supporting, and providing educational opportunities for anti-racist archival practices. But I also want to be clear that, going forward, SRMA equally pledges our support for our members from other diverse communities and to supporting archival work that includes and recognizes the multifaceted nature of diversity in our profession. The SRMA board has specifically asked the Task Force on Diversity, Inclusion & Racial Justice to recognize and include this pledge in their recommendations for the board. If you have other ideas for how SRMA can do this important work, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at: [srmaonline@srmarchivists.org](mailto:srmaonline@srmarchivists.org).



## Appendix B

### SRMA DIRJ Survey Analysis

Our task force felt it was important to establish a benchmark of where our members and organization stand at this moment in time. We were curious about the following topics:

- How familiar our members are with DEI concepts
- What our members feel are the barriers to entry, promotion, and retention in our field
- What resources our members value, and wish were available to them
- What personal experiences our members have had with discrimination at work

On December 17, 2020 and January 9, 2021, we sent out a survey of 11 questions via the SRMA listserv. Overall, we received responses from 22 individuals, approximately 16% of members. In addition, we did not share the survey directly with MLIS degree programs, an omission that unfortunately meant we did not see student respondents. While we were disappointed with this response rate, we still felt the answers were instructive for our purposes. See appendix A for full results and visual imagery.

Before turning to the results, we suggest that SRMA commit to an annual survey on DEI topics. Repeated surveying would allow SRMA to:

- Continue benchmarking on these topics
- Measure the effectiveness of activities the organization itself undertakes
- Glean new insights and suggestions for the future, from the community who will benefit
- See DEI not as an end target, but an ongoing process that we should assess regularly

Looking at the survey itself, our respondents were mostly current SRMA members (95.5%), and primarily employed at either public libraries (45.5%) or academic archives (40.9%). The remainder were at public archives, academic libraries, the state library, and unemployed. Complicating this question, however, was that we allowed respondents to select multiple answers. As 33 responses were entered for a survey with only 22 respondents, it is clear there was overlap (public library archivists, for example).

We did not ask our respondents for information on personal identity beyond these categories, due to potential participant concerns of being identified or discounted. In future surveys, we recommend adding in demographic questions, to better identify which communities need greater support, and to lend the authority of personal experience to many answers.

We did ask if our respondents had experienced “micro-aggressions, overt aggression, discrimination, othering...” etc.

- 40.1% replied they had not experienced discrimination, and 13.6% were unsure
- 36.4 % (>1/3 of respondents) said that they had experienced discrimination at work

Of these, the categories being discriminated against were:

- Gender (45%)
- Age (20%)
- Family status (15%)
- Sexual orientation (10%)
- Race (10%)

We suspect that, while these numbers indicate bias in the field, they are also indicative of the demographics of our predominantly cisgendered female and white profession. Low numbers of BIPOC archivists, for example, would mean low numbers of reported racial discrimination, even if 100% of BIPOC archivists experienced regular racism at work. Adding a personal identity question to future surveys would allow for weighting responses more appropriately.

Moving to the items from our survey that garnered the most support, the bulleted options below each received 50% or more “votes.” For the full responses, or if you prefer visual graphics, see Appendix A. Our respondents most wanted:

- To support institutions and archivists in their professional responsibilities:
  - Toolkit for equitable processing, reference, collecting, cataloging practice (95.5%)
  - DIRJ staff training program offerings (59.1%)
  - DIRJ training for managers (54.5%)
  - Creating a permanent DIRJ committee in SRMA (50%)
- To support individual members and students in their careers:
  - MLIS diversity scholarships (72.7%)
  - Diversity mentor program (63.6%)
  - Lunch & Learn sessions (63.6%)
  - Professional development programs by external hosts (59.1%)
  - Professional development programs by SRMA hosts (50%)
  - Diversity book/article club (50%)
- To support institutions and the larger profession:
  - Conduct a larger survey on factors affecting retention (71.4%)
  - Guidelines for managers on hiring, retention, management (61.9%)
  - Partner with social justice organizations (61.9%)
  - Create guidelines for managers to remove barriers to entry in the field (57.1%)
  - Outreach to high schools/colleges, as recruitment to the profession (52.4%)

Equally useful were suggestions respondents submitted. These include a need for SRMA to:

