

RBMS Diversity Toolkit

An online guide for RBMS members and library professionals who wish to make presentations about careers in special collections librarianship to students and paraprofessional staff, particularly those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

Goals for Presentations

- To introduce high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, as well as current library paraprofessional staff, to the profession of special collections librarianship.
- To describe how the audience can connect their own academic and research interests—in whatever field—to a career in special collections librarianship.
- To personalize the profession by sharing stories about how RBMS members chose their careers, and the satisfaction they find in them.
- To promote the profession as an attractive career choice.

Outreach Strategies

- Contact faculty members at a college or university who teach courses in ethnic studies, American ethnic history, American ethnic literature, or other relevant subjects, about making presentations to their classes about career opportunities in special collections librarianship.
- Contact a university's career center or graduate school of library and information science to see if they will schedule arrange for you to give a presentation or include you in a planned career outreach event.
- Contact faculty members at a graduate school of library and information science to see if you can give a presentation or be included in a planned career outreach event.
- Contact faculty members or career centers at universities with high enrollment of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups about making presentations, such as:
 - Historically Black Colleges and Universities <<http://www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whhbcu/edlite-list.html>>
 - Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities <<http://www.hacu.net>>
 - American Indian Higher Education Consortium <<http://www.aihec.org>>

- Contact advisors for targeted underrepresented racial and ethnic groups within an institution about making presentations.
- Contact the head of a campus cultural center or the head of a student group dedicated to a particular race or ethnicity to arrange a presentation.
- Contact community organizations that represent particular racial or ethnic groups about giving a presentation directed at high school or college students.
- Find events such as Black History Month (February), Asian Pacific Heritage Month (May), Hispanic Heritage Month (September), and American Indian Heritage Month (November) to tie in with a presentation; if possible, take examples of relevant material from your library's collection or put together an online exhibit or webpage.

Planning Successful Presentations

- When contacting faculty members at a college or university to set up a presentation, be cognizant of the institution's academic schedule. At most institutions, contacting faculty in late August to set up a fall presentation or in early January for a spring presentation may be most successful; this will give the faculty members a chance to work the presentation into their teaching plans as they finalize their syllabi.
- Don't overlook smaller colleges and universities when planning presentations, since faculty at these schools can be particularly appreciative of career outreach offered to their students. A simple flyer with a title such as "Preserving Culture as a Career: Becoming a Special Collections Librarian," and relevant information about the event and the speakers, can be a useful tool for promoting a presentation.
- The RBMS Diversity Committee recommends using the phrase "[people]...from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups" instead of the term "minorities" in all communications and materials.
- After your initial contact, it is a good idea to confirm the event and tentative dates and times by e-mail and telephone. Reconfirming the event several weeks before it is to take place is also recommended.
- Be sure to get directions, parking information, and a telephone number for your contact in advance.
- On the day of the presentation, give yourself plenty of time to get to the site, particularly if it is on an unfamiliar campus.

Giving Successful Presentations

- Begin with some background on RBMS. Our charge states: “To encourage members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to join and participate in RBMS; to recruit members of these groups into the Special Collections profession; to partner with other groups in the library field that focus on diversity or diverse collections; to generate and facilitate seminars, workshops, and programs about collecting materials related to racial and ethnic groups and providing outreach to patrons from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.”
- Provide an overview of what special collections are, the wide variety of materials they contain, and where they can be found, and show interesting online exhibitions. Describe popular culture collections that will give students a broader idea of what type of material may be found in a library.
- When making a presentation to a college or university class, discuss primary source materials available to them that are relevant to the content of the course.
- Discuss requirements and helpful qualifications for working as a special collections librarian. This is a good time to also mention related professions such as archivist, records manager, museum curator and conservator.
- Presenters should tell the story of how they became a special collections librarian. The more personal the account of the presenter’s career choice, the more likely the students will relate to the presenter.
- Display original materials whenever possible, or facsimiles of original materials when not. Students often become very engaged when they see the kinds of materials that special collections librarians work with. Alternatively, invite students to tour your special collections department, or arrange a tour of another local collection.
- Leave plenty of time for questions and discussion at the end of your presentation.
- Invite audience members to fill out a simple [assessment tool](#) so that you and RBMS can gain feedback about your presentation.
- Provide a handout on [Preserving Culture as a Career: Becoming a Special Collections Librarian](#) that students can take away with them.
- Take marketing materials from your library, e.g., sticky notes, pencils or folders. And finally, take business cards and encourage students to contact you if they have more questions or want to explore special collections librarianship.
- Send a thank-you note to the person(s) who hosted your presentation.