

## **A Fish out of Water**

### **Abstract**

From day one I knew I was different. Ever since the first day of class in library school, I subconsciously knew that I was the only one there who looked as I did. Looking at my classmates, I saw Caucasians and some African Americans, what I didn't see were Asian Americans. I was the only one there. Unfortunately studies involving Association of Research Libraries (ARL) have confirmed that not much has changed in over a 30 year period. From 1981-2011, Chang states that, "the overall minority representation has only increased from 10 percent to 14.2 percent. The percentage of library professionals who are black has only increased from 3.10 percent to 4.4 percent, Hispanic has increased from 1.39 to 2.6 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander has increased from 5.4 to 6.8 percent and American Indian/Alaskan Native increased from 0.09 percent to 0.30 percent." Others like me may have pursued more lucrative professions, such as being a doctor, a lawyer, or even an engineer, but certainly not a librarian that was on a career path to becoming an archivist.

It wasn't just in school that I was different. It seemed to have also followed me into the job world as I entered into the profession of becoming an archivist. I have been granted two unique opportunities in my life from a cultural and diversity standpoint. The first was being hired as the archivist for a newly created African American Library and the second is in my current position as archivist for the Carey C. Shuart Women's Archive and Research Collection. In both situations I felt that I was breaking all the rules. I didn't neatly fit into any preconceived notion of what an archivist should be in both of those instances. In the first, I was a Chinese American serving an African American repository. In the second, I am a male Chinese American serving a repository that represents the history of women in Houston and Texas. To say I felt like a fish out of water in both instances is an understatement.

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