- Provide DIRJ group mentoring and leadership training specifically for BIPOC archivists
- Offer scholarships for grad programs and continuing education
- Advocate for labor issues such as pay transparency/equity, and permanent positions. Respondent noted new archivists are more likely to struggle with poor labor practices that define entry to the field, while new archivists are also more likely to expand diversity.
- Get involved with government-level advocacy/policy work. Switch from being an organization *of* archivists, to become one *advocating for* archives/archivists.
- When doing future surveys, include an action plan
- If creating an internship database, only accept listings for paid internships

- Include virtual options in all future trainings (increases accessibility)

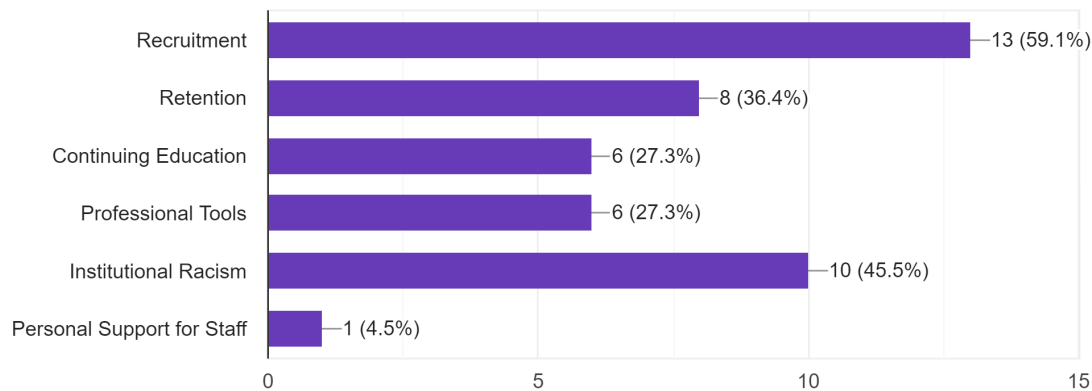
Overall, our members initially reported they felt that “retention” and “institutional racism” were the two most important factors for SRMA to address. This held steady through the survey. As we delved deeper, however, we also found strong support for improving employment contract options across the board, and direct funding of more diverse candidates in our student community. In addition, respondents asked SRMA to offer tools all archivists could use in their own professional practice, from training to best practice toolkits and guidelines.

Our respondents reported their current employers are making efforts towards lifting diversity, et al (86.3%), but they felt there is still room to grow (81.8%, with 31.8% saying there’s a *long way* to go). As a whole, our survey indicated SRMA members want to diversify archives, support the success of new colleagues, and learn how to advance justice in their daily work. While they feel Rocky Mountain archival employers are making progress, they believe there is a need for SRMA to set standards and lead the way.

**Question One:**

While each of these categories are important, what two aspects of EDI support (Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity) do you think are most crucial for SRMA to address first? Please pick only TWO.

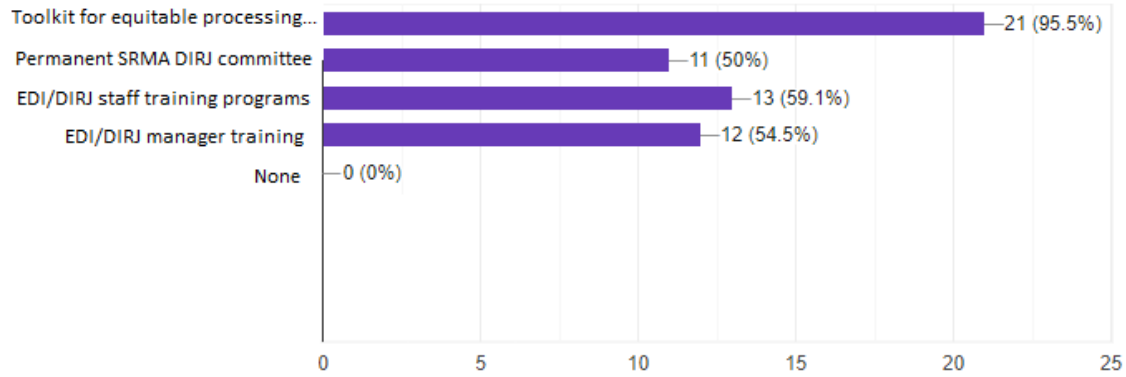
22 responses



**Question Two:**

Which of the following do you feel SRMA should offer to support professional development and institutional growth? Select as many as apply.

