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A Journal for Critical Studies & Progressive Politics in Librarianship

Issue #30 Winter 2007/08

60th Anniversary: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Librarians, News Media & the Information Literate Citizen

Union Librarians – Past & Present

PLG Report: United States Social Forum

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COVER IMAGE: Designed by Miranda Mallinson, the "Dude" graphic was used for buttons during the 89-day strike at Vancouver Public Library and was a direct take-off on a VPL marketing campaign that promoted the virtual reference service "Homework Help," featuring, among others, an impatient teen character asking "Dude, where's my pancreas?" They were designed as an amusing reference to the VPL "brand," something recognizable to both staff and patrons. They were not a critique of the virtual reference service or the campaign, more of a "poke" at VPL in general. Since both the original artwork and the graphic design for the campaign were copyright protected, the artist had to "reverse engineer" the image, creating a graphic that evoked the VPL character and slogan, but was original artwork and not a copy.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL OF US: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948–2008

by Katharine J. Phenix

We will be hearing a lot about human rights in 2008. Discussions have commenced with the year-long celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Opening events occurred on December 10, 2007, at the United Nations and will be followed by hundreds of international events and celebrations throughout the year, including two UNESCO conferences. In addition, China and its human rights violations will be prominent in the mainstream media leading up to (and partially because of) the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing. As scholars we have to continue to track and document the United States' own human rights violations internally and its continued support of repressive regimes globally. Most importantly, note: librarians are deeply involved in discussions about human rights, democracy, and libraries.

We have been exploring the concepts of human rights (especially UDHR Article 19) and intellectual freedom and how they intersect with the principles and practices of librarianship. Our common purposes are clearly delineated by statements of the American Library Association (ALA). The Code of Ethics, the ALA Core Values statement, the Library Bill of Rights, and ALA's endorsement of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are clear examples. From the ALA Policy Manual:

> 58.3 Threats to the freedom of expression of any person become threats to the freedom of all; therefore ALA adopts as policy the principles of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Association will address the grievances of foreign nationals where the infringement of their rights of free expression is clearly a matter in which all free people should show concern. Resolutions or other documents attesting to such grievances will be brought to the attention of the Executive Board and Council by the ALA International Relations Committee….
>
> 58.4 Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference

> and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.
>
> *ALA Handbook of Organization*

Most recently, the first annual *Library Journal* Teaching Award has been presented to Toni Samek who "is deeply informed," says Kenneth Gariepy, "by her commitment to, and scholarship in, human rights and the core values of the profession" (Berry 2007).

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon speaks to librarians in his call to inform and empower those who "most need their human rights protected" with these words,

> It is our duty to ensure that these rights are a living reality – that they are known, understood and enjoyed by everyone, everywhere. It is often those who most need their human rights protected, who also need to be informed that the Declaration exists – and that it exists for them.
>
> – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

This year we should go beyond bookmarks and bibliographies. This year our place is central to information dissemination, dignity and justice for all of us.

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CHALLENGING THE CONDITIONS THAT MAKE ALTERNATIVES NECESSARY: LIBRARIANS, THE NEWS MEDIA AND THE INFORMATION LITERATE CITIZEN

by Jeff Lilburn

The development of "lifelong learners" is framed as a central aspect of the *ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Information literacy is described as "a key component" of lifelong learning that contributes to producing educated students and citizens. Phrases such as "informed citizens," "informed citizenry," and "educated citizens," appear throughout the introduction to the *Standards*, reinforcing not only the idea that information literacy skills are central to informed and active citizenship, but also the view that librarians have a role to play in ensuring that citizens have these skills. Absent from the *Standards*, however, is any mention of political issues or of how the information literate citizen uses information in a socially responsible manner.[1] What's more, the Performance Indicators and Outcomes for Standard Five – the standard that asserts that "the information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally" – appear to place greater emphasis on compliance with economic, legal and social issues, rather than critical understanding of these issues. Performance Indicator 2, for example, suggests that rather than think critically about the socio-economic issues surrounding the use of information, the information literate student instead *follows* accepted practices, regulations, and etiquette, *uses* pre-approved passwords and other forms of ID, and *complies* with existing institutional policies. In other words, instead of critically engaging with the economic, legal and social issues and the political forces involved in determining what and how information is made accessible, the language used in the *Standards* suggests that the information literate student and citizen accepts things as they are and does not question why or how things came to be as they are. The question of who benefits from "things as they are" is also left unaddressed by the *Standards*.

This disconnection between the *Standards* and a genuine consideration of the social, cultural and political context in which information is produced and disseminated is but one of the criticisms directed at the *Standards* and research on information literacy in recent years.[2] The library literature has also been criticized for failing to engage with pedagogical and literacy

research from outside of the library community, for a lack of engagement with theory,[3] and for constructing an information literacy framework based on standards and the acquisition of skills rather than on theoretically informed understanding of the ambiguities involved in learning and research.[4] While there is a growing body of interdisciplinary and theoretically informed research situating libraries and library and information workers within their socio-political context,[5] the links between this research and research on information literacy instruction are only beginning to be explored.[6]

This paper draws on recent politically and theoretically informed work from both within and outside of LIS to discuss the significance that absence of political issues from the *Standards* has on the meaning of the concept of "informed citizenry" as used in the *Standards*. In particular, this essay is concerned with the question of whether the form of citizenship constructed in the *Standards*[7] entails active participation in a community, including participation in discussion and decision-making with respect to social practices, policies, rules and laws, or whether citizenship merely means allegiance to and compliance with an existing way of life, what Henry Giroux refers to as "patriotic correctness."[8]

This paper also addresses how we as librarians view our role as teachers of students and citizens. More specifically, it addresses the question of whether it is sufficient for librarians to teach students information and media literacy skills, or whether librarians should be more closely involved – and encourage students to become involved – in confronting the issues and problems we help them to recognize when searching for and evaluating information. In other words, should the focus of information literacy teaching be on giving students the tools and skills needed to work around conditions that impose barriers to access to information, or should the focus be shifted and expanded to address and directly confront those conditions? These questions will be addressed in the context of the criticisms of information literacy research already discussed, of the decades-long debate over ideological and political neutrality for librarianship[9] and, to begin, of criticisms of the mainstream commercial news media and of one specific attempt, that of Independent World Television, to challenge and directly confront the broadcast news environment by imagining and creating a new model for the delivery of news and information to mass audiences.

Challenging the Status Quo of Broadcast News

In contrast to the *ACRL IL Standards*, a report prepared by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee Subcommittee on the Impact of Media Concentration on Libraries released in June 2007 recognizes that current social and political trends render traditional, passive and so-called neutral approaches to acquisitions and the provision of other library services unacceptable. The report has as its main purpose the provision of a centralized list of strategies and actions to be used by libraries and librarians to help fulfill one of our key responsibilities: providing "access to a diverse

collection of resources and services" (9). Responding to an ALA resolution passed in 2003 opposing the FCC's proposed rule changes[10] that would have encouraged further concentration of the media (9, 24), the authors of the IFC Subcommittee report note that "with the growing concentration of media ownership, independent voices decrease and locally produced and locally relevant information, news, and cultural resources diminish" (10). As a result, "libraries cannot ensure the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources, unless they counter the detrimental impact of media consolidation on the diversity of ideas and localism in their communities" (10). "In an era when democratic discourse is more essential than ever," the report continues, "the information system is out of balance [and] librarians must be vigilant and assertive in seeking out alternative voices" (10-11). In other words, the report responds to the imbalance of power in the systems that create, disseminate and regulate the news and information required by citizens to fulfill their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The report echoes the work of media commentators and scholars such as Ben Bagdikian and Robert McChesney who have, for many years now, been warning of the consequences of increasing concentration of media ownership and of the implications for democratic civil society of an increasingly de-regulated commercial media system.[11] Henry Giroux makes these points as well, noting that "without a democratic media, it is impossible to maintain a democratic society or to provide the conditions for a critically informed citizenry"(18). The media, Giroux contends, "are now the most powerful pedagogical force for framing issues, offering the languages to decipher them, and providing the subject positions that enable people to understand their relationship to others and the larger world" (18). "As long as a handful of corporations controls the media," Giroux argues, "it will also control the conditions under which politics is defined, understood, engaged and carried out"(18).

Providing an alternative to the mainstream media and interceding with the currently accepted norms of network and cable television journalism is what the new not-for-profit news and current events network, Independent World Television (or IWTNews), has set out to do. Independent World Television, or The Real News as it is now also known, is a web-based news network conceived with the intention of challenging and changing the status quo of current broadcast news. More specifically, it is being developed in response to the same imbalance of power identified in the IFC Report – an imbalance that leaves a vast majority of TV news reporting in the hands of fewer and fewer commercial interests.

IWTNews intends to confront this imbalance by broadening "the definition of what's important" and by refusing to "blindly follow wire services or official press releases that attempt to set the news agenda" (IWTNews, *What's Real*). IWTNews believes that "serious news and informed debate on which democracy depends are disappearing from TV – the medium most people rely on for news and information"(*What's Real*) – and, as a

result, "movements for the rights of working people, women, children, immigrants, indigenous peoples," and movements for peace and "the health of our planet" will be considered news at Independent World Television (*What's Real*). In other words, citizens actively using their understanding of economic, social and political issues to intervene and participate in the world will be seen as newsmakers.

IWTNews also aims to challenge and change the economics of TV journalism. As network CEO Paul Jay explains, IWTNews wants "to create an environment for doing news that is not so subject to the external pressures of government funding, corporate funding and advertising" (IWTNews, *See the Patterns*). To achieve this, IWTNews has developed a membership-supported funding model that will enable the network to remain independent, uncompromising and immune to worries about "quick ratings results [or] the withdrawing of advertising or government subsidies" (*See the Patterns*).

What International World Television is attempting to do for broadcast news is, I would like to suggest, consistent with what librarians do for library collections every day: address imbalances, increase diversity and fill in gaps. But IWTNews is attempting to do this by not only expanding TV news coverage to issues and stories not currently covered by mainstream sources, the network is also challenging the economics of TV news and the monopoly on repetition and amplification.[12] The network is at once offering an alternative to mainstream TV news and challenging the existing system by imagining and inventing a new model for TV news that recognizes the important role played by the news media in defining and modeling active citizenship.[13]

The strategy employed by IWTNews is one that librarians might use when addressing imbalances in the library: in addition to attempts to increase diversity by filling in gaps, librarians must also recognize, acknowledge, and challenge the sources of these gaps and imbalances – namely, the economic, social and political forces that have an impact on libraries and on the production, dissemination and regulation of information.[14] Such an approach would be consistent with the IFC Subcommittee report which urges librarians to do more than promote local and independent sources of information or to otherwise work around the power and dominance of the mainstream media and commercial publishing systems. Included in the report is a section entitled "The Library Profession as an Advocate for Change" in which the report's authors assert that "librarians working together...can compete for and win the battle to shape...information policy in the public interest" (23). Specific actions recommended in the report include opposition to "changes in media ownership rules that encourage further concentration of the media," opposition to "copyright laws, regulation [and] rules...that limit the public's access rights," and support for "anti-trust actions against attempts by large media companies [and] publishers to merge" (24).[15] In other words, included in the report and embedded in the efforts of IWTNews is a call for librarians to not merely

work around issues and problems by offering alternatives and innovative services,[16] but also to confront head-on the conditions that make alternatives necessary.

Making Power Visible

The absence of genuine consideration of the political factors affecting the production, dissemination and regulation of information in the *ACRL IL Standards* is contrasted not only by the IFC Subcommittee report's call for increased librarian involvement with these issues, but also by Toni Samek's view of the library as a "point of resistance" and Henry Giroux's work on critical pedagogy. In her most recent book, conceived as a "direct challenge to the notion of library neutrality" (7), Samek notes[17] how an examination of the "relationships in society among people, information and recorded knowledge and the cultural record," reveals "local, national and international issues related to the production, collection, interpretation, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval, dissemination, transformation and use of information and ideas" (8). Among the contemporary examples Samek identifies that are relevant to our work as library and information workers are "biometrics, intellectual property, global tightening of information and border controls, and public access to government information" (8). The current climate of war, global market fundamentalism (7) and the adoption of legislation with implications for issues such as "access to information, privacy, civil liberties, and intellectual freedom" also, Samek argues, have repercussions for library and information workers and the communities we serve (8).

Given what she sees as the close interconnection between broad social and political issues and the work of library and information workers, Samek views the library as a "point of resistance"(9) and library and information workers as "active participants and interventionists in social conflicts"(7). To not participate in social struggles over these and other issues, Samek argues, makes the profession "vulnerable to control networks such as economic and political regimes" (8). To not participate, to claim a position of neutrality, is to accept and endorse the status quo.

As Ryan Gage (2004) and others have already shown,[18] cultural critic and theorist Henry Giroux addresses these same issues in his work on critical pedagogy. Giroux asserts that "there is no space outside of politics" (14) and argues that teachers "must be able to critically analyze the ideologies, values and interests that inform their role as teachers and the cultural politics they promote in the classroom"(7). For Giroux, critical pedagogy is a "discourse for asserting the primacy of the political and the ethical as a central feature of educational theory and practice" (4). Critical pedagogy is also "dedicated to revitalizing democratic public life" (5) by making power visible and accountable (19). Most importantly for Giroux, perhaps, is that critical pedagogy links the language of critique to the language of possibility in order to enable students to recognize that they can be "political actors in shaping the world that they inherit" (19). Like Samek,

Giroux acknowledges the importance of intervening with the goal of working towards social change.

The concern with power and opposition to power is also a central feature of critical theory,[19] and LIS literature includes a modest though already long tradition of exploring ways in which critical and social theory can be applied to librarianship.[20] Ryan Gage, for example, has suggested that critical theory "as a diagnostic model for addressing traditionally marginalized subjects" can help "the library profession avoid the pitfalls of status quo thinking" and provide frameworks for better understanding "librarianship's connection with issues related to capitalism, culture, ideology, power and information technologies"(2004). James Elmborg builds on the tradition of critical theory and on the work of Giroux, Paulo Freire, and LIS scholars such as Troy Swanson[21] to suggest that librarians need to develop "new guiding philosophies" (192) that take into account both the growing teaching role of librarians and the fact that education is a "profoundly political activity"(193). Elmborg notes that consideration of political and cultural agendas has been largely absent from information literacy debates since information literacy researchers have tended to separate "students from social and economic contexts" (193-94). He proposes that a "critical literacy" which "focuses on the links between the educational process and the politics of literacy" would provide a way for librarians to "more honestly align themselves with the democratic values they often invoke" (193).[22]

Critical theory, Elmborg asserts, "examines schools as agents of culture and shapers of student consciousness" (193). Drawing on the work of Freire, Elmborg explains that schools, examined "through the lens" of critical theory and critical pedagogy, are seen "to enact the dominant ideologies of their societies" and, as a result, "educators must either accept [that] ideology or...resist it" by positing "alternative pedagogies" designed "to create critical consciousness" in students about information, knowledge and education (193).[23] As an example, Elmborg asks whether librarians should be content to teach the "grammar of information" – the structures that organize information such as library classification systems and LC subject headings – or teach that grammars of information are in fact "reflections of a particular world view" and emphasize the library's role in "creating privileged discourse" (197). Elmborg argues that for information literacy to have "a critical dimension, it must involve both an understanding of how various classification systems work, and...an exploration of how they create and perpetuate powerful categories for representing 'knowable reality...'"(197).[24]

Elmborg's arguments are also consistent with the interests of cultural historian, media scholar and author of *The Anarchist in the Library*, Siva Vaidhyanathan, who has argued, in the form of a bibliographic manifesto, for the unification into one field of the broad array of works concerned with "the ways in which culture and information are regulated" (293). Vaidhyanathan proposes to call this field Critical Information Studies (or

CIS) and describes it as a "derivation of both critical theory and information theory," with library science as one of the fields that has influenced and continues to inform CIS (296).

CIS considers the "relationships among regulation and commerce, creativity, science, technology [and] politics"(293) and engages with matters of public interest such as copyright, technology, corporate control of information, and access to information. CIS scholars also reach "beyond the spheres of scholarly discourse" to influence, and intervene in, matters of "public interest" such as the open content and open journals movements, Creative Commons, and advocating on behalf of users rights (303). In other words, CIS is concerned[25] with many of the same issues addressed by LIS but its approach is interdisciplinary and, like the critical information literacy discussed by Elmborg and the critical pedagogy discussed by Giroux, it is also concerned with power and the transformative potential that comes from critical engagement with information and the rules and systems governing the regulation of information.

It is this concern with power and recognition that imbalances of power can be challenged and changed that is lacking from the *ACRL IL Standards*. An understanding of economic, legal, social, and political issues should lead to more than compliance with existing policies and the following of established etiquette. Identifying and discussing ethical, legal and socio-economic issues – to use the language of Performance Indicator 1[26] – is a start, but discussion without a sense that knowledge can be transformative does not represent fully the role of an informed citizen who is active and engaged in the communities of which he or she is a member.[27] The form of citizenship the *Standards* appear to construct is one that is passive rather than active, acquiescent rather than interventionist, and conformist rather than critical. It is a form of citizenship which mirrors the traditional, so-called neutral position of the library profession. By teaching information and media literacy skills to students without also teaching them that their knowledge can be transformative – without including what Giroux calls the language of possibility – librarians model to students a form of citizenship that passively accepts the world as it is rather than a form of citizenship that is active and participative and seeks to challenge inequity and change unfair policies and practices.

