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# Desegregation and Library Education

by

E. J. Josey

The year 1964 marked the tenth anniversary of the United States Supreme Court's decision which destroyed the legal basis for segregated education. As this historic decision is viewed in retrospect, it seems appropriate to examine the nine accredited library schools which were, at some point in their history, segregated institutions, in order to ascertain to what extent desegregation has taken place in these library schools.

The writer is the chief librarian at Savannah State College and in addition is also responsible for the teacher-librarian certification program. Therefore, in recent years, he has become concerned about the small number of Negro students who are choosing librarianship as a career. In view of the proximity of the nine southern accredited library schools to Negro colleges, a questionnaire was drawn up in the summer of 1964 and circulated to the deans of these schools,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of coming to grips with the problem.

The instrument was introduced by the following statement:

Over the years, Negro college graduates, by and large, have gone into the traditional professional fields, e.g., teaching, law, medicine, and the ministry. There is a dire need to recruit more able people for librarianship. Negro educators and guidance counselors seem to be convinced that more young people should be recruited for the non-traditional fields, engineering, mathematics and the sciences, but they never seem to encourage these young people to study library science. From a librarian's point of view, this is rather disconcerting and frustrating, when he hears his colleagues urging Negro collegians to break away from the traditional fields and seldom or never mention librarianship, and, at the same time, librarianship is a fertile field for recruits.

It was felt that the dean of each library school should ask himself these questions in order to present a clear picture of desegregation in their formerly all-white library schools: (1) How many Negro students are currently studying at your library school? (2) How many Negro graduates did you have in June? (3) How many Negro students completed your program in the last two years? (4) Do you notify Negro colleges regarding the possibility of their graduates studying librarianship at your institution? (5) Do you send scholar-

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<sup>1</sup>These schools included Emory, Florida State, Kentucky, Louisiana State, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Peabody, University of Texas, and Texas Woman's.

ship and recruitment material to the counselors of Negro colleges? (6) If you have overlooked this possible source of student-supply, would you be willing to institute a program of encouraging Negro students to study at your library school? (7) Do you presently have a Negro on your faculty? and (8) Would you be willing to employ a Negro professor on your faculty?

The deans of all nine library schools responded. Nevertheless, several failed to answer all of the questions. From the data which were collected, certain implications emerged which will be of paramount importance for improving this situation or for making positive recommendations.

During the 1963-1964 academic year and the 1964 summer session, a very limited number of Negro students are recorded to have been registered in these nine (9) institutions. This infinitesimal number is shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Negroes Studying in Accredited Formerly All-White Library Schools in 1964.**

	Regular Session	Summer Session, 1964	No Negro Students	Extension Center	Statistics Unavailable
Emory			0		
Fla. State	1 part-time			5	
Kentucky					x
La. State		14			
N. C.		5			
Oklahoma		4			
Peabody					x
Texas		2			
Texas Woman's	2	5			

The above table presents answers which give a partial picture of the number of Negro students studying in southern formerly all-white library schools. It can be seen that the highest per cent of these Negro students attended the 1964 summer session and that there were more Negroes in attendance at one extension center than were recorded among on-campus Negro students in library science at these colleges that year. This is a tragic waste of human resources which could alleviate the shortage of professional librarians.

Because of a genuine attempt to bring Negroes into the main stream of American culture, it has become more difficult to record Negro citizens as Negroes. Several library school deans indicated that they are forbidden to keep records by race; hence, their statistics may

not be accurate. This fact was recently pinpointed by the following statement: "It is becoming increasingly difficult to answer that question because administrators are reluctant to maintain any figures by race. However, on the basis of certain official figures and some good estimates, the situation can be summarized fairly accurately."<sup>2</sup>

Although statistics were unavailable from Kentucky and Peabody, this writer is aware of the fact that both library schools have had several Negroes to graduate during the last two or three years. Maurice D. Leach, the Chairman of the Department of Library Science at Kentucky writes ". . . we are puzzled by your questionnaire and statements in the covering letter, in that the University of Kentucky graduate program has been integrated for approximately twenty years." The foregoing statement is a little less than accurate, because Lyman T. Johnson, the Negro school teacher of Louisville won his suit in 1949 and entered the University's History Department in the summer session of 1949. In spite of the fact that records are not maintained according to race or religion at Kentucky or Peabody "on the basis of certain official figures and some good estimates," approximate figures could have been given.