22 responses



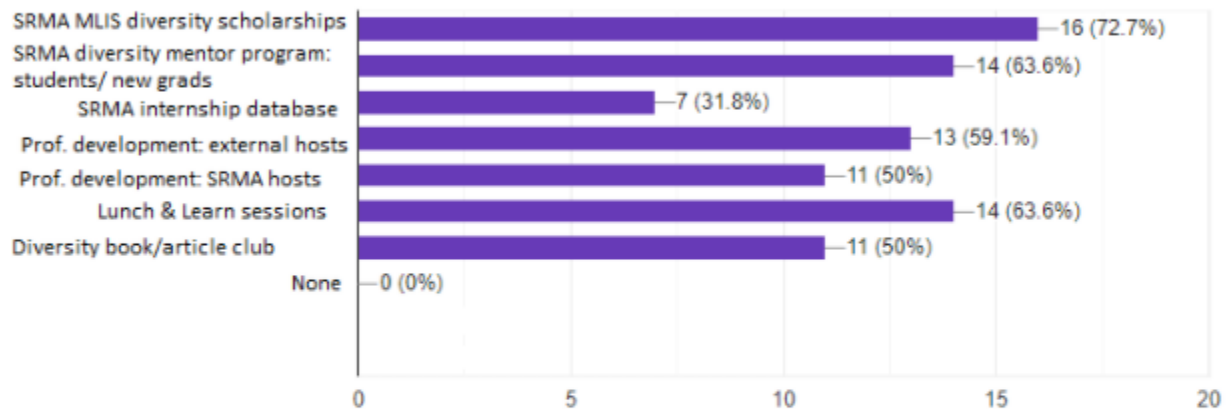
Additional Answers suggested:

1. EDI/DIRJ Group mentoring (semi-formal)
2. Managerial/leadership training for professionals of color
3. Scholarships for grad programs/continuing education.
4. More active advocacy for issues in the field, including pay transparency and equity.

**Question Three:**

Which of the following do you feel SRMA should offer to support individual members and SRMA-service area archivists and students? Select as many as apply.

22 responses



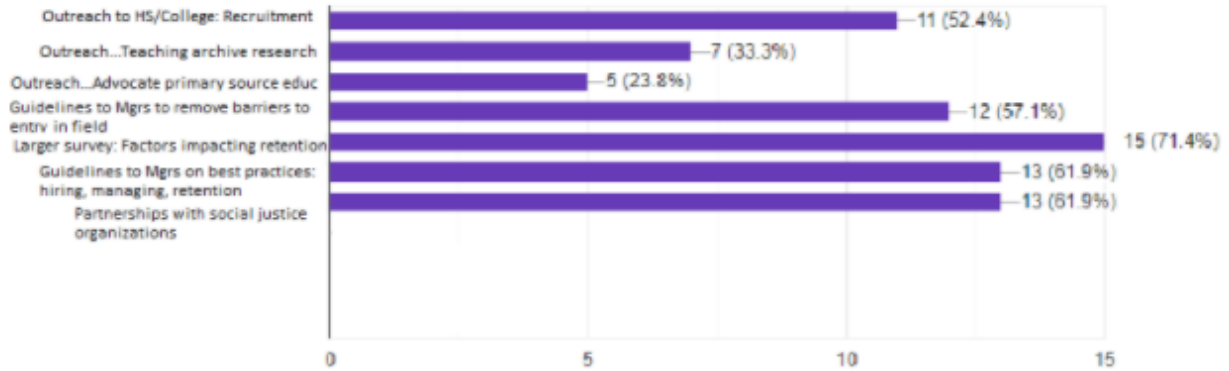
**Additional Answers Selected**

1. If creating an internship database (& for job postings), please only include postings which list pay ranges.
2. Please include virtual options for any programs to help with accessibility.
3. I would love to see us focus on labor issues related to EDI - the youngest cohort of archivists are also the most racially diverse and if they can't afford to live and count on longer-term positions, we can't recruit or retain them.

#### Question Four:

Which of the following do you feel SRMA should offer to support institutions and the larger profession? Select as many as apply.