Citizenship and the Practice of Political Judgment

In his recent Hart House Lecture,[28] "One Nation Under Google: Citizenship in the Technological Republic," Darin Barney describes citizenship as "a way of knowing and acting, a way of being in the world, a practice" (11). And the practice of citizenship is, he suggests, "at its core, the practice of political judgment" (13). In other words, to be a citizen "is to engage in judgment about common things in relation to and with others"(13). It is judgment "brought to bear on claims about justice and...a life lived well in common with others" (15). Much of Barney's lecture is beyond the scope

of this paper, but his argument that citizens should be involved in the political judgments regarding new technologies is, I believe, relevant to the issues addressed here. Barney takes issue with the fact that technology is not the object of political judgment of citizens and that decisions about the "design, development and regulation of technology" are instead left to "private interests"(24). For the most part, Barney argues, "we citizens just take what we can get when it comes to technology: we live in the world of cell-phones, the automobile, the jet airliner, pharmaceuticals, plastic, video surveillance... whether we like it or not: nobody asked us" (24-25). Barney contends that citizens should be permitted the chance to exercise political judgment on new technologies, not merely as consumers who choose what to buy and use, but as citizens since new technologies and systems, and the manner in which they are used and regulated, can "have such dramatic consequences for human social, economic and cultural relationships and practices" (23).[29]

Barney's argument can, I would like to suggest, be extended to the news media and media policy. Barney observes that individual technologies are always political "in both their genesis and their outcomes" – that is, political interests are at stake and determine the course taken by new technologies – but they are also depoliticizing in the sense that "technological societies remove from political judgment and contest questions that belong in the political realm," including questions about technology (8-9).[30] A similar argument could be made regarding the media and media policy.

In Canada, for example, citizens are permitted to participate in discussions about media regulation and, earlier this summer and in advance of the September Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) hearing to address the rules governing media ownership, the public was invited to have its say. However, the public's say, and the fact that the public has the right to have a say, receive little coverage by the media who stand to benefit from changes to the rules governing media ownership.[31] In other words, the media's failure to adequately cover issues related to media policy and regulation remove from public view the political nature of the media and conceal the opportunities citizens have to exercise political judgments about media policy.

The important role played by politics and political choice in the development of media technology and policy is finely documented by Paul Starr in his history of modern communications in the United States. Starr shows how "constitutive choices" about the modern media in the US took place "in the context of larger political and economic transformations" (2). The story of modern communications, Starr notes, is usually told as "a narrative of revolution" such as the printing revolution or the electronics and computer revolutions and the usual understanding of these revolutions is that "radical change" in communications and society stems from the introduction of a new medium (4). The reality is that "social change stemming from a new technology...relate[s] less to a medium's intrinsic properties than to constitutive choices about its design and development"(4). Starr points

to the decision to operate the telegraph as a private enterprise (Western Union) and notes that once decisions such as this are made, they can appear "natural and inevitable, as if there could be no other way"(4-5). But, as Starr shows throughout his book, the development of communications media in the US followed the path it did – a path different in many ways from the ones followed in Europe and Canada (2-3) – because of political decisions. Decisions made about the telegraph in the nineteenth century could have been different just as decisions made about the media system today can maintain current rules and trends or help create a more democratic and equitable media environment.

Modeling Active Citizenship

The primary argument of Darin Barney's Hart House Lecture is that "technology poses a significant challenge for citizenship"(8). The explanation of this challenge is complex – in Barney's words, it is "both complicated and troubling"(8) – but it in part has to do[32] with the observation that in our technological society "the progress of technology is closely associated with possibility of well-being and self-realization"(34) and the fact that the "pervasive [...] everydayness of technological experience works to obscure its contingency as an ethical claim that might be subject to political judgment in relation to competing claims"(39).[33] But to be a citizen and to make judgments about the good life, we must, Barney argues, be open "to the possibility that [the good life] might entail something different from the way things just happen to be at the moment"(38-39).

Once again, Barney's arguments regarding citizenship and technology inform the issues addressed in this paper. A commercially driven media system that obscures questions that belong in the political realm and that marginalizes viable alternatives (alternative voices, views and sources of information, but also alternative ways of regulating the media or society) poses a challenge for citizenship just as significant as that posed by technology. Future research may consider in greater detail strategies librarians might use to actively confront this challenge. We might begin by revising the form of citizenship constructed in the *ACRL IL Standards* to one that is open to the possibility that the rules and systems governing access to and use of information could be different from the way things just happen to be at the moment. Also, by recognizing as relevant to our work as librarians and information workers the attempt of Independent World Television to challenge the status quo of broadcast news, and by addressing and actively confronting issues such as big media's attempts to loosen the rules of media ownership, librarians can provide concrete examples of how economic, legal, social and political factors play a role in the creation, dissemination, and regulation of information and, at the same time, model for students a form of citizenship that refuses to accept unchallenged imposed conditions that limit diversity both inside and outside our libraries. Similarly, the continued integration of critical theory and critical pedagogy into library and information literacy discourse, and

further inquiry into interdisciplinary research such as the newly named "transfield" of Critical Information Studies proposed by Vaidhyanathan, may help broaden our discussions and help emphasize the need for greater research focus on imbalances of power and on the role librarians can play as interventionists and advocates for social change, as recently recommended by the IFC Subcommittee report on Media Concentration and Libraries.

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Footnotes

1. *The Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning* prepared by the American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology, for example, include three "Social Responsibility Standards." Standard 7 emphasizes the importance of information – and equitable access to information – to a democratic society.
2. See Elmborg (2006) discussed below, Swanson (2004) and Anderson (2006) who argue that the *ACRL IL Standards* make information literacy look like a neutral ability rather than a sociopolitical skill (215).
3. See, for example, Wiegand (1999), who expresses concern about the failure of LIS discourse to engage questions raised by critical theorists and philosophers of science about "connections between power and knowledge" (23); Buschman (2006) who provides an overview of recent attempts to address the lack of theoretical basis in LIS; Pawley (2003) who suggests that debates over "what, fundamentally, we are trying to do when we engage in information literacy practices... requires us to draw on scholarship not only in LIS but also in education, epistemology, ethics, politics, and social theory..." (445); and Riddle (2003) who suggests that, despite common ground and common interests, there is a "research void" between the areas of information literacy and service learning (71).
4. Simmons (2005) argues that the "published literature about information literacy tends to focus narrowly on the acquisition of skills..." and suggests that the ACRL definition of information literacy "lacks a critical element in which assumptions about information are called into question" (299). She further suggests that "helping students to examine and question the social, economic, and political context for the production and consumption of information is a vital corollary to teaching the skills of information literacy" (299) and that Standard 5 "should infuse all instruction" (300). Simmons proposes that IL instruction be extended to include tenets of genre theory as a means of fostering an awareness of the social construction of discourses (302). Doherty and Ketchner (2005) argue that "librarians have been guilty of a patriarchal and privileged positioning of their expertise in relation to the users they serve" and take a "critical theory view of libraries, information and library users" (1) to help develop a "more critically grounded theory of information literacy instruction"(2). The authors propose a librarian-user partnership based on "equitable power" that would enable "authentic, empowered, intentional learning" (4). Swanson (2004) argues that the standards "that drive information literacy limit its true potential" and "send librarians and instructors down a path of purely functional education that risks disconnecting from the lives of students"(75).
5. See, for example, Birdsall (2006), Buschman (2003 & 2006), Doherty (2006), Gage (2004), Kapitzke (2003), and Samek (2001, 2004 & 2007).
6. See, for example, Elmborg (2006) discussed below, Pawley (2003), and Swanson (2004 & 2004a).
7. Definitions of citizenship vary and are closely related to competing definitions and models of democracy and active political participation. It is not the intent of this paper to argue for one particular definition of citizenship but, rather, to discuss the form of citizenship constructed by the ACRL IL Standards.
8. Giroux writes: "...the ideologically driven conservative corporate media substitute entertainment or patriotic correctness for any responsible effort to make dominant authority and institutions accountable for their actions"(111).
9. There is a long tradition of questioning the assumption that librarians should be ideologically and politically neutral. This tradition, linked to the social responsibility movement and, as Samek (2001) has documented, extending back to the 1930s, posits that there can be no neutral position for librarians since librarians and libraries are subject to the same issues and distributions of power that affect the communities in which they work and operate. Samek offers the views expressed by David Berninghausen in a 1972 *Library Journal* article as an example of the position of those who objected to the concept of social responsibility. Berninghausen argued that "impartiality and 'neutrality' on non-library issues serve as the central principle of the profession" and that the concept of social responsibility was a "New-Left tactic" that threatened this neutrality (4).
10. See McChesney (2004) chapter seven (The Uprising of 2003) for a discussion of

the political and economic factors at play in the FCC's attempts to change rules on media ownership.

11. For example, McChesney argues that increased media consolidation increases the likelihood that official press releases will be used word for word, increases reliance on PR, and leads to a decline in investigative journalism (80-81). Deregulation usually means "government regulation that advances the interests of the dominant corporate players" (19-20). McChesney contrasts the commercial media to non-profit, public service broadcasting which is accountable to citizens and does not rely on the market to determine programming (241). Similarly, Grant and Wood (2004), in their study of market dynamics and cultural products (books, movies, television, recorded music, etc.) argue the drive to maximize profit can "preclude programming that serves a public interest in, for example, educational programs for children or a fully informed citizenry" (51).
12. The network will provide existing independent and alternative media with the means to substantially increase its reach and compete with the "amplifying conduits" (the network and cable news channels) that act as echo-chambers for voices widely heard in the mainstream media.
13. Bybee, Fogle and Quail (2004), in their article examining the lessons commercially produced news teach young people about the meaning of democracy and citizenship, argue that "we must rethink the idea of news" and "add to the task of news...that it be a watchdog of the ways in which the interests of economics intersect with, conflict with, and potentially undermine the interests of participatory democracy" (par 75). They conclude that "the critical role the news plays in both defining citizenship – and potentially modeling active citizenship – must be recognized" (par 76).
14. Policy decisions that lead to increased concentration of media ownership, policies that lead to media deregulation, decisions to cut funding to education, public broadcasting and other public services, policies that favour a commercial rather than a public media system, cuts to university presses, to name but a few examples, all have an impact on libraries and the communities we serve and all require political action to ensure that future policies and decisions take into account the public interest.
15. Suggested actions for change are not limited to this one section. For example, the suggestion to lobby the Library Congress for revisions to misleading subject headings and index and abstract companies to include more diverse media in their databases appear in other sections of the report.
16. The provision of alternative and independent sources of information remains, as I have elsewhere argued (Lilburn 2005) and as the IFC Subcommittee report emphasizes, an essential task for librarians if libraries are to do more than merely reproduce the inequities and imbalances outside our libraries.
17. Samek here acknowledges the work of Capurro and Hjorland (2003).
18. Gage argues that Giroux's work is "highly translatable and applicable to librarians because he constantly puts forward trenchant critiques that draw out and illuminate the ways in which the production, circulation, and consumption of information, knowledge, and meaning are never innocent but instead sutured to issues of power, political economy, and specific subject positions organized along class, racial, gender and sexual orientation lines."
19. The term critical theory is used in different ways. Although I refer here primarily to theorists associated with and influenced by the Frankfurt School of critical theory (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas, to name but a few), critical theory can also be understood more broadly to include theoretical approaches associated with structuralism, poststructuralism and postmodernism (Kellner, *Critical Theory*). As described by D. Kellner, critical theory (as opposed to traditional theory which "uncritically reproduces the existing society") was developed as an interdisciplinary social theory characterized by a synthesis of social science and philosophy which could "serve as an instrument of social transformation" (*Crisis*). The Institute for Social Research (Frankfurt School) "developed theories of monopoly capitalism, the new industrial state, the role of technology and giant corporations in monopoly capitalism, the key roles of mass culture and communication in reproducing contemporary societies, and the decline of democracy and of the individual" (Kellner, *Critical Theory*). Kellner explains how the Frankfurt School eventually become known for its "theories of 'the totally administered society,' or 'one-

dimensional society,' which analyzed the increasing power of capitalism over all aspects of social life and the development of new forms of social control" (*Critical Theory*). Critical theory is "motivated by an interest in emancipation from capitalism and provides a philosophy of social practice engaged in 'the struggle for the future'" (Kellner, Crisis).

20. See, for example, Budd (2003), Buschman (2006), Kapitzke (2003), Raber (2003) and Radford and Radford (2005).
21. Swanson (2004) argues that information literacy "can move away from the mechanistic approach offered by the various information literacy standards towards a new view of information literacy by drawing from critical pedagogy"(69). Critical pedagogy theory can allow librarians to develop a broader perspective of information literacy that recognizes that education, technology and information are not apolitical (71-2) and also "recognizes the potential for information literacy to support society's status quo..." (67). Elsewhere, Swanson (2004a) offers an example of how the critical pedagogy model can be applied to the research paper component of a first year composition course.
22. Kapitzke, as part of her critical analysis of the current information literacy framework, also proposes a "critical information literacy" which would "analyze the social and political ideologies embedded within the economies of ideas and information" (49).
23. Elmborg here refers to the work of Giroux, Peter McLaren and, in particular, Freire whose "banking concept" of Western education based on the ideology of capitalism is discussed in detail. It is Freire who posits an alternative pedagogy designed to create critical consciousness in students.
24. Elmborg here refers to the work of Hope Olson. For Elmborg, "a critical information literacy involves developing a critical consciousness about information and learning to ask questions about the library's... role in structuring and presenting a single, knowable reality"(198). The task should not be to define information literacy, but to develop a critical and theoretical informed practice of librarianship (198).
25. Vaidhyanathan offers the following "rough definition" of CIS: CIS "interrogates the structures, functions, habits, norms, and practices that guide global flows of information and cultural elements. Instead of being concerned merely with one's right to speak (or sing or publish), CIS asks questions about access, costs, and chilling effects on, within, and among audiences, citizens, emerging cultural creators, Indigenous cultural groups, teachers and students. Central to these issues is the idea of 'semiotic democracy,' or the ability of citizens to employ the signs and symbols ubiquitous in their environments in manners that they determine" (303).
26. Three of the four outcomes for Performance Indicator 1 (Standard Five) begin with the words: "Identifies and discusses."
27. Benjamin Barber, for example, has argued that in a strong, participative democracy, citizenship must "stand for something more than taxpaying and voting" (xxviii). Citizens "need not participate all of the time in all public affairs, but they should participate at least some of the time in at least some public affairs" (xxix). Democracies, Barber writes, are "easily overthrown" not from without, but are "eroded gradually from within, consumed unprotestingly by complacency in the guise of privatism, by arrogance in the guise of empire..., by passivity in the guise of deference to experts..." (xxix). Democracy can only survive as a "strong democracy, secured not by great leaders but by competent, responsible citizens" (xxix).
28. Darin Barney's 2007 Hart House Lecture is part of the student-organized Hart House Lecture Series at the University of Toronto.
29. Barney argues that technologies are "not just neutral instruments or means, they are rather intimately bound up in the establishment of prohibitions and permissions, the distribution of power and resources, and the structure of human practices and relationships" (23-24).
30. "When it comes to matters of technological design, development and regulation," Barney contends, "the stakes are too high [and] the risks are too great... to subject technology to something as unpredictable as politics, particularly the politics of democratic citizenry"(31). In a "resolutely technological society, citizenship is basically a risk to be managed"(31).
31. The Diversity of Voices Public Hearing addressing the issue of media concentration

in Canada was held in Gatineau, Quebec, beginning on 17 September 2007. Although a number of earlier studies addressed this same issue (including the 1970 Davey Report, the 1981 Kent Commission, and the 2003 Lincoln Report), this hearing, according to CRTC Chairman Konrad von Finckenstein, marked "the first time that the CRTC has held a comprehensive policy review of its approach to media ownership and the impact it may have on the diversity of voices available to Canadians." Public notice of the hearing and the invitation for written comments was released on 13 April 2007. The deadline for receipt of written comments was 18 July 2007. Of the twenty major Canadian daily newspapers indexed in the Canadian Newsstand database (accessed via McGill University on 21 September 2007), only *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* reported on the 13 April CRTC public notice. The *National Post* piece made no mention of the call for public input and the *Globe and Mail* noted only that "submissions will be accepted until July 18" but did not explain that the public was entitled to make a submission.

32. Barney's full argument cannot be summarized here, but his explanation of the challenge is also related to the observation that technology serves as a "unifying common project that lends coherent purpose to a diverse people"(35). Barney argues that Canada's so-called "innovation agenda," a project of "economic restructuring to which capitalist and state elites in Canada have been committed for at least the past two decades," has been presented as a "technological project, connected seamlessly with Canada's historical destiny as a technological nation"(35-36) As a result, Canadian elites have been able to efface "the deeply political nature of this project" (36). As long as "ours is the dream of a nation made strong and whole by technology," Barney contends, "it will be very easy for the captains of commerce and industry to invoke technology as a reason to exclude questions of justice and the good life from the political judgment of citizens"(36).
33. Technology, Barney also writes, "so thoroughly occup[ies] the foreground of our experience that it eclipses both its own ethical background and any possible alternatives (38).

"SO PROMISING OF SUCCESS": THE ROLE OF LOCAL 88 IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1937–1952

by Joyce M. Latham

On Sunday, October 31 in 1937 a group of thirteen activists employed by the Chicago Public Library (CPL) capped a labor organizing campaign at a "mass meeting" held at the John Marshall Law School.[1] As Abram Korman, the president *pro tem* explained, it was not the first attempt to organize a union at CPL. The earlier effort had occurred in 1922, and lost to the counter-effort by the administration, which organized a staff association. Korman blamed the failure of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) attempt on half-hearted effort. But he was more confident of the current undertaking as "The will and the determination to perfect such an organization were never so earnest and so promising of success."