Louisiana State bursts forth with the largest enrollment of 14 attending summer school. North Carolina, Texas Woman's and Oklahoma follow with 5 and 4 respectively. With the University of Texas having 2 and Emory none. Carlyle J. Farery of North Carolina and Robert R. Douglass of Texas indicated that during the past several years, both library schools have had Negro teachers who were working toward school library certification and not towards a degree. From the foregoing analysis, it appears that the southern library schools are not attracting large numbers of Negro students.

Concerning question two, 6 reported that they did not have a single Negro graduate in June, while Oklahoma boasts of one and no statistics were provided by Kentucky and Peabody.

With regard to question three, 4 reported no Negro graduates during the last two years; Louisiana State reported 2; Oklahoma indicated 3; North Carolina stated 1, with no report from Kentucky and Peabody.

By and large, we may assume from the foregoing data that those Negro students who do not attend the Atlanta University Library School are receiving their library education in other areas of the country. These findings corroborate Pollard's findings regarding Negro College chief librarians, when she stated that "and more than 60 per cent . . . chose library schools located outside the South."<sup>3</sup>

Question 4 sought to elicit answers regarding notices being sent to Negro colleges relative to the possibility of their graduates studying librarianship at the respective library schools in the region. We find

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<sup>2</sup>Guy B. Johnson, "Desegregation in Southern Higher Education," *Higher Education*, 20: (June, 1964), 6.

<sup>3</sup>Frances M. Pollard, "Characteristics of Negro College Chief Librarians," *College and Research Libraries*, 25: (July, 1964), 283.

that 3 answered affirmatively and 2 responded negatively; 3 provided no answers and 1 indicated that materials would be sent upon request.

The answers to question 5 are varied and interesting, for 3 stated that they send scholarship and recruitment materials to counsellors in Negro colleges and 2 gave negative replies; 3 failed to answer and 1 said that materials would be sent upon request.

It appears that most of these library schools have failed to contact Negro colleges or their counsellors. The truth of the matter is that if the counsellors are made aware of the opportunities in librarianship, then these educators would be in a better position to guide young people into librarianship. If library school heads do not wish to mail out circular material, then they may wish to accept Harold Lancour's advice ". . . a few library school directors make extended trips through a specific area, visiting by prearrangement a number of colleges and libraries, talking informally with counsellors, placement officers and groups of students."<sup>4</sup>

Before leaving recruitment, a word or two should be mentioned, specifically, with reference to certain comments made relative to guidance counsellors. Robert Clapp, Assistant Dean of Florida, writes "Since Guidance Counsellors recommend to us what seems to us the most unlikely applicants that apply—the physically handicapped, socially maladjusted, and the academically weak who have difficulty getting jobs and holding them—we make no effort to encourage their efforts." I do not pretend to have the answer for Mr. Clapp, but it is my belief that it is the library school's responsibility to inform the counsellors relative to the type of applicants that are desired for graduate library education. Those who are socially maladjusted or academically weak, should not be encouraged; but, on the other hand, those candidates whose physical disabilities will not be too much of a hindrance to providing effective library service should be encouraged.

Mrs. Frances Neel Cheney, The Associate Director of the Peabody Library School stated, "We are eager to recruit able students regardless of race or creed and will continue to encourage qualified graduates to apply to Peabody." Obviously, these words do not clearly commit her school to this liberal policy, for it seems that it would be terribly difficult for Negro college graduates to be aware of this policy, if the Peabody Library School will continue to ". . . send scholarship and recruitment materials to all counsellors who request it."

Turning to question six, it was discovered that 4 library school directors declared that they would be interested in instituting a program of encouraging Negro students to study at their library school, while 4 failed to respond and 1 claimed that recruitment is handled by a separate bureau on campus and not by the library school.

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<sup>4</sup>Harold Lancour, "The Role of the Library School," *Library Journal* 87: (December 1, 1962.) 2839.