21 responses



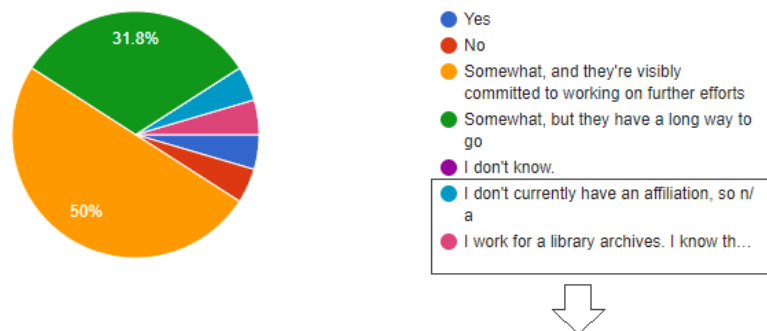
Additional Answers Suggested:

1. A lot of great work has already been done by DLF to research the issue of contingency. I would potentially like to see us get into advocacy/policy work, organizing cross-institutionally (maybe as makes sense, public sector workers, private universities, corporate, etc.)
2. If doing a survey, please also include an action plan.

#### Question Five:

Do you feel your institution (whether you are an employee or a student) has addressed EDI needs in their hiring, management practices, or their approach to the outside user community?

22 responses



Additional Answers Suggested:

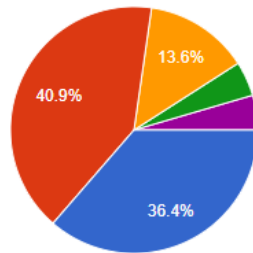
1-No current affiliation

2-I work for a library archives. I know that the archives department is committed to EDI, but the library is not, and that impedes us significantly. Many administrators are still of the mindset that racism doesn't exist in our community.

### Question Six:

In the course of your career in libraries and archives, have you as an individual experienced micro-aggressions, overt aggression, discrimination, othering, or has an employer failed to take into consideration the impact policies may have on you based on your identity? We ask this and the next question in order to better understand if there are particular communities or themes around which we should prioritize programming and initiatives.

22 responses



- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Not often

I have not experienced aggressions based on my identity, but I have experienced pushback and shaming (perhaps othering?) for the work our archives is doing to address EDI and implement anti-racism. I also witness...



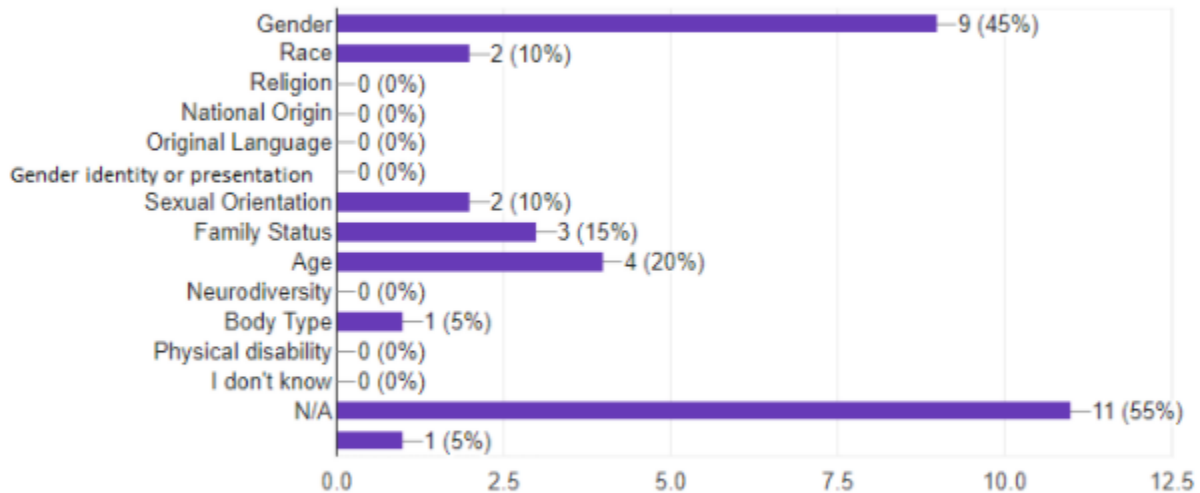
Additional Responses Submitted:

I have not experienced aggressions based on my identity, but I have experienced pushback and shaming (perhaps othering?) for the work our archives is doing to address EDI and implement anti-racism. I also witnessed my colleague experience othering when other employees mocked an LGBTQ movie.