The "will and determination" arose not simply from the economic challenges inherent in the 1937 recession – feared by some as a reprise of the Depression – but also the political realities attached to the Memorial Day Massacre that occurred at the Republic Steel plant on the south side of Chicago. Employees were also energized by the growth and development of a new, activist union – the Committee of Industrial Organization (CIO) – that was brazenly challenging the status quo on all fronts.

One union which emerged within the CIO was the State, County and Municipal Workers of America (SCMWA), an organization primarily of government employees, with a strong white collar orientation. The president of SCMWA was Abe Flaxer, a radical organizer with roots in the rank-and-file movement of charitable organizations in Depression-wracked New York City. An immigrant himself, and a lawyer, Flaxer affiliated with the Communist Party early in his career as a labor organizer. He maintained his leadership position until the white collar union was expelled from the CIO[2] and most of the locals were folded back into the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers in the wake of the red purge in 1948/49.

But in 1937, four libraries organized with the CIO: the Library of Congress, New York Public Library, Cleveland Public Library and Chicago Public Library.[3] Of these, the Chicago Public Library Local 88 left the broadest collection of materials, as they published some variant of a newsletter for all of their fifteen years with the CIO. The newsletter is available in the Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection. Local 88 – later

Local 2, after SCMWA merged with the United Federal Workers of America to become the United Public Workers of America – also maintained a scrapbook, which was lost for several years in San Francisco, but then returned to the Chicago Historical Society. Abe Korman and his associates also worked closely with the national SCMWA leadership, as articles and announcements often appeared in the national newspaper, *Govt. Guide*.

The Chicago Public Library also maintains a record of annual reports and Board of Director minutes, which allow strands of research from the grassroots labor organization to be related to the administrative perspective. Head Librarian Carl B. Roden left an archive of the correspondence of his long administration and the records of the Staff Association also became available during the period of research. These records are supplemented by an emerging analysis of the alternative associations that developed in the city of Chicago during this period, which provides context for the growth of the union.

The evidence indicates that the library union pursued strategies to strengthen a failing civil service practice within CPL, improve educational opportunities for staff, extend the political role of the staff of the library, and provide cultural and social events for employees. Local 88 also took strong positions against fascism, promoted racial equity as well as rights for women, and was a consistent advocate for intellectual freedom within the profession and on behalf of patrons.

But even more than their intentional program, the emergence of Local 88 signaled a new era of library service, a challenge to the "moral uplift" model of public librarianship and a rejection of the patronage process of professionalization. With the support of the CIO, librarians were emboldened to turn away from their elitist patrons and toward the communities they served. The members of those communities then, in a cultural dialogue with the institution, changed the orientation of the local institution to reflect their identity back into the city. Public libraries have been engaging that dialogue ever since.

The Launch of the Union

Volume 1, number 1 of the *C.P.L. Union News* (CPLUN) reported that the union was organized to achieve two primary objectives – the good of the library itself, and the well-being of the Library employees, individually and collectively. The "Program of the Union" listed ten areas of concentration for the organization: Strict enforcement of civil service for all library employees; an adequate staff at all times; definite classification of duties within each grade; minimum wage of $1200 a year for all full time employees, with part time employees paid on a proportional basis; promotional examinations and appointments from qualified lists at regular intervals; automatic increases within grades; four week vacation with pay and a thirty-five hour workweek; proper working conditions and

the safeguarding of employees health; adequate facilities as to space, equipment and supplies for carrying on the duties of all employees.[4]

The list represents a detailed challenge to the weakening of civil service practice in Chicago that occurred during the period immediately preceding the stock market failures, as well as the subsequent Depression era. Records of the Staff Association provide the evidence of the impacts of the budget cuts on staff, but the Staff Association itself had functioned primarily as an ameliorating organization.

This initial issue of the newsletter also addressed how the union had organized itself. The lead article "Union Head Addresses Staff Council" reported that the union president met with the Staff Association Council on November 30, 1937. Korman relayed the history of the formation of the union, and reminded the staff association leadership of his communication with them following the second general organizational meeting.

The question appears to be, however, who knew about the union? Who even knew that the organizational process was taking place? The editorial "No Secrecy Involved" claimed that "Announcements of the first meeting were distributed to those persons who could be reached." It did not discuss who was doing the reaching, or the influence that had on the outcome of the process. The writer noted, however, "More than ten persons, the required number for charter application, came to this meeting and voted to form a local of the State, County and Municipal Workers of America." CPL organized as an independent municipal department.[5]

The library organizers believed that an established organization had a better chance of growing than continuing a discussion of whether the library should organize at all. Organizers who attended the first meeting brought friends and associates to the second meeting, and they collaborated on the construction of a contact list. The writer of the editorial assured readers that "All union material has from the beginning been sent to branch librarians and department heads."[6] The editorial further explained that the officers, executive board and several committees were already established and operational.

The Executive Committee listed twelve members, with A.B. Korman as president, and his Foreign Language Department assistant, Ben Hirsch, as chair of the publicity committee and member of the newsletter editorial board. Helen E. Radesinky, chair of the membership committee, had been active with the Staff Association. Marie Antoinette De Roulet, a branch librarian, served as chair of the Grievance Committee and was a key player in the development of the effectiveness of the union. She would later emerge as the union leader who attempted to yank the organization to the right during the period of the red purge.

Civil Service / Merit

Civil service, sometimes referred to as the merit system, had its roots in New York state, but the Pendleton Act, "An Act to Regulate and Improve the Civil Service of the United States," was passed at the national level in 1883, following the death of President Garfield, shot by a disgruntled patronage seeker. The city of Chicago was among the earliest adopters, also due to the assassination of its popular mayor Harrison Carter, by a similarly disgruntled office seeker.[7]

As the CPL union organized, civil service was failing its stated objectives of assuring consistency in hiring, work and promotion. Employees were working "out of title" – performing duties assigned to another level of job. Tests for promotions were frozen, in some cases for years. Open entry-level positions were left unfilled. The fiscal situation for Chicago, even pre-Depression, had already negatively impacted the civil service structure of the municipality. The creation of Works Progress Administration positions within the library for non-library workers further eroded the once secure employment structure.

While the Civil Service Commission was not under the control of the library board, automatic salary increases, promotion lists and the call for examinations were managed by the administration. In fact, personnel matters were, at that point in time, the responsibility of the Assistant Librarian, as the library had no personnel officer who could have functioned as an advocate on behalf of employees. The union issued a call for automatic increases within grades with the February 1938 issue of the CPLUN. "On January 6th it was made the basis of a resolution by the Executive Committee of the local endorsing and urging favorable action on the petitions circulated by various employee groups with the active participation of the Union." The editorial noted that funds had been released to increase the book budget, and hoped that the administration would also choose to address staff morale by re-instating automatic salary increases. The Board of Trustees did authorize, at its February 28th meeting, a restoration of salary cuts and the reinstatement of automatic increases for those who had been eligible for them in 1930. The salary adjustments were made possible by a significant increase in funding of $400,000.[8]

The union also launched a call for promotional exams in April, 1938. They argued for promotional exams rather than open exams. Open exams would have allowed new applicants to come into the organization, but while the union recognized a need for "new blood" it did not seem "quite right that the transfusion should take place" at that point. Primarily, many staff, already working out of their class, developed professional skills without the benefit of an advanced library education. It was a concern to the union that new applicants, with library school degrees, would score better on exams than those within the organization eligible to test.[9] Advanced library degrees were not required for professional entry positions. The library

itself maintained its own professional training program, and promotions often emerged from in-house cohorts.

Calls for examinations, publication of lists, and demands for closer adherence to standard civil service practice continued through the war years, coupled with a battle for improved salaries. However, the union knew that the success of their own agenda depended on improved funding through the taxing authority. The leadership of Local 88 made knowledge of the funding formula a priority and lobbied at both the national and the local level for improved public library support.

Salaries

In December of 1938 the CPL Employees Union petitioned the Board for a minimum salary of $100 per month and an increase of $20 per month for all full time employees. The union leadership did its homework, and reported that the lowest salary paid in other city departments was that of messenger, which began at $1,080 per year. A full-time page employed at the library received $600 a year.[10] The union also requested reclassification of grade titles, one half-holiday a week for janitorial staff and time-and-a-half for hours worked in excess of the scheduled 35. It further requested a reimbursement of two weeks lost pay from the 1931 citywide cutbacks. The Board of Directors referred the issues to their Committee on Administration.

The Executive Committee of the union then wrote Mayor Kelly on January 23, 1939, concerning the same issues. They pointed out the discrepancies between library salaries and those of other city agencies.[11] The Mayor apparently forwarded the letter to the head librarian, and Roden's response, dated January 28, 1939, challenged several of the union assertions. He noted that Junior Clerks actually earned $75 a month, that it was the pages who earned $50 a month. He explained that pages usually were young boys, "employed as runners, messengers, etc., for which $12 a week is considerably more than the commercial rate." He did concede that, with the Depression, several boys had grown into men in their page positions, and now found their responsibilities more demanding and harder to support on a page's salary.[12] While he granted that the salaries for the professional grades could see some improvement he found "the comparison with Teachers is hardly reasonable." While he did indicate some support for the call for promotions, Roden put the responsibility on the Civil Service Commission, which he blamed for failure to test.[13]

The publication of the Executive Committee's memorandum in the union newsletter also served to educate staff to the inequities, no doubt with the hope of stimulating growth in membership. While the initiative failed, it laid the groundwork for a joint campaign between the members of the union and the staff association.

"TwoWeeks" Pay

One staff person who identified her- or himself as "Patience" wrote an article for the newsletter in response to a challenge from a board member about the need for a union within the library. The employee, who began with the library around 1925, explained that in 1931 s/he took the senior examination for civil service and did not receive an appointment until after the union was in place (1937). The employee reported cuts in salaries, lack of promotions, lay-offs of colleagues, and the loss of two weeks pay that was never recovered. The employee's supervisor lent the employee money as the credit union at that point was unable to provide much assistance. When the staff person notified the supervisor s/he would need to resign to be eligible for relief, the supervisor made arrangements for the employee to borrow $5.00 a week from United Charities.

> Each week, for eight weeks, on my way to work, I stopped at the charity office and waited in line to see my case worker. Perhaps this is one reason why the idea of professionals in the labor movement does not scandalize me.[14]

The union mounted a campaign to reclaim the lost "two weeks" pay. The deductions were made from staff paychecks during the last five months of 1931 in accordance with a resolution passed by the Chicago City Council. In 1936 the Circuit Court of Cook County found in favor of police officers who filed suit for reimbursement for the hours worked. As a result the City Council voted to reimburse all city employees in order to stop further suits. But the library employees were never paid.

The Staff Association Council voted 21 to 6 to join with the CPL union in petitioning for a restoration of the lost pay from 1931. The union newsletter reported that a joint committee of the two staff organizations drafted a petition to the library Board and circulated it among employees working in the library at the time of the cut.[15] Four hundred and sixty members of the staff who suffered the 14-day salary cut signed the petition, and it was submitted to the Board.

Roden had indicated to Mayor Kelly that the cost of the restoration of pay totaled about $50,000, which was not possible in the current budget, but he appeared to indicate that the staff had a valid issue when he noted that the fact that the restoration had been granted to other city employees but not in the library "has been a source of dissatisfaction for a long time."[16] The Library Board rejected the joint petition at the June 26, 1939 meeting, however, determining that the complaint had "no validity under the law."

Educational Opportunities

Local 88 recognized the need to inform staff of how a union operated, and what it meant for them to be organized into a union. The union appeared to

understand as well the need to address not only "bread and butter" issues, but, in keeping with national president Abe Flaxer's stated philosophy, the reasons such bread and butter issues existed.[17] The union sponsored workshops and lectures on what union organization meant, and why it was necessary. As various articles in the *C.P.L. Union News* indicate, they also sponsored lectures and training opportunities relevant to the skills of practicing librarians. The union supported internal movement up through the organization, based on in-house training programs, and also sponsored preparation classes for the taking of the civil service exams themselves.

The CPL union built labor education into its meetings as well as promoting distinct training programs. The November, 1937 meeting featured Harvey O'Connor, editor of the *People's Press* and former member of the IWW, who described the obstacles newspaper workers confronted in their battle for better working conditions and improved wages through the Newspaper Guild. John A. Lapp, economist, addressed the open meeting on Feb. 13th about need to organize.[18] A March, 1939, membership meeting concerned "The establishment of democracy in the relationship between employees and the administration as one of the most important functions of a professional union," a topic stressed by Annette Direckman, Industrial Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. in her discussion of "The New Role of the Librarian."

The first full lecture series, launched in the spring of 1938, addressed union topics such as "Labor Journalism," by Harold Rossman of the Chicago Newspaper Guild; "Parliamentary Procedure," by Ira Silbar of the National Lawyers Guild; a history of the American labor movement, by labor attorney Ben Myers; "Techniques of White Collar Organization," by Irwin Elbar of the sister agency United Federal Workers of America. Another lecture series, also sponsored by the union during April and May of 1938 addressed library issues. Speakers from the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago, discussed "the distribution of library facilities, federal aid for libraries, the history of publishing in Chicago and library surveys."[20] The fall lecture series mixed a range of topics. It included talks on youth and the public library, fascism, professional standards and union standards, adult education and, notably, a lecture by Leroy C. Merritt from the University of Chicago Graduate Library School on the "Library as a Social Force."[21]

The classes cost $1 per session.[22] Given that staff were still advocating for competitive salaries, this is a considerable amount. While the union itself was structured to cut across all levels of staff within the organization, the fees suggest that classes were restricted to those who could afford them. As the librarians drew the highest staff salaries, they would have been the likely targets of the programming.

The education committee, chaired by the vice-president of the union, who was for many years Mary M. Taggart, changed the strategy of a lecture series to one of single lecture events similar to those organized for the union meetings. One such presentation was a report by William Spahn,

the Midwest regional representative for SCMWA, on the discussions at a recent meeting of the National Executive Board of the union in New York. The focus was on the apparent change in policy in the Roosevelt administration as the then "European war" took center stage.

Another event, very different but still motivated by educational intent was the CPL union-sponsored literary tea. The first speaker in the series was the activist black writer Langston Hughes. Hughes discussed Richard Wright's *Native Son* and told the audience "All Negroes in the United States are subjected to the same social restriction and discrimination which destroyed Bigger Thomas. It does not matter if that person is Marian Anderson, George Washington Carver, Roland Hayes, or Langston Hughes." Over 500 employees and friends – a "capacity crowd" – attended the program, which seemed to highlight a more intense focus on race relations by the union itself.[23]

The library union also worked with other white-collar organizations in the city of Chicago to sponsor general civil service preparation classes.

The *C.P.L. Union News* was itself another educational strategy. Particularly in the first four years, it conveyed a wealth of information about union identity, collective activity and the perspective of others outside the library profession itself. The first three volumes often featured writings by influential leaders of the day, such as the scholar Alvin Johnson; Rockwell Kent, president of the United American Artists union; Mary Anderson, Director of the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor; and Abram Flaxer, President of SCMWA. However, despite successful fundraising parties, the printing schedule of the *C.P.L. Union News* fell off over the years. The first year (1937-1938) the newsletter was issued monthly, obviously professionally printed, well-written and thoughtfully laid out. Soon the schedule changed to every other month, while the format remained the same. At the end of 1940, the newsletter was scheduled to be printed quarterly, but with a more national focus, supplemented with a bi-weekly mimeograph *EXTRA*, with a focus on local union concerns. The final years of publication were as legal length mimeographed handouts, reflecting a serious loss of quality in production. The last few months of the union saw a contending publication called the "Library Log," which reflected the views of the raiding right-wing union, the Government Workers' Union. Only a few issues of it were ever distributed.

The Value of Membership

Local 88 of SCMWA justified its existence on the ability of organized labor to draw from a larger support base than that available to the unaffiliated worker. In fact, vol. 1, no.1 (June, 1939) of the *Govt. Guide*, the first national publication of SCMWA, carried a lead article under the heading of National Issues entitled "John Public and the ALA" to emphasize just that point. It was the fictional story of Steve Chambers, a highway surveyor

who also chaired a current events discussion group at his lodge every Thursday night. While conducting research one May evening, he learned that the reading room of the New York Public Library was due to be closed at dinner time, and so generally unavailable to the everyday worker.

In his concern that the same thing could happen in his town, Steve brought up the question with the study group. They agreed to pass a resolution in support of the library, but the support snowballed. The secretary of the AFL typographical union offered to take it to his membership, which triggered the CIO member present to also get involved. The CIO member (not surprisingly) drove the point home:

> Sure, Mac, take it up with your brothers in the printers union. And I'll take it up with the nine thousand rubber workers of my local. But, Mac, you should ask the printers to send a letter to all the other AFL unions in town, especially the teachers' union, asking them to back you up with resolution. That's thirty thousand voters. I'll do the same with the CIO – that's forty thousand more...