Recruitment is the responsibility of the library profession as a whole, but it seems to me that the confrontation of the college graduate with many possible fields of endeavor beckoning him to come, library schools, then, must plan bold and imaginative programs of recruitment for Negro college graduates as well as non-Negro college graduates. In short, library schools must bear their own responsibilities in this area. I can not find a justification for Maurice D. Leach's statement that "our promotional literature and newsletters go to all former students and alumni and to those interested in studying library science at the University of Kentucky." What kind of program does Mr. Leach envision for attracting Kentucky State College graduates to his program?

Question seven was designed for the purpose of ascertaining if Negroes are employed on the faculty of these library schools. All nine library schools responded negatively. Nevertheless, Peabody and the University of Texas indicated that Negro professors serve in other departments of their institutions.

Closely related to question seven, the final question sought to determine if the director or the dean of the library school would object to employing a Negro professor. The replies are significant for they are indices to the philosophy of the library school director, in some instances, and the prevailing attitude of the parent institution in others. The findings revealed that 4 would employ a Negro professor and 3 answered negatively while 1 failed to respond.

Some of the comments on this question are worth repeating. Leach of Kentucky stated "It is the policy of the University to employ the people whose qualifications are the best for a given position." The Assistant Dean of Florida State asserted, "We have no Negroes on our faculty and I personally would not recommend employing one until I feel that he could carry his part of our teaching load without any more frustration than is endured by the other faculty members." Since Dean Clapp does not define "frustration," it would be rather hazardous for me to guess. However, I can not refrain from reminding him that Negroes are serving full-time or part-time on the faculties of Columbia, University of Washington, Pratt, St. Johns and Drexel without any more frustration than their Caucasian colleagues.

Dean Frarey of North Carolina pointed out that "since the School of Library Science is a graduate department, appointments to the grade of Assistant Professor or higher now require that the candidate have completed a doctoral degree, or that he be well-advanced towards completion of that degree. This requirement gives us serious difficulty in recruiting faculty, for there are very few librarians of any race who meet it except for those who may already be employed in another library school."

Except for certain salient facts, there is no need to repeat the findings in this summation, for they are self evident. Generally, a sizable number of Negroes are now studying in formerly all-white library schools in the South, but most of these students study during

the summer sessions, and a large number are seeking only certification for school library positions. Those who are not studying at the Atlanta University Library School are studying in the North, the Mid-West and the West. By and large, the library schools of the South have failed to recruit Negro students. Most of the desegregation in higher education has stemmed from the Negro students' desire to remain and study in the region rather than being encouraged by recruitment officers of formerly all-white southern universities.

Viewing the problems of desegregation in library education from a broad-based point of reference is inescapable. Speaking in broad terms, but realistically, as we assess the role of library schools in the South in the education of Negroes, firstly, we must be ever mindful that, with the exception of Howard, Lincoln, and Cheyney State, all of the predominant Negro colleges in America are in the South, the same region of the Southern library schools. Secondly, it is less expensive for Negroes to be educated in the region within the framework of desegregation. Thirdly, since Negro students have not been in the mainstream of American culture, and since there are still too many Negroes who are reluctant to do graduate study in the South, school administrators have a responsibility to make a bold attack and recruit able Negro collegians for study in the area of librarianship.

As we look into the future, we agree with the distinguished sociologist of North Carolina who writes "The transition from complete segregation to a rather high degree of desegregation in southern higher education in the past 15 years is almost a miracle in the annals of social change. The necessary regulative and structural changes will soon be completed, but there remains the task of arriving at the condition of equality of status and opportunity implied in the term 'integration.'"<sup>5</sup>

Equality of status and opportunity must be provided for Negro students and Negro faculty in southern Library Schools. The constant endeavor of the dean or director of the library schools in the South must be to improve the climate for study and research for the South's Negro citizens who desire librarianship as their life's work. In fact, the future of southern libraries may very well depend on the extent to which southern library schools educate Negroes for positions of library leadership.

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<sup>5</sup>Guy B. Johnson, *op. cit.* 7, 10.