### Question Seven:

Were these experiences based on your (Please select as many as apply):

20 responses



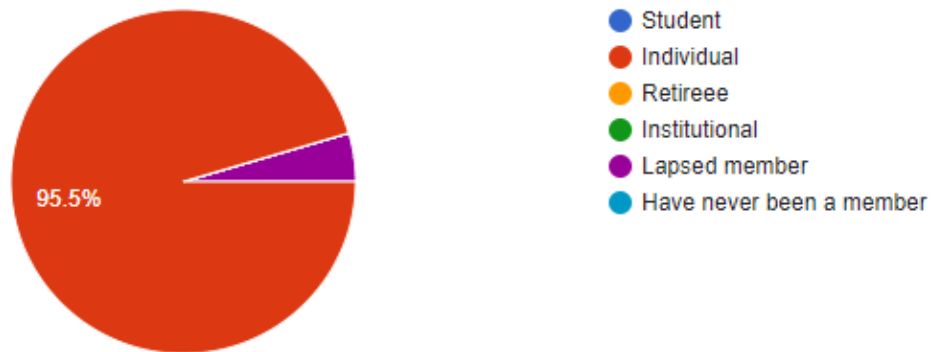
Additional Responses Submitted:

My colleague's sexual orientation

**Question Eight:**

What is your current SRMA membership status?

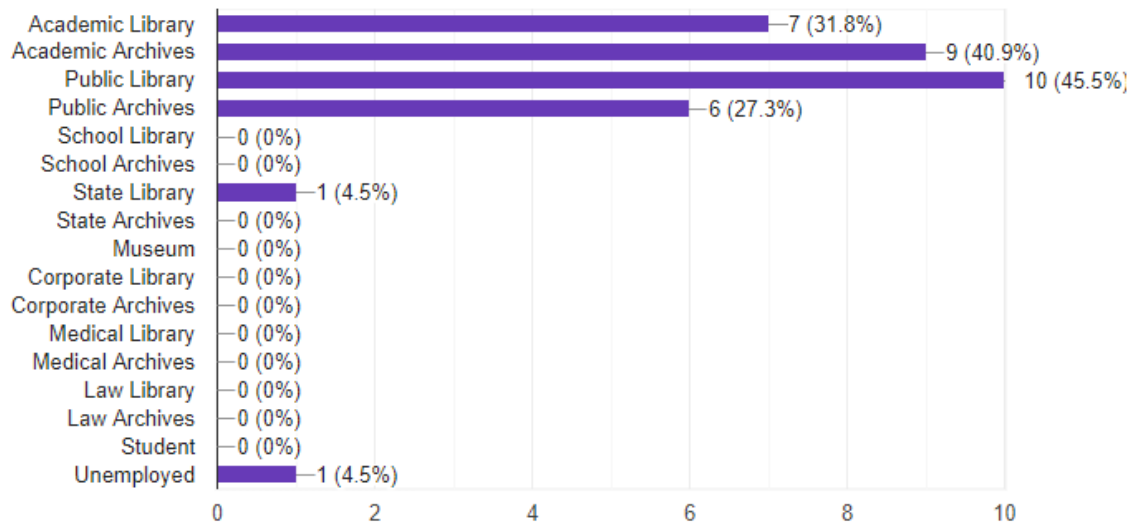
22 responses



**Question Nine:**

How would you describe your current employment institution? Select as many as apply.