The author of the article emphasized that the "alliance with millions of organized workers" gave new meaning to the term "people's university.[25]

The outline of "How To Build the 'People's University'" was printed in the next issue of the *Govt. Guide*.[26] Capitalizing on the Joeckel and Carnovsky study that found the physical plant of CPL to be inadequate, the union presented its local campaign. The membership began by alerting likely allies to the needs of the library buildings, promoted the issue to candidates for city council, urged the library board membership to seek Public Works Administration (PWA) funding, stimulated a letter-writing campaign to the Board to reinforce their own recommendation, obtained an endorsement from the Mayor and, finally, proposed a modification to the state tax levy that would have doubled the building fund for the library. The printing of the campaign strategy was to ostensibly demonstrate that unionists did have an investment in the public interest and were concerned with more than their own salaries. However, it also provided a training ground for political activism not generally accessible outside the realm of Chicago's local political campaigns.

Political Partnerships

Immediately upon formation, Local 88 joined the Provisional Council of Chicago CIO White Collar Unions, which included locals from eight other national organizations. The Executive Board of the union also immediately requested recognition by the Board of Directors as a representative agency acting on behalf of library employees. The union leadership similarly approached the city council and requested authorization as a representative unit for the library employees.

The political outreach continued as Local 88 joined the Non-Partisan League, Cook County committee on January 22, 1938. At least 150 unions and many progressive organizations came together with a goal of "the cooperation of labor, the farmer and all progressive forces for united political action. It aims to secure for the American people better economic security; it aims to liberate them from poverty; to safeguard our democratic institutions; to maintain our civil liberties; to preserve national and international peace."

The partnership with other labor organizations and access to the Mayor became an issue again in 1944. Mike Mann, Secretary of the Chicago Industrial Union Council, arranged for Mary M. Taggart, as a representative of Local 88, to inform the Mayor of a decision by the Board of Directors to restrict the use of library communications structures to library business only. The issue came up twice in 1944, and both times the Board of Directors denied the right of the union to use the library delivery systems and other transmittal strategies to conduct union business.[27] As a result, the union requested that the Mayor consider filling new board vacancies with representatives from organized labor. The Mayor committed to making appointments to the Board representative of labor and indicated that the appointments would be made soon.

The appointment was made, in February of 1945. William Lee, President of the Bakery Drivers Union, an AFL affiliate, was named to a vacancy created when Leo Lerner, a supporter of the unions initiatives, left the Board of Directors. The union expressed appreciation for the appointment and called immediately for a CIO member to lend support to Mr. Lee.[28]

Relations with SCMWA / UPW

Like most locals, Local 88 reported on the activities and initiatives of the national organization through the *CPL Union News*. The April, 1938, issue carried a report from Ravenna Van Houten, the SCMWA field representative in the mid-west, that the circulation of the *CPL Union News* had generated a number of inquiries into the national office. Abram Flaxer, president of the union, apparently recognized a significant opportunity and was prepared to launch an organizing drive among librarians on a national scale. To that end, SCMWA was prepared to send a speaker to the ALA national conference, as well as sponsor a booth for the conference floor. The editors of CPLUN anticipated the conference and produced a column in May-June, 1938, issue that explained SCMWA as an organization, established in July of 1937, by three affiliated locals. The column noted that the affiliates had grown to 173 locals in a single year.

The December, 1938, issue celebrated the Pittsburgh CIO convention that transformed the CIO into the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The reporter noted that "The Convention adopted a broad program of political action to defend civil liberties and extend social security to all the people in

the United States, and voiced its determination that fascism shall not come to this continent."[29]

The national office similarly recognized the contributions of the local organizations. In February of 1940, SCMWA formed a library committee specifically to reach out to members of the profession during national conferences, as well as coordinate activities among the library locals that already existed at that time.[30] During the 1941 SCMWA convention in Michigan, the membership passed a resolution supporting labor representation on library boards.[31] Flaxer played a role in Chicago when as president of the United Public Workers[32] he advocated for salary increases for library employees to the library board.

Reciprocity

Local 88 in turn supported the leadership agenda. Where SCMWA resisted the "European" war, Local 88 also resisted the war. When SCMWA moved to support the war, so did Local 88. After the 1944 re-election of President Roosevelt, the local newsletter ran front page congratulations to the CIO on the success of the Political Action Committee (PAC) as there was no "denying that the PAC's campaign of education made the great majority of members in the American labor unions see the issues clearly."[33]

The *CPL Union News*, in its list of highlights for 1944, celebrated the distribution of *Ballot Box*, a publication of the CIO PAC which detailed the voting record of members of Congress concerning issues they considered important for the American people. As the article noted, *Ballot Box* was a controversial publication and the union compounded the controversy by using internal library distribution channels to disseminate the information. The March 27, 1944, minutes of the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors contains a memo from Carl Roden, read into the record as new business and addressed to all department heads and branch librarians, calling for the mimeographed communication to be "disregarded and discarded."[34]

"Culture of Unity"

In her discussion of CIO industrial organizing in Chicago in the thirties, Lizbeth Cohen observes that the CIO promoted a "culture of unity" in order to weaken the power of the employers to play employees against each other. As blacks and Mexicans had been used as strike-breakers in the past, the CIO countered that strategy with inclusiveness across racial and ethnic barriers.[35]

The white-collar unions pursued similar opportunities to develop a sense of community. Korman and the leadership of Local 88 created more immediate and frequent engagements, often in the homes of staff. A Mexican Fiesta party, hosted by Bertha Schuman, in September of 1938 was followed by a

Creole Gumbo Party, given for the benefit of the *CPL Union News*, at the home of Charlemae Rollins, of Hall Branch, on Saturday November 12th. Just two weeks later the union held its first anniversary dinner celebration, which attracted two hundred to the Medinah Athletic Club.

The second annual *Union News* party was also held at the home of Abe Korman and the speaker, M.E. Cordulak, offered his observations on the status of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, which he had recently visited. The raffle and the party raised $174.35 for continued publication of the *CPL Union News*.[36] The union also included theater events and lectures, such as the Langston Hughes presentation and tea. A broader based event, the first annual Chicago SCMWA dance, was offered in December of 1942, and was open to servicemen. Local 88 ran a regular canteen for servicemen during the Second World War. The range of events varied, and the objectives were the same as the national agenda: break down barriers based on race, ethnicity and class…create a sense of belonging. Braced by the philosophical support of the broader CIO, the frontline librarians addressed racial issues in a much more direct way than the administration of the library.

Civil Liberties: Racism

The African-American library in Chicago was the George Cleveland Hall Branch, named for Dr. Hall, a surgeon and activist who was the second African American to serve as a Director of the Board of the Library, from 1926-1927. The branch opened in 1932, built with funds from the local philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, and Vivian Harsh was appointed the first African American branch head in the city. Charlemae Hill Rollins was the children's librarian there from 1932-1963 and became the first African American president of the Children's Services Division of the ALA. She was an author of books for children and also served as a vice-president of Local 88.

The Hall Branch, which served as one anchor of the African American community in the southside Bronzeville community, provided a point of intersection for the union with the African American community. Both Vivian Harsh and Charlemae Rollins knew the African American writers of their day, such as Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. The branch sponsored a Book Review and Literary Forum, where Hughes presented regularly. The staff sponsored the DuSable History Club which stimulated fifteen separate history clubs in the library by 1944.[37]

It was through the Hall Branch that Local 88 established relationships with Hughes and Bontemps. While the Hall Branch provided a center for the African American community in the city, their participation in the union also created an avenue to influence the political positions of the union itself. SCMWA, as a whole, was known for an activist position on the improvement of civil liberties; the black activist Ewart Guinier was one

of the co-founders of SCMWA itself.[38] However, the presence of a local African American membership reinforced the national agenda.

The union became an advocate for the passage of anti-poll tax legislation, which prevented African American and poor white citizens from voting due to an inability to pay the tax.[39] The staff also produced "We Hold These Truths," a pamphlet published by the Education Committee of the union as a contribution to Negro History Week, celebrated February 13-20 in 1944.[40] Librarian Ruth Puffer chaired the Education Committee that produced the reading list; other members included Vivian G. Harsh, Marie Antoinette de Roulett, Charlemae Rollins and Mary M. Taggart.[41]

Programming that supported tolerance included "a noon-hour Book Talk for that week about books by and about the Negro. Exhibits and programs in branches varied in form and content from a series of events scheduled for each day as held in one branch, Langston Hughes at another branch, to attractive window and room displays in others." The focus was on "racial tolerance, changing attitudes and open minds."[42]

The union also sponsored a viewing of the film *The World We Want to Live In*, presented by the Roundtable of Christians and Jews.[43] Several of the leaders of the library union were Jewish, beginning with Abe Korman and Ben Hirsch, including other Jewish members of the staff, such as Ruth Puffer, Bertha Schuman and Karl Jenkinson. Abram Flaxer, president of SCMWA, was also Jewish. Jewish staff members were prominent within the union organization.

Chicago was certainly not the only library system to engage on the issue of racial division within the profession – the debacle of Richmond[44] dated from 1936 – but the high profile of the participants helped to reinforce the significance of the issue among library practitioners.

Civil Liberties : Intellectual Freedom

The September, 1938, issue of the *CPL Union News* carried a short report of the action during the ALA national convention in Kansas City by the Staff Organization Round Table (SORT) on the practice of censorship. Concerned that "There has been evidence in this country of the exercise of bias in the selection of books and in the administration of library service" the round table membership characterized censorship as a breach of library ethics and called for a public repudiation of such practice. The Chicago Public Library had already issued its repudiation of censorship in 1936, when the Board of Directors issued the first intellectual freedom policy.[45] But, in the winter of 1938, Forrest Spaulding, the director of Des Moines Public Library, presented the Library Bill of Rights resolution passed by his board to the profession as a whole. Representatives of the profession then adopted the *Library Bill of Rights*, with modifications, as an ALA policy during the 1939 ALA national conference.[46]

The passage of the resolution rejecting the practice of censorship by librarians followed a resolution against fascist book burning and a call for international protests against the practice, and another resolution protested the dismissal of Philip O. Keeney, the librarian at Montana State University who promoted a progressive agenda. The three actions occurred in series, and reflect a strong progressive influence on the SORT assembly. The sequence clearly embeds the roots of the anti-censorship resolution in the vocal left-identified membership of the organization.

Korman was certainly there. His message in the May-June issue of the newsletter indicates Local 88s involvement. He wrote: "In the Staff Organizations Round Table are represented many types of staff organization. We are glad to be affiliated with them and partake of the opportunity to give and take of the different levels of experience afforded in this organized effort. The C.P.L. Employees Union is of that group of organizations in the SORT which is committed to affiliation with the organized labor movement of the country..."[47]

The Toman Branch Challenge

The Toman Branch Library Forum came under attack by some residents who objected to the content of the discussions. The Toman Branch library had opened in 1927 on the south side of the city and served a largely Bohemian community. Unlike other immigrant communities that experienced the "Americanization" strategies of their local libraries, the patrons of Toman infused the branch with the culture of the Czech community. The discussion Forum was organized by the community leadership in 1931 and continued into the 1960s. The Forum had achieved national prominence and functioned as a model for similar programs in other libraries. Edith Wolinsky, a librarian at the branch, was also a union officer. The speaker, however, who presented the free speech position to the Board was Roderick Ginsburg, a merchant and community leader.

The Board re-affirmed the right of the Forum participants to uncensored speech, and made it clear it was a matter of library policy and not simply applicable to the Forum itself. As the news article noted, in 1936 "The Librarian and the Committee on Library with Dr. Preston Bradley as Chairman, took the logical and dignified view that 'the Library asserts its rights and duty to keep on its shelves a representative selection of books on all subjects of interest to its readers … including all books on all sides of controversial questions."

However, positions had altered, if ever so slightly, since 1936 and the author of the article went on to add "To this dignified position we may add that the Library is a democratic institution supported by all the people and functioning in a democratic state, and consequently has the affirmative right to give the democratic viewpoint priority and prominence over all other undemocratic theories and viewpoints. At a time like this when

democracy is under pressure in Europe and Asia, American public libraries must rid themselves thoroughly of the 'myth of impartiality' … and become militant advocates of the democratic faith."[48]

"Books vs. Hitler"

The SCMWA Resolution on Foreign Policy, passed at the national Second Biennial Convention in September of 1941 at Lansing, Michigan, galvanized the members of Local 88. The national union affirmed that fascism was an attack on labor, and noted that "it was particularly brought home to government employees by the tragic news of the mass imprisonment of one thousand city employees in Oslo, Norway, at the orders of the Gestapo." The resolution also denounced appeasement of Hitler and called for a "swift and crushing military defeat."[49] The Nazis had also invaded the Soviet Union in June, in violation of the treaty signed in 1939. As the national union abandoned its pacifist position, so did the locals.

In October of the same year, the CPL Employees Union arranged a city-wide rally "in protest of the debasement and destruction of culture now taking place in all countries occupied by the fascists."[50] Karl Jenkinson, an officer in the union, presented a resolution denouncing the "medieval burning of books; the murder and humiliation of writers, scholars, teachers; the destruction of libraries and schools." They resolved that "we Chicago Librarians, intellectual and cultural workers assembled at a meeting sponsored by the Chicago Public Library Employees Union, Local 88 (SCMWA) at the Hotel Hamilton, Friday Nov. 28, protest these acts of brutality and inhumanity and pledge to do all in our power to wipe out this scourge of humanity and support the foreign policy of President Roosevelt of giving aid to all countries fighting Hitlerism and fascism."[51]

The union passed its resolution just days before the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor and the German declaration of war against the United States. Roden called a general meeting of senior staff on December 23. Cast as a "War Against Hitlerism," the administration announced that library branches and facilities would host civilian defense activity whenever needed and that there would be no "business as usual" in the Chicago Public Library. Korman used the opportunity to address collection development issues, and charged staff to be more rigorous in their selection practice. He cited two examples: a "mendacious piece of writing" by Jan Valtin, *Out of the Night*, which the library had readily available for public selection and a more scholarly work, *Soviet Power* by Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury, which was restricted in closed stacks.[52]

Editors of the newsletter began to carry reviews of "Books that lose the war…books that are read by many people – which teach unconsciously those attitudes which we are fighting to eradicate. We are fighting injustice and intolerance across the seas, and we should warn the people when we hand out books that subtly teach intolerance at home…It is the westerns,

detective stories and cheap love stories which are read in great numbers."[53] A criticism of *A Man Lay Dead* by Ngaio Marsh noted that the detective writer seems to "Spend all her time convincing people that Russians are always ridiculous, always conspirators, always Orientals, and thank God for dear old England, always doomed to be foiled in their dirty machinations." Other titles included Zane Grey's *Majesty's Ranch* and *Plantation Murder* by Christine Govan. *Great Ceasar's Ghost*, by Malcolm Coles, was also seen as racist, and many copies were returned to the publisher before making it to the shelves. Korman and Roden debated the removal of the book *My Name Is Million*,[54] with Roden advising Korman to leave it where it was as removing it might cause more problems.[55]

The *News of SCMWA*, a later version of the national newspaper of the union, carried significant spreads on members of Local 88. One example was the center spread in the July 1944 issue, which featured Charlemae Rollins and "Books on the Negro." It identified Rollins as an active member of the library union, and related resistance to racial inequity to strategies for winning the war. The unidentified author of the article wrote that "Books can build understanding and tolerance, or they can spread confusion and prejudice. In the hands of young people, books can promote the fascist idea, or they can help build the better world that we are fighting for." The article also included two columns, one headed "Books for Democracy" and the parallel column, "Books for Fascism." The "Books for Democracy" column promoted books that offered positive images of the Negro, such as *Journey Cake* and *Steppin and Family*. The column of fascist titles listed *You Shall Have a Carriage* and *Jump Lively Jeff* as promotions of racial stereotypes in support of a fascist agenda.

The union also promoted materials in support of the Soviet Union as an ally. In keeping with the ALA agenda of placing emphasis on materials that would deliver facts and *ideas* that would enable readers to make "intelligent decisions" the newsletter promoted reading materials. The employees union stated a belief in "offering decisive aid in winning the war and peace." The column then recommended a list of items on the Soviet Union.[56]

Recommended reading lists were a common practice in libraries, but it appears that the union was often engaged in "correcting" the image of the Soviet Union during this period. It helped when the ALA designated May 1-6, 1944, Russia Book Week in an attempt to promote reading of books that would "foster friendship and understanding." But the political positions reinforced views of the unionists as "a bunch of reds."

As early as 1938, Korman had indicated his concerns that "the greatest minds are languishing in exile and in concentration camps" and libraries were being burned to the ground.[57] It was Korman who conveyed the anguish of the practitioners' witness to the intentional destruction of any alternative to an Aryan culture. The fact that the Jewish race was a target for destruction lent an immediacy to the unionists' agenda; at that time they

viewed the Soviets as a line of defense against Hitler. However, while they adopted the position of civil liberties for the African American community, they did not expand their advocacy to the Roosevelt administrations' illegal incarceration of Japanese Americans. They actually devoted little attention to the Pacific war; the focus was on defeating Hitler, which suggests that the Nazi program of Jewish genocide was a driving factor for the union. Korman himself died in December of 1945, the victim of a hit-and-run accident, before the purge of the leftists began.

The Purge

The left-led unions of the CIO supported the third party candidacy of Henry Wallace in 1948. As a result, the centrists and right-wingers of the CIO finally convinced Philip Murray, president of the union, to eliminate the leftists from the organization. The CIO expelled ten unions and lost anywhere from 675,000 to 1 million members. In Chicago, the raid on what was then Local 2 of the United Public Workers was led by Antoinette de Roulet, one of the original organizers of the library union. In September of 1949 she announced the formation at the library of Local 1215 of the Government and Civic Employees Organizing Committee, the CIO successor to United Public Workers.

