

# Why do academic librarians of color stay in the profession?

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What factors are contributing to academic librarians of color staying in the profession and what can we learn from this?

## Introduction

### Abstract

While there has been a steady increase in scholarship about why librarians of color have left the profession, there has been very little written about those who choose to stay. This research seeks to pinpoint specific factors & institutional practices that may influence the retention of academic librarians of color, with the intent to make recommendations for improving working conditions.

### Background

For the purposes of this research, anyone who works full-time in an academic library is referred to as a “librarian,” regardless of staff or faculty status.

### Guiding Questions

- Are a majority of BIPOC librarians staying because they rely on the salary & benefits?
- Do BIPOC mentors & coworkers positively influence retention as systems of support?

### What does the literature say?

- The literature concerning the working conditions of academic librarians of color can be categorized into four main themes: recruitment & hiring, retention, workplace advancement, and turnover
- Ultimately, the scholarship has shown that recruitment alone cannot improve working conditions of BIPOC librarians due to racism, tokenism, bullying, and burnout

## Research

### Methods

- A Qualtrics survey asked current academic librarians to select, suggest, and rank factors they considered had influence on their retention and answer a series of questions to determine professional commitment using a Likert scale.
- The survey was shared via ALA Connect, LinkedIn, and Bluesky
- 240 responses were collected with 229 complete results

### Demographic Data

- n = 229
- 58% BIPOC/multiracial, 42% white
  - Community colleges (3%), public research (60%), private research (16%); public liberal (3%), private liberal (15%), other (3%)
  - 95% have MLIS, 5% no MLIS
  - Highest responses from those with 6-10 cumulative years of experience
  - Staff (n=84), faculty (n= 145)
  - 20% of BIPOC librarians have/had an academic librarian of color as a mentor through a formal institutional program

### Commitment Scale

- Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed (0 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree) with a series of statements based on the model of commitment created by Meyer & Allen (1991)
- Commitment scale:



### Results

BIPOC Rank	White Rank	Factor
1	2	I believe the work I do is important.
2	1	I enjoy helping/working with my institution's community members.
3	5	Colleagues across the field
4	3	Colleagues at my institution
5	7	Professional opportunities available to me
6	4	Salary satisfaction
7	9	Support from my supervisor
8	8	A desire to make a meaningful change in the profession
9	11	Support from library leadership/admin support
10	6	Unsure of alternative career paths
11	13	Support from my mentor/mentee
12	12	Other
13	10	Opportunities for advancement
14	14	I don't know

## Conclusions

### Discussion

- There was no statistical significance in results between BIPOC & white librarians, regardless of position type.
- Nor was there any statistical significance in results from the professional commitment scale.

### Next Steps

- Exploring a qualitative study using these factors & scale, along with geographical locations & cost of living data
- Creating recommendations for academic libraries to positively retain BIPOC workers

### References



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### Contact me!

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