22 responses



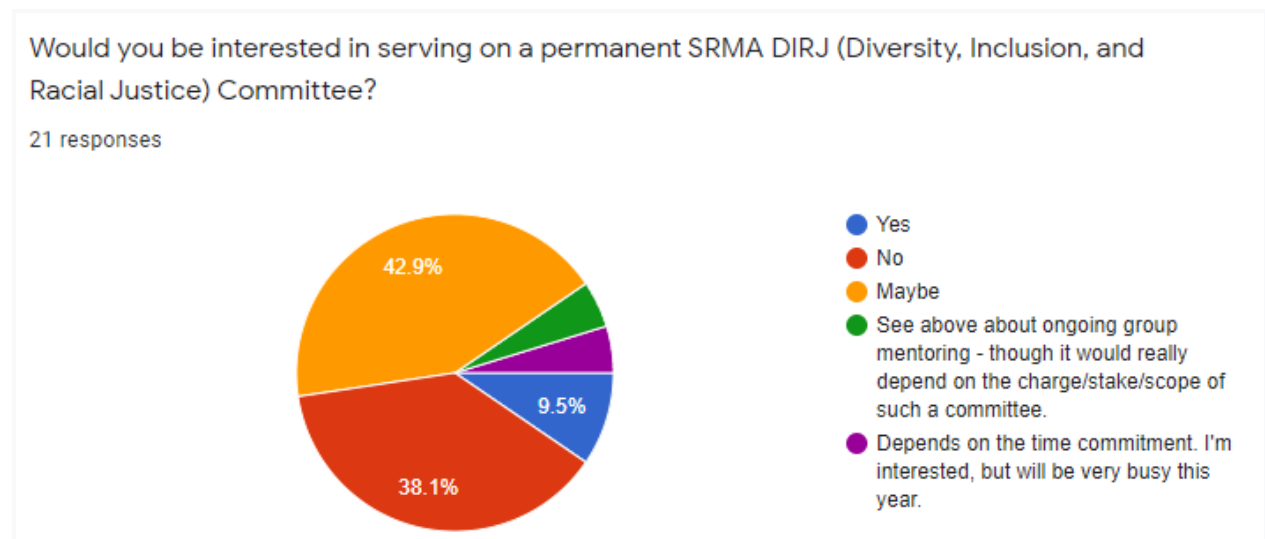
**Question Ten:** On the assumption that “you don’t know what you don’t know,” we’d like to know if you think we missed anything. What ideas or suggestions would you like the Task Force to take into consideration? (5 replies)

- I think it's impossible to discuss the issue and think about longer-term solutions without addressing the increasing tendency for entry level positions to be very low paid and contingent and non-benefitted. Issues of institutional racism are real and need to be addressed, but I don't think they can be addressed separately.
- I think the most important issue by far is trying to understand and correct why there are not more people of color in the archives profession.



- As I think about the experiences with micro-aggressions, discrimination, etc. I've experienced at work, it occurs to me that while a few have been from supervisors/Admin, more have been from patrons. We may want to host trainings or group discussions on how to proactively address these issues in our field, and how best to deflect them as a front-line reference archivist.
- Training in management and leadership for professionals of color.
- I mentioned in other responses that I would like to see more pay transparency. AASLH is already doing good work on this issue. The internship database idea is interesting, but often unpaid or exploitative internships are a huge issue in the field, so that would need to be done carefully, only including paid internships and ones that truly seek to help candidates with professional development. Many people of color fill diversity-based internships or temporary positions only to have no opportunity for retention or permanent employment. Being shuffled from diversity internship to diversity internship is obviously not a healthy career path.

**Question Eleven:** Would you be interested in serving on a permanent SRMA DIRJ Committee?



We have email addresses from 5 people who indicated interest.

## Appendix C

### Ideas for Existing Workshops and Speakers For Educational Opportunities

- Reparative Archives workshop by Lae'l Watkins-Hughes (not associated with an organization. Contact instructor for more info)
- [Beyond Diversity Initiatives: Recruitment of BIPOC into Archives and Special Collections Librarianship \(Society of California Archivists\)](#)
- [Tell Us How UC It: Thinking Critically through a Living Archive for Student Activism](#) (SCA)
- [Applying Radical Empathy Framework in Archival Practice](#) (SCA)
- [Confronting Hard History: Using Primary Sources to teach Slavery, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter](#) (ProQuest)
- [Critical Librarianship and Pedagogy Symposium. Univ of AZ](#)
- Dr. Taisha McMickens, Cross Cultural Dialogue & Equity consultant.
  - Contact info: [tmcmickens@gmail.com](mailto:tmcmickens@gmail.com), 562-810-9352
  - Potential topics:
    - § Microaggressions in the Workplace
    - § The Importance of Pronouns and Self- Identity
    - § Developing Racial Awareness
    - § The Basics of Cross Cultural Dialogue
    - § Why Brave Spaces are Necessary
    - § Critical Reflexivity and Empathy
    - § Thinking Though Differences
    - § Honesty and Equitable Environments
- [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#)