As president of the new rival union she released a flyer called "The Union Story" which detailed the reasons for the raid:

> We do not deny any one the right to his beliefs. If an individual believes in the communist philosophy, that is his own business, but *he should keep it his own business*, and not involve those who do not share his belief. A person should be able to belong to a UNION without being thereby committed to philosophies and movements in which he does not believe.

For De Roulet, the concept of "right wing" is not characterized as conservative: "it means middle of the road liberal – the mental climate of most of our people."[58]

Ben Hirsch took up the defense of the UPW local:

> IS OUR UNION A GOOD UNION? Has it helped you to live more decently and to do the things which make you happy? Has it helped you to become a better librarian and a better citizen? Has it helped the library and the people who use it?
>
> You and I know the answer. It has been for these twelve years and still is a good union…Our union has done the many little and big things which make our lives a bit easier and happier.[59]

However, on March 1, 1950, United Public Workers lost its charter with the CIO. It attempted to continue as an independent, but actually only

persisted long enough to move its remaining members into other white collar unions. The old Local 2 of UPW moved into AFSCME, bringing this initial experiment in radical politics to a close. But the experiment itself cannot be considered a failure.

The choice of the original thirteen organizers to affiliate with SCMWA was significant. It introduced a radical analysis into the discussions of the role of the public librarian in American culture, an analysis not previously considered due to the association of the public library with the propagation of "high culture" and the maintenance of the status quo. The radical analysis stimulated a potential identification of the public librarians with an expanded user population representing multiple classes, ethnicities and races. Librarians as unionists tested that identification through their participation in union activities as well as professional activities, and tested their significance through the promotion of cross-cultural programming, alternative publications and advocacy for working class branch services.

The reason the significance of the public librarians affiliation with the left-led CIO is obscured is precisely because the left lost the battle of cultural orientation. While white-collar workers were allowed to "experiment" with alternative analyses and cultural strategies for social change as long as there was no serious challenge to the mainstream culture, at the point at which the status quo became nervous about the potential impact of the left, they obliterated it. Organizations were broken up, the leadership was marginalized and silenced, and the written records were destroyed or dispersed. But there is enough evidence to prove that public librarians did, indeed, try to shatter "the normative expectations under which they normally labor[ed]."[60] We only need to grant the experiment credibility.

Footnotes

1. CPL Municipal Reference, October 1937. The actual number of attendees is not recorded. See The Abram Flaxer Papers; Wagner #73; box 2; folder 16; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives; New York University.
2. At the point at which it was expelled, SCMWA had become the United Public Workers of America, due to a merger with the United Federal Workers of America.
3. Milwaukee Public Library organized as an AFL affiliate.
4. Chicago Public Library Union News (CPLUN) December, 1937, p.1
5. American Catholic History Research Center & University Archives. The Catholic University of America. Congress of Industrial Organizations Records. State, County and Municipal Workers of America. Series 1, Box 10, Folder 1 10 9 (CUA CIO SCMWA)
6. CPLUN, December, 1937, p.2
7. See Rung, M.C. Servants of the State : managing diversity & democracy in the Federal workplace, 1933-1953. Athens : University of Georgia Press, particularly the chapter "Building the New Deal Civil Service." Also Goldhor, H. (1943), "Civil Service in Public Libraries." *Library Quarterly*, v. XIII, #3, pp. 187-211.
8. See CPLUN, March, 1938, p.1. $400,000 in 1938 would be equitable to $5.5 million in 2006 (http://www.westegg.com/inflation/). The significant amount of the increase also indicates that the salary issue had been planned. The unions actions probably served to underscore a pre-existing initiative.
9. CPLUN, April, 1938, p.4. "Testing" for civil service professional positions relied

heavily on the currency of advanced education in "scoring".
10. CPLUN, January, 1939, p.1,3
11. CPLUN, February-March, 1939, p.1,4
12. Chicago Public Library Special Collections (CPLSC) Roden, 1939
13. CPLSC, Roden, 1939
14. CPLUN, October-November, 1938, p.4
15. CPLUN, April-May, 1939, pp.1,3
16. CPLSC, Roden 1939
17. The Abram Flaxer Papers; Wagner #73; box 1; folder 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives; New York University p. 64
18. CPLUN, March 1938, p.1
19. CPLUN, April-May, 1939, p.4
20. CPLUN, May-June, 1938, p.3
21. CPLUN, November/December, 1938, p.1
22. CPLUN, March 1938, p.4
23. CPLUN, May-June, 1940, p.5
24. CPLUN, April, 1938, p.1
25. *Govt. Guide*, June, 1939, pp. 5-7
26. *Govt. Guide*, July 1939, p.10
27. *Proceedings*. Chicago Public Library Board Of Directors (CPLBOD), 1944-1945, pp. 69, 147.
28. CPLUN, February 18, 1945, p.1
29. CPLUN, December 1938, p.2
30. CPLUN, January-February, 1940, p.3
31. CPLUN October 20, 1941, p.1
32. In 1946 the State, County and Municipal Workers of America merged with the United Federal Workers of America to create the United Public Workers of America, with Abe Flaxer as president.
33. CPLUN, November 30, 1944
34. CPLBOD March 27, 1944, p.84
35. Cohen, L. (1990). *Making a New Deal : Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. New York : Cambridge University Press., p. 340-341.
36. CPLUN, February/March, 1939, p.3
37. Knupfer, p. 63.
38. Mike Gold, in a letter to Flaxer in 1986, quoted a section of a book entitled *Union Power and New York – Victor Gotbaum and District Council 37* by Jewel Bellush and Bernard Bellush. He wrote "…Flaxer along with Frank Herbst, Jack Bigel, Ewart Guinier, and others, set about organizing fellow social workers in the Bronx and elsewhere in the city into what became known as the Association of Workers in Public Relief Agencies …" Guinier later served as president of SCMWA Local 176, New York University. Tamiment Library. Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. Abram Flaxer Papers. WAG 73, #1.
39. The poll tax continued in several southern states until the Kennedy administration prioritized the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, which eliminated the poll tax in national elections. It was ratified in 1964.
40. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy,* published in 1944, certainly reinforced commitments among librarians to social and economic equality, but it should be noted that the attention on race as an issue within the Chicago Public Library gained traction earlier in the 1940s.
41. CPLUN, December, 1943. Knupfer does not address the union activities of the Hall staff, because she was not aware of them. She characterizes the "ambitious task" as the work of a "special committee organized to compile a bibliography of books and periodic literature on the history of black life in the western hemisphere" (p. 61). My own discussions with the CPL archivists for both the main library and the Harsh collection indicate that there was no awareness of this early library union.
42. Chicago was not the only library system to engage on the issue of racial division. The American Library Association became involved with the question of racial equity in the late 1920s, and actually sponsored a study of discrimination as it applied to libraries in the first half of the 1930s. See Barker, T. D. (1936) *Libraries of the South : a report on developments, 1930-1935*. Chicago: American Library

Association. The ALA also had to deal with the controversy of the Richmond conference, See Preer, J.L., "This Year – Richmond!" The 1936 Meeting of the American Library Association, *Libraries and Culture*, Spring, 2004, v. 39, #2.

43. CPLUN, September 1, 1942
44. Preer, J.L., "This Year – Richmond!" The 1936 Meeting of the American Library Association, *Libraries and Culture*, Spring, 2004, v. 39, #2.
45. See Latham, "Wheat and Chaff: Carl Roden, Abe Korman and the Definitions of Intellectual Freedom," unpublished manuscript.
46. Geller, pp. 172-174
47. CPLUN, May-June, 1938, p.1
48. CPLUN, January, 1939, p.4. The writer of the article is unidentified, but the tone is similar to Korman.
49. CPLUN *Extra*, October 9, 1941.
50. CPLUN *Extra*, October 27, 1941
51. CPLUN *Extra*, December 5, 1941.
52. CPLUN *Extra*, December 23, 1941
53. CPLUN, August 1942, p.2 This observation is balanced by the use of popular propaganda by the Nazis to demonize their opposition. The University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign possesses a collection of German World War II belles-lettres that are designed to promote the Nazi agenda through popular literature.
54. There are two *My Name is Million* shown as available at that time. One appears to be a Polish title concerning WWII, and the other is by the Polish poet Adama Mickiewicz,
55. CPLSC Roden 1943
56. CPLUN, November 1942, pp. 1,2
57. Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection, 1938.
58. See *The CIO'S Left-Led Unions* (1992), editor Steve Rosswurm, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, p.2.
59. Chicago Historical Society. Government Workers Union Archives (CHS GWU)
60. Raber, D. (2003). "Librarians as organic intellectuals : a Gramscian approach to blind spots and tunnel vision." *Library Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 1, p. 52.

AN INDOMITABLE SPIRIT: THE EIGHT HUNDRED OF CUPE 391

by Anita Galanopoulos et al.

> "The most important asset of any library goes home at night – the library staff." Dr.Timothy Healy, NYPL

These are the ramblings, musings, and personal observations of one member of approximately 800 unionized library staff workers of Local 391 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE. The catalyst, an unprecedented 89-day labour dispute, or *strike* for those who appreciate uncomplicated language, involving CUPE 391 and its employer, the City of Vancouver.[1]

Those expecting a dissection of sorts of the events leading up to, during and after the strike will be somewhat disappointed. Although what follows will contain a few of these details, along with appended documents, the genesis of this article is rooted in the need to recognize and document the extraordinary creativeness, persistence, compassion and solidarity of those 800 library staff workers of the Vancouver Public Library. This is a *tribute* to a library staff who showed the library community, the public and the politicians how ingenuity and fearless convictions synthesize to create a paradigm, one worthy of emulation by other library systems that find themselves in similar circumstances. The members of CUPE 391, as a collective, are an apotheosis of positive labour actions.

For those unfamiliar with the physical landscape and organizations mentioned above, the snippets of information that follow, lackluster as they might be, are necessary components to understanding the terrain of this labour dispute. Appendix 1 contains a chronology of the events in these places, among these players.

The Physical Geography

"Vancouver is the largest city in the province of British Columbia. It's surrounded by water on three sides and is nestled alongside the Coast Mountain Range. Vancouver is home to spectacular natural scenery and a bustling metropolitan core, and boasts one of the mildest climates in Canada. The Greater Vancouver region is home to more than two million people in 21 municipalities, making it the third largest metropolitan area in Canada."[2]

The Participants (some more willing than others)

- Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE 391
- Vancouver Public Library, VPL
- Vancouver Public Library Board
- City of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District GVRD (now Metro Vancouver)

Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE

CUPE pronounced "que pee" is Canada's largest union. It is comprised of 550,000 members, 2,500 locals and 70 offices across the country. "With more than half a million members across Canada, CUPE represents workers in health care, education, municipalities, libraries, universities, social services, public utilities, transportation, emergency services and airlines. CUPE members are service-providers, white-collar workers, technicians, labourers, skilled trades people and professionals. More than half of CUPE members are women. About one-third are part-time workers.[3]

CUPE Local 391, History[4]

CUPE 391 had humble beginnings in 1931 when a group of library employees formed the Vancouver Public Library Staff Association. It went through a number of metamorphoses and other labour group affiliations emerging as a member of Canada's largest union on September 23, 1963.

CUPE 391, Today

CUPE Local 391 represents close to 800 employees of The Vancouver Public Library, as well as 10 employees of Gibsons and District Public Library. We are comprised of librarians, library technicians, information assistants, library assistants, bookbinders,[5] delivery staff, maintenance workers, graphic designers, supervisors, marketing and communications coordinators, corporate service clerks, and duplicating machine operators.[6]

Local 391 members are compassionate advocates, thoughtful negotiators, active in our local community, and engaged in the broader community

Vancouver Public Library, VPL (1869-)

The third largest library system in Canada, Vancouver Public Library is comprised of a Central library and 20 branch locations; total size of its collections is 2.7 million items with 1.3 million of that housed at the downtown Central library.

The library's primary funding source, and one might argue also its employer, is the City of Vancouver. VPL also receives provincial funding and project grants including one that facilitates its role as a Provincial Reference Resource. In terms of municipal funding for 2007, however, VPL received 4% of the total $848 million operating budget.[7]

The Vancouver Public Library Board

The VPL Board is one of "75 locally appointed library boards, accountable under the Library Act, [to] manage and control the public libraries" of British Columbia, BC.[8]

Individuals of the library board are appointed by City Council with a requirement that one member be from the current municipal council. The VPL Library Board, with its maximum allowable number –13, has historically included two additional government representatives, one from the Vancouver School Board and another from the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

For the purposes of this article, the following statements from the Library Act need to be highlighted. Note: item 9(d) is not reflective of the current negotiating hierarchy involving CUPE 391 and its employer.

General powers and duties of library board (excerpt):

> The library board
> (a) may make rules for managing its business and for regulating the use of its facilities and services by the public,
> (c) must appoint a chief librarian,
> (d) may hire and dismiss employees, enter into collective agreements with employees and set the terms of their employment, including fixing their remuneration and duties.[9]

The City of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District

The Mayor and ten councillors ponder, debate and direct the City's business. In addition, The City of Vancouver looks to the Greater Vancouver Regional District, GVRD (now Metro Vancouver), a separate level of government, for assistance and services that affect all of the 21 member communities of which the City of Vancouver is the most populous. These services include: hospital planning, parks, water supply, solid waste, sewage disposal and labour relations.[10]

So who sits at the bargaining table if it's not the VPL Library Board?

CUPE 391's Bargaining Committee was comprised of the union president, Alex Youngberg (Alexandra) and five other members. Representing the interests of the employer were individuals from Vancouver Public Library

Management, City of Vancouver, and members of the Labour Relations Bureau of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, GVRD.

As the above descriptions have already alluded, the involvement of so many political entities makes for a challenging and often progress-impeding process. The GVRD has been the labour intermediary since the mid-1970s. Simplifying this process, for example, the removal of the GVRD as the city's collective bargaining intermediary, has been a choice some municipalities have opted to pursue as in the case of the City of Richmond.

> Free from the Bureau: Key to settlement in Richmond, says Mayor Brodie – City of Richmond Mayor Brodie is crediting the fact his city opted out of the GVRD Labour Relations Bureau as aprt of the reason they were able to reach a deal with civic workers as opposed to facing the kind of job actions seen in Vancouver and North Vancouver. See http://www.fairnessforcivicworkers.ca/news.

97% of the CUPE 391 Membership Voted to Strike[11]

The members of CUPE 391 voted overwhelmingly to go on strike for the following issues:

- Pay Equity (See Appendix 2 for CUPE 391 report, p.58)
- Improved benefits for our members and their families
- Rights for part-time and auxiliary workers
- Better job security and technological change protection[12]

The fight for pay equity, or comparable worth, or equal pay for work of equal value, or however one wants to describe this, was clearly the dominant issue for the union and the most problematic, if not enigmatic, for the employer.

It is interesting to note that, while the strike was in progress at the Vancouver Public Library, discussions on the topic of pay equity were initiated at both the British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) and the Canadian Library Association (CLA). The 2007 President of BCLA, Deb Thomas, presented her personal views on this in the September/October issue of the *BCLA Reporter*. Her thoughts are summarized by this excerpt:

> Fundamentally, this issue is about fairness. Everyone – regardless of gender – should receive fair compensation for the work that they do. That this remains an issue for some of the largest public libraries in British Columbia highlights the fact that this province lags behind other provinces such as Ontario where pay equity legislation in the late 1990s increased the salaries of library workers by, in some cases, up to 24%.[13]

In a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio interview, the City Librarian of the Vancouver Public Library responded to a question on pay equity in this way:

> Interviewer: But what do you make of the union's position regarding pay equity and gender discrimination, which they've been resolute about for the last 12 weeks?
> City Librarian: It's a hugely complex issue. We do not believe that there is systemic gender discrimination at Vancouver Public Library. Men and women are not paid differently for doing the same work. We believe that when library positions are compared with positions at City Hall, when you take the whole range of factors that have to go into determining what a job is valued at – and that includes qualifications, working conditions, consequences of your actions on the job, the responsibilities you hold – when all of those are taken into account, we don't believe that there are serious discrepancies. We do acknowledge, and certainly Foley [appointed mediator] acknowledges in his recommendations, that now some positions of the library probably need market adjustments, that positions are underpaid relative to some other work environments. But this is not gender discrimination per se.[14]

Joel Bakan, a professor of law at the University of British Columbia, an internationally recognized legal scholar, author of *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*, and co-creator of the film, *The Corporation* – and strike line visitor – offered his thoughts on pay equity for this article. It is reprinted here with his permission.

> One of the real shames in the way the recent city strikes were dealt with was the presumption in the media that somehow libraries were not as important to the public as garbage collection, or the issuance of construction permits. In a way this exactly reflected the main grievance of the library workers, namely that their work was being undervalued on gendered grounds – that because library work is traditionally viewed as women's work, it is somehow less important, worth less, when compared to traditionally male jobs. The principle of pay equity, which the librarians were fighting for, is crucial because it challenges the embedded gender stereotyping that so profoundly distorts the way we attach value to work.

How to Conduct a Strike, 391 style

> "Chaos in the world brings uneasiness, but it also allows the opportunity for creativity and growth,"– Tom Barrett

A three-month, full-time strike, unprecedented in local library history has had monumental impacts on the economic and emotional health of

the Vancouver Public Library staff. What follows are some of the ways CUPE 391 chose to deal with this reality – with creativity, integrity, and resilience.

Since it would be impossible to highlight all that we did during those 89 days and at all locations – instead what follows are vignettes of our proud accomplishments. Apologies to anyone who might feel excluded! A library school professor has suggested that a book might be a more appropriate vehicle for telling the whole story.

On July 26, 2007 (some consider this to be July 23) approximately 800 library workers of the Vancouver Public Library withdrew their services joining the other Vancouver civic locals, CUPE 1004 (outside workers) anad CUPE 15 (inside workers) – and went on strike. For the first time in their 77-year history the library staff members of CUPE 391 found themselves relegated to the various library exteriors with their varying amenities, shade and warmth. Some of us are now very familiar with every uneven brick on the plaza of the Central library, and are more attuned to weather conditions, present and impending. We have an enhanced awareness of and respect for the power of nature and the power of a unified work force.

So how does one organize a strike? Is there a manual? Are all strikes conducted in a similar fashion? Is there a strike standard one should adhere to? How does one bring order to what is essentially an emerging society with its diverse needs and components (government & economics, food, shelter, entertainment, shelter, etc.)? In terms of organizational skills, of course, there is no other professional group that can even come close to matching those of library workers. This genetic predisposition, of sorts, served us well.

Other than the existing CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee and the Union Executive, comprised of ten members, no other structure existed to deal with the realities of the strike. It became quickly apparent that a Job Action Committee was required, not only to handle the day-to-day strategies and events, but to act as a communication and motivational force during this economically – and emotionally – taxing time. Some of the events organized by the Job Action Committee will be mentioned later.

Crew Talks

Picketing staff were invited to attend on-site talks throughout the day, their length of course depended on the type of news to be delivered, the weather, and appetite of those attending. A question & answer time was always encouraged. At the Central Library, the Crew Talks usually took place on the South Plaza, a Roman amphitheatre-styled space that looks onto one of Vancouver's most well-known streets, Robson. The talks, delivered by the various members of the Job Action Committee usually without mechanical assistance (i.e. megaphones), and in direct competition with the downtown traffic and blasts of car horns registering their support, informed the staff about such things as: bargaining updates, strike pay, rallies at City Hall, media blackouts, picket behaviour protocols (flip your sign when walking near businesses), etc. These informal chats, thanks to the talents of Peter DeGroot, D'Arcy Stainton, Randy Gatley, and Alexis Greenwood were integral to sustaining the energy of the 800 throughout this very lengthy three-month strike.

Picket Captains

These individuals were on-site, roving information purveyors who fielded questions on topics ranging from picket-line protocol to strike pay information to Crew Talk event schedules. Brian Peaslee, a regular Picket Captain, with his quick wit and union experience was an invaluable presence and a credit to his role and rank.

CUPE 391 Bargaining Blog

This award-winning blog is packed to its digital extremities with information on all things – labour. There you'll find links to photos, videos, bargaining resources and a diary highlighting our setbacks and triumphs. The blog was an invaluable communication tool and will remain as a record of our historic struggle. (See Bargaining Blog http://www.cupe391.ca/blog2/ and Bargaining Resources Page http://cupe391.ca/action/bargaining.shtml.)

Ministry of Propaganda, CUPE 391 Counterspin and Media Clarifications Committee

The media's failure to provide diverse viewpoints and unbiased information was painfully apparent during the strike. Media democracy took on more personal meaning. We witnessed – in frustration – the inaccuracies that filled the pages of our local newspapers. To bring balance to this problem, a group of like-minded picketers agreed to scour the pages of all the local media, paper and digital, and bring attention to our side of the story through written contributions that appeared on the blog. The office of the Media Clarifications Committee (it went through various names changes) was often the concrete ground outside the Central Library. Some of us

remembered our elementary school days and the fine art of sitting on the ground with your legs crossed. All was not so minimally furnished and low-tech, however, one member brought along a laptop to the "Battle Room" and reports were written – on site, on strike. The efforts of the group's labours can be viewed on the CUPE 391 blog at: http://www.cupe391.ca/blog3/ under *Setting the Record Straight: Media Clarifications*.

A Day in the Life of a Library Picketer

Unlike other union locals, CUPE 391 did not assign picket times. Library staff were afforded the flexibility to set their own hours of picketing. However, in order to qualify for the maximum amount of strike pay, 20 hours of picket duty were required to earn $200 per week in strike pay. These hours could be completed in more than one location. In fact, union members were encouraged to divide their time across many Vancouver Public Library branches. Some chose to picket in the mornings, others preferred the afternoons or evenings, some chose to complete the 20 hours over 3-4 days while others stretched the time over the week.

Tracking the comings and goings of the 800 was no easy feat, but a registration table at each picket location, appropriately staffed, and with all the necessities of an outdoor office (picket signs, cell phones, writing instruments of every description, forms, tents, etc.) made for easy accounting. And then there was the coffee, tea, water, and goody table that was stocked by the union, picketers, other supportive labour organizations, and the kindness of our library patrons.

After the initial novelty of this new-found occupation wore off, the first week or so when people would gather, picket, talk and do little else, library staff settled into routines and diversions of their own making. Chatting with your colleagues can only go so far before boredom settles in. To combat the monotony and still fulfill their picketing obligations library staff started to occupy their time by: playing various board games, doing crossword puzzles while simultaneously walking the perimeter of the building, reading – of course – playing instruments to entertain their colleagues (guitars, accordion, French horn, violin), walking their dogs, playing toss football, sketching, and knitting.

Good Food, Good Company

There were pancake breakfast, chili days, and the gastronomic highlight of the week, the Friday barbecues. As anyone who has organized a family barbecue knows, creating an outdoor kitchen is no small feat and even more challenging when your family numbers in the hundreds. The CUPE culinary experts served the regular North American fare of hot dogs and hamburgers as well as many ethnic dishes. One Friday featured Indian cuisine. Many library staff brought items to share, which were gratefully accepted and greatly enjoyed.

Our hospitality also extended to the many homeless individuals who congregate around the Central library. They were invited to share lunch with us, and for those who were hesitant to approach our outdoor restaurant, library staff made deliveries. Smiles – priceless!

Stress

> People handled the stresses of the "striking lifestyle" in very different ways, exercise was one of those methods.
>
> Tai Chi began on the picket line as a result of discussions between union members including some from the Wellness Committee. It was a way for us to deal with the uncertainties, the ups-and-downs, and serve as a form of stress reduction. One of our members with some experience in the practice led the Yang Style Tai Chi sessions. Almost none of those who took part had ever done Tai Chi so instruction focused on simple description with emphasis on the health benefits of the forms.
>
> We did not progress beyond the first few movements in the sequences as that seemed to be best for the time, place and audience. The slow movements, with concentration on breathing and balance seemed to be tailor made for a strike situation. Many staff were curious about the practice and the sessions attracted as many as two dozen people from time to time. Generally, they were done 2 or 3 times a week in mid-morning, usually after the "Grandeur on Georgia" portion of the day (which was the title given to the activity of standing on the corners of Georgia and Homer street, waving our picket signs at traffic and passers-by). Because the movements were done outside the library plaza we had to be limited by the weather – but we were only rained out on a couple of occasions.
>
> – member of the Wellness Committee

Hardship Committee

The stresses that a strike exerts on its participants extend beyond the physical and emotional parts of life. Although library workers have, historically, engaged in what has been called "voluntary philanthropy," losing a quarter of one's annual salary during this trike was economically devasting for some families. To help offset this significant wage loss, the Hardship Committee was formed to administer grants and no-interest loans. Donations poured in from other union locals, organizations in Canada and the Unites States, and the citizens of Vancouver's surrounding municipalities. The generosity offered to CUPE 391 was phenomenal and hugely appreciated.

Striker's Brain

When broken down, the physical components of picketing are simple: you don a sign and walk the perimeter of your worksite hoping to draw the attention of those who might make a difference – the public, politicians, etc. Picketing, in its basic form, is not an unpleasant task – in good weather. However, what is not immediately apparent is the mental toll that leading a "striking lifestyle" entails. This phenomenon, which may have already been identified in literature on the topic, is characterized by an almost 24/7 preoccupation with the task at hand, one that inflicts a mental and physical paralysis. Many CUPE 391 members noted that although, logically, they had more free time – were at the worksites 20 versus 35 hours a week – they didn't see a noticeable difference in what they accomplished during off-picket hours, as though we couldn't move ahead until the strike was over. Even mundane, otherwise ordinary jobs such as laundry often remained untouched – for another day when spirits and energies might be higher.

Knitting in Solidarity

A park-style bench located on the Homer Street side of the Central Library became a knitters' destination. Why? Knitters seek out other knitters. They congregate. A sign soon appeared, propped up against this bench, it read, "Knitting in Solidarity." The Knit Picketers, as they called themselves, quickly realized that they could contribute their skills to producing hats for families in need. Additionally, as the strike proceeded, they recognized that they could earn some desperately needed funds for the Hardship Committee by selling their multi-coloured creations to other staff. Free knitting lessons were also available.

The Videographers

We are artists, dancers, musicians, writers, poets, actors, athletes (including a Sports Hall of Fame inductee), animal rights activists, environmentalists, and videographers. CUPE 391 is a unique assembling of individuals of diverse skills and whose talents became more prominent during the strike as people realized that they could add another dimension to the activities on the line. Whether for cathartic, entertainment, creative or political statement purposes – this didn't seem to matter.

James Gemmill, Holly Hendrigan, D'Arcy Stainton, David Philip and Sloan Garrett, and are videographers. They documented, in their very differing styles, events and aspects of the strike. Their videos are available for all to enjoy off the CUPE 391 Bargaining Blog site at: http://www.cupe391.ca/blog2/

Artistic statements from our videographers:

I created my strike films with the general public in mind as the target audience rather than the local's membership. In the knowledge that in this day and age unionized workers are often portrayed in an unfair fashion by the mass media, my overriding goal was to put a human face to VPL's workforce, and to be as positive as possible in the message, which I felt was strong and our best marketing tool. I also avoided humour, knowing that other 391 video-makers were employing it and not wanting all the films to blur together. Black and white was used in the hopes that my final film would contain a slow fade-in of colour, to signify a "return to normalcy." Alas, this film was never made.

–James Gemmill

We didn't set out making our videos with any particular themes in mind. We just wanted to "entertain the troops." Both of our mindsets tend toward the satiric, and a labour strike is an inherently absurd situation, highlighted in this case by the inane denial of a pay equity issue. We also wanted to simply look at daily life on the picket line and give that a few twists. So with our unstructured ideas we shot heaps of footage and then shaped it at the editing stage. It was fun!

– David Philip and Sloan Garrett

My films are all about keeping the bar low. I choose antiquated genres like the newsreel format because I have really poor equipment (my footage is shot using the MPEG video clip feature on my son's digital still camera). This way, I can use titles and dubbing to make up for what would undoubtedly be horrific sound. The poor video quality plays up the intended format, too. I edit everything using Windows Movie Maker on my old PC, and keep filming time to 15 minutes (everything is done in one take) and editing time to under two hours.

By keeping my standards simple, making one of these movies is not onerous, and it fits into my busy life as a parent.

– D'Arcy Stainton

Flying Pickets, Bike Strike Brigade

When CUPE 391 went on strike in late July, the Union Executive quickly realized that we could not set up pickets at each of the 21 branches for a variety of reasons: many branches lacked shade from the sun or shelter from the rain, or were located on busy, noisy streets far from washroom and coffee facilities. The union then suggested that a group of people drive to certain unpicketed branches and wave signs around for a half-hour or so, and then

move on to another branch. These hours would be counted as a "Flying Picket" shift. When the flying picket concept was explained to a large group gathered at Central Library, three hardcore bicycle commuters looked at each other and said, "Why drive? Why not bike?" After a quick consultation with the Union Executive, where everybody agreed to cross their fingers and acknowledge that no liability insurance was available, the Flying Bicycle Pickets were born.

Also known as the Bike Strike Brigade, we were very easily organized. It was a joint and democratic effort, but Beth Davies took the lead. She gathered phone numbers and e-mail addresses of known commuters, drew posters, and contributed to the strike blog. A children's librarian provided crafty materials and we decorated our bikes with balloons, ribbons, and union slogans. Somebody else created Bike Brigade banners that we safety-pinned to our T-shirts (and, later, rain jackets!) [See page 74.] Five to fifteen of us would gather at a certain branch, and figure out a route that would take us to several different branches over the 4-hour picket shift. We went as fast as the slowest rider, and avoided hills whenever possible. One day, somebody suggested an Epic Ride: visit every branch over an 8-hour shift, ending at a nearby pub. To everyone's delight and surprise, about 50 bicycle riders showed up. Somebody strapped a cassette player to his rack and we relived the heyday of the mixed tape. It was a glorious sunny day, we set-off on the first of many long, 50-odd kilometer Wednesday rides. We expanded our rides to visit picket sites of other striking city workers, such as community centres, the animal shelter, the transfer station and works yard, swimming pools, and archives.

Everybody loved the Bike Brigade. The bike picketers enjoyed the freedom and the exercise, quickly finding out that participating in the Brigade was the easiest way to fight strike-induced depression. The stationary picketers appreciated the arrival of the cyclists, thanking us for breaking the monotony of their shift. We received standing ovations for just showing up! Branches fueled us well with coffee and donuts, as well as the occasional feast of chili, salmon, and souvlaki. Cars did not seem to mind being temporarily delayed by our motley parade of bell-ringing library workers. Many riders gained strength, skills, and confidence, and claimed that the bike brigade had a lasting impact on their future transportation choices.

The strike ended in late October, but the Bike Brigade lives on. The experience created lasting friendships and a renewed joy of bike riding. It's more difficult to organize rides now – we're back to our busy lives and work schedules, and it's dark and cold out. But we vow to keep riding together and, come early spring, the

bike paths and pubs of Vancouver will (occasionally) again be alive with a lively peloton of library workers on wheels.

AV resources for Bike Brigade

Photos by Anita Chan: http://www.flickr.com/photos/ellafunnt/sets/72157601364029495/

Photos by James Gemmill: http://flickr.com/photos/jamesandannie/sets/72157601067630540/

Flying Bicycle Brigade by James Gemmill: http://jamesandannie.cyberflunk.com/portfolio/video17.html

Tour de VPL by Holly Hendrigan http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkUPgRV6Pao

– Holly Hendrigan

Librarian Retires on the Line

The strike was a first for CUPE 391, as was celebrating a retirement while on strike. The occurrence of this happening might not be unique, but rare in any case. Who better to relay the emotions of the day than the long-time CUPE 391 member himself, Ron Dutton.

My last day of work was bitterly cold, with the threat of rain. I arrived with 10 dozen donuts (sugar, fat and chocolate being excellent insulators) to find no more than 15 chilly staffers manning the picket line. By noon the donuts were gone – the line was THROBBING – and had grown to well over 200 merry souls. Staff I had not seen in 25 years made the long trek downtown, including people with whom I had once performed puppet shows as a junior children's librarian in branches that no longer exist. The sun broke through its cloud cover, masses of food and a portable barbeque appeared out of nowhere, and the party was on!

There were heartfelt speeches, gifts (including, appropriately, a bottle of Anarchist beer), some tears and many hugs. Young people whom I had never met lined up to shake my hand. I spoke briefly (atypically), reminding staff of the farewell address of a long gone Chief Librarian. In her retirement speech, Miss Tufts had astounded everyone present by saying that, in her experience, the very best staffers were those who took the most active roles in their union, that a strong union was essential to the good operation of a library. Not a message we are likely to hear again soon.

> You know, you work hard all your life, try to treat your coworkers with fairness and respect, set your standards high and push the envelope whenever possible. But you never really know what, if any, impact you have had on the service or on the people with whom you work. That day I had the extraordinary experience of hearing the generous and genuine feelings of my colleagues. The staff at VPL made my last day the most unforgettable of my career, and I am deeply grateful to them all.
>
> – Ron Dutton, VPL Librarian for 32 years.

CUPE 391 Picket Line Visitors

Writers, poets, and political personalities were invited by various CUPE members to the picket line to lend their support. And some came post-strike. Todd Wong, through his network in the literary community, was able to organize what he has entitled, "The Library Square Author Series."[15] A partial list appears below. Sincere thanks to everyone who showed their support; apologies to those who might have been overlooked.

Joel Bakan – law professor, author, film co-producer (see his pay equity statement above)

Fred Bass – preventive medicine physician, former City of Vancouver Councillor

Libby Davies – community activist, advocate, Member of Parliament for Vancouver East

Chuck Davis, "Mr. Vancouver" – broadcaster, award-winning author, historian, newspaper columnist

Mitch Freedman (post-strike visitor) – librarian, pay equity advocate, former President of the American Library Association, creator of the Better Salaries/Pay Equity Task Force:

> It was an honor and a pleasure to speak with and meet CUPE 391 members and other library worker militants in the Vancouver area. I thought that the commitment exemplified by the Vancouver Public Library staff (CUPE 391) striking for 89 days for equitable pay was extraordinary.
>
> Putting their livelihood on the line for principle as did the CUPE 391 members was unprecedented in my experience and knowledge – the possible exception being Joan Goddard and her colleagues at the San Jose Public Library and the other San Jose City departments.

> I always will remember the CUPE 391 members because they showed that there were still people – library workers, indeed! – who put their livelihood on the line for 3 months as part of their commitment to and their fight for fair pay.

Daniel Gawthrop – author of the *Rice Queen Diaries*, CUPE Communications staff member

Terry Glavin – author, journalist, editor, adjunct professor in the creative writing department, the University of British Columbia

Hiromi Goto – award-winning author, poet, currently 2007's Vancouver Public Library's Writer-in-Residence programme recipient.

Naomi Klein – award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and author of the *New York Times* and international bestsellers, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Her visit is captured on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QWSj8Ha55o:

> I want to congratulate you on your tenacity, and your courage, and your insistence on your right to work under fair conditions, under equitable conditions, you deserve this.

Jack Layton – leader of the New Democratic Party, NDP, former university professor, a small business owner, and author

Stan Persky – writer, media commentator and philosophy instructor

George McWhirter – City of Vancouver's inaugural Poet Laureate, Professor Emeritus of the University of British Columbia's creative writing programme

Raging Grannies – caring older women who endeavor to raise awareness of issues relating to peace, the environment, & social justice through satirical songs and skits

Tom Sandborn – Vancouver based writer, organizer and consultant, currently serves on the board of directors for the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association

Ann Seidl (post strike visitor) – Librarian, film producer of *The Hollywood Librarian*

Fiona Tinwei Lam – poet, a Scottish-born Chinese Canadian who grew up in Vancouver, winner of one of the 2003 City of Vancouver Book Prizes.

Rita Wong – author of *Monkeypuzzle*, activist, and archivist

Ellen Woodsworth – community organizer working for social justice, economic equality, former City of Vancouver Councillor.

Acknowledging the Acknowledgment Committee

The moral and economic support extended to CUPE 391 was impressive, hugely appreciated and inspiring. Notes of encouragement and statements (via blogs, in-person, etc.) validating our fight for fairness arrived from all over North America, within and without the library community.

The need to recognize the many kindnesses extended to us gave rise to the Acknowledgement Committee, a group of three with many helpers who hand-crafted and mailed in excess of 200 unique thank you cards.

CUPE 391 Strike Events (no particular order)

Two rallies at City Hall
Read In Solidarity
Benefit concert for our Hardship Fund, Sept. 15/07
Labour Day picnic
Picketing Puppet Productions' – Click, Clack, Strike!
Haiku writing event – see example on page 68
Word on the Strike
Black & White Day
Film screenings of *The Hollywood Librarian*, with an introduction and special visit from Ann Seidl, librarian and film producer. All proceeds collected went to the Hardship Fund.

Details of these events can be found on the CUPE 391 Bargaining Blog: http://www.cupe391.ca/blog2/

Moving Forward

"Time is always moving. The important thing is to learn from the past and then look forward to the future."
– Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama

The scope of this article has precluded any attempts to offer a thorough accounting of the events of this historic library strike or an economic or political analysis. The intention of the article is to offer glimpses, emotions, and an appreciation of what a collective of determined individuals can accomplish in terms undefined by any monetary measurement. We will take forward the lessons learned during those 89 days – remembering though to look back at this time of frustration, exhaustion, tears, creativity, resilience, laughter and camaraderie. We are the 800 of CUPE 391!

Closing Comments from President Youngberg

"It is inevitable that some defeat will enter even the most victorious life. The human spirit is never finished when it is defeated…it is finished when it surrenders."

– Ben Stein

Why, after being on strike for twelve weeks, did we settle for less than we deserved? This is CUPE Local 391's first strike in seventy-seven years. Library workers love and thrive on public service. Everything about our job appeals to us. We are life-long learners, sharing information and facilitating, with a deep-rooted belief that our public is worthy of the highest possible standards of service and that there should be access for all.

The decision to deny our community access to their libraries was a difficult one. Women's economic inequality is an issue that must concern all of us in society. We went out on that principle and came back in on the principle – that it was time to give our public back their space. Our strike has identified our human rights issue and has educated thousands of people across this continent. We built coalitions with other female-dominated sectors across the land. Our solidarity with each other and our movement to achieve pay equity is now secure in its foundation and is an indelible part of our spirit. The job actions that supported our strike were great examples of participatory practice in a grassroots movement.

We lost that round with the guys in suits with 6-figure incomes, but we are beginning to win the war against gender discrimination. The outcome of the mediation, with the fourteen pay grades being awarded to the top librarian and clerical classifications, shows clearly that there is marked discrepancy between female dominated library workforce and the male-dominated City of Vancouver workforce. We will take our battle for equal pay for work of equal value to other venues, continuing to build coalitions with other female-dominated, wage-depressed groups. The fight for justice, dignity and equality must continue and now has firm support from the community we serve and beyond.

– Alexandra Youngberg, President CUPE 391
Library Journal Movers & Shakers Award Nominee

Footnotes

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APPENDIX #1

CUPE Bargaining & Strike Chronology

Summer/Fall 2006 – CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee is appointed and begins preparations for upcoming negotiations.

Summer 2006 – The CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee surveys members on what issues and concerns they would like to see addressed in our next contract.

October 2006 – The CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee presents a list of proposed bargaining issues to the 391 Executive. The issues are amended and ratified by the executive and presented to 391 members at the November 22, 2006 General Meeting. CUPE 391's contract with our Employer is set to expire on December 31, 2006. It's time to bargain a new contract.

December 18, 2006 – Negotiations begin. The CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee has its first meeting with the Employer and the GVRD to exchange proposals.

January-April 2007 – Negotiations continue. CUPE 391 meet with the Employer on January 31, February 26 & April 11, with no progress. Municipal workers from CUPE 15 (Vancouver inside), 1004 (Vancouver outside,) 23 (Burnaby), 454 (Delta), and North Vancouver District (389) bargain with the GVRD and their respective employers and also make no meaningful progress.

April 26, 2007 – CUPE 15 receives 93.5% support for a strike. CUPE 391 has made no further progress in negotiations.

June 6, 2007 – CUPE 391's Bargaining Committee meets again with the Employer. The Employer continues to say no to all of 391's proposals. Talks come to a complete halt.

June 7, 2007 – CUPE 391 applies for mediation at the Labour Relations Board in an effort to negotiate a fair collective agreement. How did we get here?

June 13, 2007 – Fairness to Civic Workers Campaign is launched. www.fairnessforcivicworkers.ca

June 24, 2007 – CUPE 391 members take strike vote. There is a large membership turnout for the Strike Vote meeting. (A strike vote is a referendum that gives the Union the legal ability to take strike action, if necessary, in support of negotiating a collective agreement.) CUPE 391 members vote 97% in favour of strike action if the Employer continues to ignore our proposals.

July 3, 2007 – Mediation begins. CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee meets with the mediator for the first time and presents an amended package to The Employer.

July 5, 2007 – CUPE staff release a report on Pay Equity (one of our four key issues) and its impact on libraries. Copies are distributed to worksites. Bargaining Committee members Ed Dickson, and Laura Safarian join more than 50 CUPE members from around the Lower Mainland at the GVRD Labour Relations Bureau's monthly meeting. CUPE had previously made an

application to be put on the speakers list, but were told that "labour relations" was not on the agenda. Despite being asked to leave, CUPE members stand their ground and reluctantly the GVRD allows CUPE BC President Barry O'Neill a chance to speak to the Labour Relations Bureau for no more than 10 minutes. During his short address, President O'Neill reminds the GVRD that no meaningful bargaining has actually occurred yet. There is extensive media coverage of this meeting.

July 11, 2007 – Back in mediation. The CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee tables another amended list of proposals on several issues. The Employer responds to the Union, but so far none of CUPE 391 priority issues, like Pay Equity, Job Security, Rights for Part-Time and Auxiliary Employees, or benefits have been addressed.

July 20, 2007 – Mediation Unsuccessful, Strike Notice Issued. After three days in mediation, the Employer continues to stall and refuses to discuss any of 391's key issues. With no other options available, at 4 p.m. the Bargaining Committee asks the Mediator to book out and serves 72-hour strike notice. However, the Committee also encourages and invites the Employer to continue talking over the weekend in hopes of coming to an agreement. Unfortunately, the Employer emphatically declines to continue negotiating and leaves the room.

July 25, 2007 – CUPE 391 makes a presentation to the VPL Board on Pay Equity and reissues invitation to bargain.

July 26, 2007 – CUPE 391 members go on strike for the first time in our local's 77-year history. The Bargaining committee again reissues an invitation to the Employer to meet anytime and anywhere to bargain a fair agreement without concessions that addresses our local and key issues. Negotiations in the City of Richmond conclude and the collective agreement is ratified (formally approved)

August 1, 2007 – Negotiations Resume. The Bargaining Committee tables an amended package of proposals that featured our local key issues. The Employer takes the package and says they will get back to us on August 9. They intend for us to wait over a week for their response knowing that we would be remain on strike. CUPE 454 and Corporation of Delta ratified their agreement August 1.

August 2, 2007 – Burnaby contact is ratified. The Burnaby Library Board and Union will form a joint committee to look at all library classifications (except pages), comparing them to similar positions in the City of Burnaby, and then making use of the job evaluation plan being developed by Coquitlam and the GVRD

August 4, 2007 – North Vancouver District contracts are ratified. Although they did not ask for a job evaluation plan, North Van librarians receive a 1 page grade wage adjustment.

August 5, 2007 – Vancouver CUPE locals (391, 1004, 15) agree to resume negations with the City. A media blackout is imposed, which lasts for 5 days.

August 7, 2007 – Surrey contract is ratified.

August 9, 2007 – Negotiations break off. Media black-out is lifted. The Bargaining Committee, after being available for a total of over sixty-four hours, meets with the Employer for only three hours and five minutes.

The Committee tries to be creative and flexible with our proposals, but the Employer will not seriously consider any of 391's local issues and continues to focus on Employer concessions.

August 15, 2007 – The Bargaining Committee meets again with the Employer. The Employer basically restates their last position and offers less than the regional wage settlement that has wage increases on January 1st of each year.

August 17, 2007 – The Bargaining Committee responds to the Employer with a counter proposal. We include the actual wage and term from the other regional settlements and job evaluation language from ratified Burnaby agreement.

August 24, 2007 – It's been 7 long days since CUPE 391 last spoke to the Employer.

August 29, 2007 – CUPE 391 participates in a rally at City Hall.

September 2007 – The Greater Vancouver Regional District, GVRD changes its name to Metro Vancouver.

September 2007 – Employer finally agrees to resume negotiations.

September 2, 2007 – The VPL Library Board meets for an in camera information meeting.

September 5, 2007 – Day 19 without a response from the Employer.

September 10, 2007 – A Talk about Talking. Informal discussion about returning to the bargaining table takes place between all parties.

September 13, 2007 – Bargaining resumes.

September 14, 2007 – City of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Library and Metro Vancouver Labour Relations Bureau break off talks.

Mid-September, 2007 – Brian Foley is appointed mediator for three CUPE locals

October 5, 2007 – CUPE's Bargaining Committee meets to review Brian Foley's (mediator) recommendations.

October 9, 2007 – 78.1% of CUPE's membership vote to reject the mediator's recommendations.

October 12, 2007 – CUPE's Bargaining Committee meet with library and City representative to present amendments to the mediator's recommendations.

October 14, 2007 – The CUPE 391 Bargaining Committee meet with representatives from VPL Management, Metro Vancouver (formerly the GVRD) and the City of Vancouver.

October 15, 2007 – Small group of CUPE's Bargaining Committee meet with representatives of VPL management and the GVRD.

October 16, 2007 – Media blackout in effect.

October 19, 2007 – 71.4 % of the membership say yes to the memorandum of agreement and a return to work.

October 20, 2007 – Vancouver Public Library Board meet and ratify the Memorandum of Agreement.

October 22, 2007 – CUPE 391 Vancouver Public Library workers return to work.

October 24, 2007 – Renowned pay equity advocate and former American Library Association (ALA) President Mitch Freedman appears at the Central Library, delivers a talk entitled, "Library Workers and Equitable Salaries."

APPENDIX #2

Pay Equity and Wage Adjustments – Presentation by CUPE Local 391 to Mediator Brian Foley

October 1, 2007

Presented by Laura Safarian and a representative of CUPE National

Preamble to Presentation

My regular day job is as a public service librarian in the Art & History Division of the Main branch of the Vancouver Public Library. I have over 20 years of work experience in the field of information management, including 7 years at the Vancouver Public Library as a reference librarian.

Despite my work experience and 6 years of post-secondary education, I earn significantly less than almost all of my friends and family with similar education and work experience. For a long time I simply accepted this situation because I bought into the argument that as a public service librarian, I'd earn less.

Then I started to really look at what I actually do and I began to ask why public librarians are paid so much less than librarians in other sectors when the jobs are so similar? Is it because our society does not value public libraries and library workers or is it because our society does not value work that has traditionally been done by women?

What became evidently clear to me is that the problem revolves around the complexity of the pay equity issue and the mistaken belief that gender discrimination no longer exists in our society.

I think this belief stems from the reality that the women's movement made great strides in the 60s and 70s to achieve equality:

- We now have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees us equality rights.
- We see all around us examples of individual women in non-traditional careers and positions of power.
- We know that women get paid the same as men when they do the same work.
- And in our daily lives, our society has progressed to the point

> where not many women expect doors to be held open for them, bus seats to be vacated for them or their drinks bought for them

I believe that all these "achievements" have convinced us that our society no longer tolerates gender discrimination. And therefore we live in denial that gender-based discrimination could possibly exist in our public libraries.

I am convinced that the world of municipally-funded public libraries is one of the last areas where the issue of gender discrimination has such an impact on the livelihood of the men and women working in them. I hope I can also convince you of this fact and impress upon you the need to finally address pay equity in this round of bargaining.

The bargaining committee would like to begin our discussion on this proposal by first introducing the landscape and history of the issue of pay equity, including how it relates to library workers. Then we'll turn our focus to the issue of pay equity at Vancouver Public Library, finishing with a review of how this proposal has evolved at the bargaining table over the course of current negotiations. Along the way, we will make reference to the supporting documents in front of you – sources that validate the information we are presenting to you on this issue today.

Introducing the issue and history of pay equity

In 1951, the International Labour Organization (including Canada) passed the Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100), which states in part:

> Each Member shall…ensure the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

In other words: Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value; Pay Equity; Comparable Worth. All phrases used in the discussion of the historic devaluation of work that has traditionally been, and remains, "women's work."

The first document we've provided you, an excerpt from the federal government's 2004 Pay Equity Task Force Report, discusses some of the various prejudices and stereotypes in the labour market that may create and maintain the wage inequities that plague women's work – jobs such as secretaries, nurses and of course librarians.

Add these lingering stereotypes to an outdated job classification system that segregates work into occupational groups, preventing comparisons between work that is "male" and work that is "female", and you have a system that perpetuates the historic devaluation of female dominated professions and workforces – specific to the case at hand, the devaluation of library work.

These historic inequities form a significant portion of the gender wage gap. Published in 2005, the fifth edition of the Statistics Canada publication titled "Women in Canada: a Gender Based Statistical Report" tells us that:

> Even when employed on a full-time, full-year basis the earnings of women remain well below those of their male counterparts. In 2003, women working full-time, full year had average earnings of $36,500, or 71% what men employed full-time, full-year made that year.
>
> As well, while there have been some year-to-year fluctuations, the gap between the earnings of women and men has not changed substantially in the past decade. Indeed, the current difference is actually slightly lower than the peak figure of 72% recorded in the mid-1990s. This is in contrast to the two previous decades when women's earnings as a percentage of those of men rose relatively quickly.

Pay Equity attempts to correct this inequality.

Pay equity legislation across Canada

In recognition of the wage gap and the historic inequalities that exist between the earnings of men and women, governments across Canada have taken a variety of initiatives to address the problem.

At the federal level, applying to workers under the jurisdiction of federal labour law, Pay Equity initiatives are limited to a complaints-based process under the Canadian Human Rights Act. According to the Act, it is discriminatory to "establish or maintain differences in wages between male and female employees…who are performing work of equal value." The Act also identifies that assessing the value of work, "the criterion to be applied is the composite of the skill, effort and responsibility required in the performance of the work and the conditions under which the work is performed."

The Act identifies the standard by which the need for pay equity is assessed, and how pay equity is implemented – gender-neutral job evaluation that provides for the bias-free measurement of jobs based on the skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions required of the work.

When pay equity was finally established in the federal public service, librarians were one of the job classifications that benefited from the largest increases.

Of course, most workers in Canada are covered by provincial labour laws, and there is a hodge-podge of different legislative and policy initiatives

across the provinces addressing pay equity. Several provinces have specific laws on pay equity which apply only to the provincial public sector, like Manitoba and PEI. Others, like British Columbia and Saskatchewan remain without any specific pay equity laws, although they have implemented pay equity in portions of the public service through policy frameworks.

Ontario and Quebec lead the way in Canada, with pro-active pay equity legislation covering most workplaces in the public and private sectors. Ontario's legislation is often declared to be among the most progressive in the western world.

Each of the jurisdictions with pay equity legislation or policies have required acceptable methodology by which to measure the relative or comparable worth of male- and female-dominated jobs. In all jurisdictions, the standard acceptable methodology has become the gender-neutral job evaluation plan.

Gains for library workers in Ontario through proactive pay equity legislation

Ontario's Pay Equity Legislation was introduced in 1987, and applied to all public and private sector employers in workplaces of 10 or more employees. The Act, to quote Ontario's Pay Equity Commission:

> requires that jobs be evaluated and work mostly or traditionally done by women be compared to work mostly or traditionally done by men. If jobs are of *comparable value*, then female jobs must be paid at least the same as male jobs. Female jobs are those mostly or traditionally done by women such as librarian, childcare worker or secretary. Male jobs are those mostly or traditionally done by men such as truck driver, firefighter or shipper.

Changes were made to the Act in 1993 to make it more effective for certain workplaces, such as libraries, where there were few or no male jobs within the place of employment. Before those amendments, some libraries were only allowed to make internal comparisons, although in others comparisons had been allowed to the municipal workforce.

The second document we've provided you is an excerpt from a 1994 article published in the Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science, which discusses in part the impact of pay equity on public libraries in Ontario prior to the 1993 amendments to the Act. It includes results of a survey of public libraries across Ontario on the subject.

Those results, in table 3, show that all levels of library workers, including Library Administrators, benefited greatly from the pay equity process. They show average increases, in medium and large library systems, of more than $3 an hour for Librarians, almost $3 an hour for Library Technicians, and around $2 for Circulation Assistants.

There have been recent increases as well, as pay equity had to be re-established following the amalgamation of many municipal and regional governments in Ontario, providing for larger organizations and different male comparators for female jobs.

Of course, we don't all live in Ontario – nor would we want to. But we think this information serves to justify our claims that library workers are under valued and under paid at Vancouver Public Library and that we wouldn't be at this table discussing this today if Vancouver Public Library was subject to pay equity legislation.

Pay equity as an issue in the library community

The issue of pay equity in public libraries is gaining momentum locally, nationally and internationally.

Far from being an issue addressed only by library workers and their unions, professional associations are also weighing in on the importance of establishing pay equity for library workers. These associations represent public and other libraries, administrators, Library Board members, as well as librarians and other library workers.

We want to share with you a number of quotes from representatives of Library Associations:

From Mitch Freedman – past president of the American Library Association (excerpt from his email, dated Oct. 14, 2002, to the ALA Council and membership)

> I didn't sign onto this profession, nor did most of you, to subsidize libraries by accepting inequitable, and, in altogether too many situations, demeaning salaries. I will not let up in my efforts to promote better salaries and pay equity for all library workers in all kinds of libraries. I hope you won't either.

The California Library Association has an active Fair Compensation Campaign titled: Making the Case for Fair Pay, which includes the following:

> Librarians and library workers are under-valued, and most people, whether members of the public, elected officials, faculty, corporate executives, or citizen board members, have little or no idea of the complexity of the work we do.
>
> Librarians and library workers are also unfairly compensated for the complexity of the work we do, especially in comparison with other service workers. There are several reasons for this: the vast majority of library workers are women, so we suffer from all the

> years of wage discrimination our gender has endured. The standard method (marketplace) used by human resources professionals for classifying and compensating service employees perpetuates low or unfair wage rates for library workers. And people with the power to make compensation decisions suffer from the lack of understanding of library work...

The executive council of the Canadian Library Association has just endorsed a review of pay equity in libraries across Canada.

Closer to home, what follows is an excerpt from a column by the BC Library Association President Deb Thomas in the current edition of the BCLA magazine:

> Pay equity has been and remains a critical issue in recent labour negotiations between library workers and their employers in British Columbia. The newly formed Public Librarians Interest Group of BCLA has taken a strong stand in favour of addressing pay equity in those libraries where it has not yet been addressed and hopes to be able to bring a draft position statement on the issue to the Board in the coming months.
>
> Fundamentally, this issue is about fairness. Everyone - regardless of gender – should receive fair compensation for the work that they do. That this remains an issue for some of the largest public libraries in British Columbia highlights the fact that this province lags behind other provinces such as Ontario where pay equity legislation in the late 1990s increased the salaries of library workers by, in some cases, up to 24%.

Library Pay Equity in BC

Also closer to home, CUPE's recent report *Overdue: Pay Equity for Library Workers*, makes the following points about wages at public libraries in BC:

- Many entry-level positions in public libraries make as little as 64 to 82% of similar municipal labour jobs.
- Library assistants working in education – both K-12 and post-secondary, can earn up to 22% more than municipal library assistants.
- The highest wage librarian positions in seven lower mainland public libraries made about $8 less per hour than librarians at two universities and $10 less per hour than librarians at two colleges.

These differences reflect the fact that, while there is no pay equity legislation in BC, many women working in the provincial and provincially-funded public service benefited greatly from a pay equity policy framework in place in BC during the 1990's. This framework provided pay equity

money, from the province, to designated workplaces that had assessed the inequities in the wages they paid their employees and made adjustments to correct those inequities, using an approved methodology. In all cases, that methodology was a form of gender-neutral job evaluation.

Through this process, school boards, universities and colleges across the province made significant progress in correcting pay inequities – resulting in significant gains for library workers, as we've shown.

Unfortunately, this pay equity policy framework was never made available to, nor imposed on municipal or municipal-funded organizations – leaving workers at public libraries across the province falling behind their co-workers in other parts of the public service, with severely limited options to catch up.

In some cases, and we'll use the examples of Victoria and Port Moody Libraries, employers and unions have collectively entered into a joint, gender-neutral job evaluation process.

In Port Moody, where library and city workers are in the same bargaining unit, a single job evaluation plan was developed and applied across the bargaining unit. The implementation of the plan, which was finalized earlier this year, resulted in wages for the Public Services Assistant at the library increasing by $4.27 an hour and the Children's Librarian rate increasing by $2.63.

In Victoria, library workers are in a separate bargaining unit from municipal workers. Nevertheless, the employer agreed to work towards pay equity by using the same job evaluation plan to evaluate library jobs as had been used for the municipal workforce. The established goal was to pay library workers the same as municipal workers with jobs that were rated the same through pay equity.

Unfortunately, the employer has refused to fund the wage adjustments, and library workers in Victoria have recently taken strike action to finally achieve them. The adjustments would see wages of Circulation Clerks rise by $3.89, the wages of Public Service Librarians by $3.31.

Recent gains at public libraries in the region

In British Columbia, where there is no legislation to establish pay equity, proposals to address historic wage inequities are becoming a hot issue at many bargaining tables. In many cases, Library Workers are leading the way.

In the Metro Vancouver region, several other locals representing library workers have tabled proposals to address pay equity.

In Burnaby, CUPE 23 and their employers, both the City of Burnaby and Burnaby Public Library, negotiated a 2-step process to address wage inequities. The first step establishes a joint committee to compare Library jobs to jobs in the City, using the existing job classification system. The employer has agreed to implementation costs of up to 5% of Library payroll for this project. The second step creates a joint committee to review the new JE [job evaluation] plan developed in the City of Coquitlam and consider its implementation in both the City and Library, with an additional 4% of payroll set aside for costs.

The North Vancouver City Library and CUPE 389 agreed to increase librarian wages by one pay grade.

The issue of pay equity at Vancouver Public Library

We conducted a survey of our membership in the summer of 2006, asking them about their priorities for the coming round of contract negotiations. Our members made it clear that the issue of pay equity was second only to achieving the regional general wage increase. After nine weeks on strike, our members continue to tell us that the agreement we reach with the employer *must address, at least in part, the issue of pay equity and wage adjustments*.

We have looked for other ways to address the wage inequities. But our job classification system is an outdated method of whole job comparison that segregates work into occupational groups and doesn't allow for comparisons outside of those groups. In the present system, librarians can only be compared to librarians and clerical workers can only compared to other clerical workers. And we are limited in our comparisons to our own workplace, meaning that while we can achieve a decent measure of internal equity, the present system does not allow us to make any advances on pay equity.

In the absence of a legislative or policy framework that will compel the employer to study the matter and correct any existing inequities – *in other words, without pay equity legislation* – it has become clear to us that the only avenue open to us to even begin to address this issue IS the bargaining table.

Indeed, the only significant progress we have ever been able to make on this matter has been in collective bargaining.

In 1981 we successfully negotiated a substantial increase for our lowest paid members – Library Assistant 1s. In 1992 we negotiated one pay grade increases to all classes at pay grades 9 through 11.

In the early nineties, the GVRD [Greater Vancouver Regional District] and municipal CUPE locals established a joint committee to work on the

development and implementation of a new, point-weighted, job evaluation plan to replace the existing job classification system. After a couple of years of work, the parties abandoned the process. There are a number of rumored reasons for this, but they have never been clearly documented and are probably irrelevant. What *is* relevant is that both the employer and the union, in entering into the joint committee, admitted and agreed that the existing classification system is outmoded, outdated and discriminatory.

We have seen the gains made by library workers in Ontario, and here in BC, in other library sectors, using gender-neutral job evaluation as a method to establish pay equity. And so our initial proposal on this matter called for the creation of joint committees to address job evaluation and pay equity.

The last document we've provided you is a chronology of the issue of pay equity and wage adjustments during the current round of bargaining. We hope you will review this document and observe that we have tried to adapt and adjust our proposals throughout this process, eager to find something that the employer would agree to that would still result in appropriate wage adjustments and start us on the road to the pay equity our members continue to tell us is so important to them.

You will see that, even though we recognize that a gender-neutral job evaluation process is the best way to achieve our members' goals, we have removed all reference to job evaluation in our final proposal.

We are now proposing a specific wage increase for librarians, similar to what was achieved in North Vancouver, and a committee to assess wage disparities in other classifications with concrete additional financial resources dedicated for use by the committee.

We have heard the employer's representative state, at the bargaining table, that there is no evidence of a pay equity, or wage inequity, problem at Vancouver Public Library or the City of Vancouver. Unfortunately, the employer has provided us with neither the data nor the methodology they used to make this determination. There has not been, to our knowledge, any "comparable worth" study to assess the existence of the problem.

We suppose it might be possible that the employer is right – although we kind of doubt it. We find it hard to believe that our members would still believe so strongly in this issue ten weeks into a strike if the employer's assertions are true. And the evidence of historic inequities, from jurisdictions and sectors that have begun to address them, is undeniable.

Still, if the employer is right and there is no problem, then there is no harm in creating the Joint Committee we are proposing, with a mandate to review and address the issue. And if the Joint Committee is able to establish that those wage inequities do in fact exist, then it's only prudent to establish a pool of money to address the issue.

Conclusion

In nearing a conclusion, I'd like to quote again from Roma Harris and the *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*,

> Of particular importance to all librarians, however is the reluctance in some municipalities to accept wage adjustments for library workers, for such reluctance suggests that women's work is still substantially undervalued and so too are the institutions in which women work. As the entangled nature of the public library's relationship with municipal governments becomes more and more obvious, this lack of respect for librarians and their work will remain a central obstacle in the public library's bid to attract sufficient funds to maintain a high level of service.

It has been very difficult for our members, and our bargaining committee, to understand the continued resistance from the employer. When the library community is making moves to address and correct longstanding inequities, in all jurisdictions and sectors, it seems inconceivable that our employer refuses to acknowledge the benefits to the organization of a gender-neutral job evaluation system and to at least start down the long road to pay equity.

Our members have clearly told us that access to an objective, comprehensive and fair job evaluation system is important to them. If you were to approach our members on the picket line, they would tell you that.

We have been as flexible as we believe our members will accept on this matter – we have made significant moves towards the employer's position, with each change in our proposal a reduction in what we ultimately want to achieve.

We believe it is unethical to continue to engage in a discriminatory practice on financial grounds. We believe that equal pay for work of equal value is the cost of doing business for the Library. Although employers will always argue that pay equity is too expensive, the financial argument is even harder to understand when this employer has recently saved millions of dollars in wages not paid during the strike and our pay equity proposals amount to only 1% of payroll per year.

In closing, our members have asked politely for some form of pay equity adjustments for years. We've tried lobbying the provincial government for pay equity legislation. We've tried to address it through wage adjustments and reclassification attempts. We've tried, in several previous rounds of bargaining, to get the employer to address this issue. All to little or no avail.

We've finally dropped the "polite" and have now been on strike for 10 weeks and counting. We are well aware that due to the length of the strike,

our current members will not likely personally benefit from wage gains but we continue to stand out on the street on a matter of principle, for our sons and daughters, the library workers of the future. Equal pay for work of equal value.

We trust that you will seriously consider the information we have provided and hope that you can make a recommendation that begins to address pay equity for the library workers at Vancouver Public Library.

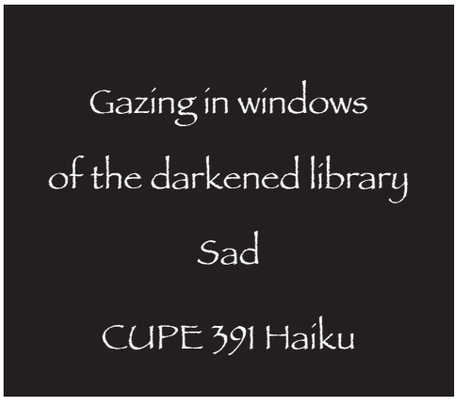
Thank- you
Laura Safarian, Librarian
CUPE National Representative

Supporting Documents

1. Excerpts from: *Pay Equity: a New Approach to a Fundamental Right, Pay Equity Task Force Final Report*, published by the Pay Equity Task Force under the authority of the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of Canada, and the Minister of Labour, 2004.

2. Excerpts from: "Public libraries and municipalities in Ontario: the impact of pay equity," by Roma M. Harris, published in the *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Sciences*, vol.19, no. 2, July 1994.

3. Chronology of CUPE 391 Pay Equity Proposals Available at: http://www.cupe391.ca/action/bargaining_2007_documents/pay_equity_mediator_presentation.pdf



THERE IS POWER IN A UNION–2007[1]

by Kathleen de la Peña McCook AFT Local 7463

The Democratic victory in the 2006 Congressional elections meant that the name of the Committee overseeing Labor concerns was returned its original robust title: the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor.[2] Under the leadership of Rep. George Miller the U.S. saw the first minimum wage increase in ten years (Rubin). The Employee Free Choice Act passed the House, but stalled in the Senate. Librarians' support of the Act is strong with the ALA-APA Council having voted in favor of the Act by resolution in June 2006 and a statement issued in support of HR 800 in March, 2007.

Librarian unionists were highly active in 2007. The strike at the Vancouver Public Library lasted 89 days — the longest librarian strike I have been able to identify (Galanopoulos)[3]. A new AFSCME union was voted at the Indianapolis – Marion County Public Library. Library unionists, Tarnel Abbott and Susan Velfort, were honored with important awards for their commitments to social justice and intellectual freedom. The scholarship of library unionism saw completion of a landmark study of the Chicago Public Library union by Joyce Latham.

As ever the role of unions in librarianship is not highly visible in the literature of the field, but strong and determined unionists comprise nearly 30% of all library workers and the editorial collaborative *Progressive Librarian* has an historical solidarity with our union brothers and sisters.

December 2006

§ Tarnel Abbott, Richmond Public Library , SEIU Local 790 was honored with the California Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee, Zoia Horn Intellectual Freedom Award for 2006 (Brenneman). "As one of our committee said, 'If every library had someone on staff taking these actions, imagine what a strong voice the library community would have in the fight to defend freedom of speech!'" wrote committee chair Janis O'Driscoll in the letter announcing the award.

January 2007

§ "Ignored Too Long: The Benefits of Managing a Library with a Union," by John Buschman, Steve LaBash, and Dorothy Warner was published in *Library Worklife*.
§ Many librarians are organized as AFSCME locals. On January 12 Gerald W. McEntee, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, issued a statement on the escalation of the war in Iraq:

> "The President's decision to escalate the war in Iraq is reckless and wrong. It's bad foreign policy and takes away the resources we need to solve problems here at home…." We are spreading violence in Iraq, not democracy. This ill-conceived war of choice has cost the lives of more than 3,000 American soldiers and countless billions in U.S. treasure. We could have solved the American health care crisis for what this war has cost us…." The time has long past to bring our troops home. This decision by the President is the very definition of misguided leadership."

§ At the Library of Congress Saul Schniderman, president of the Library of Congress Professional Guild, AFSCME issued a press release stating the LOC is not doing enough to protect employees and should create a program designed to monitor asbestos levels at the facility.

§ The California Faculty Association (CFA), which includes academic librarians, protested at San Jose State University to raise awareness about the unfair wages of faculty, to recruit new members and to show strength in numbers to the Chancellor's office in hopes of reaching a deal for a new contract.

February 2007

§ California Faculty Association (CFA) informational pickets continued at 23 campuses. The efforts of the CFA continued through the spring. I'd like to emphasize the work of all the librarian members and point out that the Librarians Committee has its own page on the CFA website.

§ The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continued to shutter libraries and make collections unavailable both to its own staff and the public. An unfair labor practice complaint was filed on Monday, February 5, 2007 by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) National Council of EPA Locals, Council 238 before the Federal Labor Relations Authority. The Bush administration is seeking to dismantle the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's network of technical libraries. The fight to save them is being lead by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

§ The ALA-APA, the Organization for the Advancement of Library Employees announced. The creation of a union wiki on February 27, 2007. This wiki is a resource both for current union members and for library professionals seeking information about joining or starting a union.

> "Unions are one of many ways library workers may improve salaries," said ALA-APA Director Jenifer Grady. "ALA-APA cannot do collective bargaining, so its goal is to empower others to raise their salaries and benefits. Union membership is one of many ways to do this. By being part of a union, library workers gain local allies who can help them achieve pay equity and better salaries."

March 2007

§ Dozens of Upper Moreland (PA) School District secretaries, educational assistants and aides wore wore signs demanding a fair contract around their necks as they walked the picket line Monday, the first day of their strike. Librarian Sue Powidzki, who works at the intermediate school, said she fully supported the strike. Union representatives said they want the community to know why they decided to walk off the job. People at the picket lines outside Upper Moreland Middle School on Monday wore placards that said "Value Our Support Staff" and "Keep Quality Employees."

§ The James B. Carey Library which serves the faculty, students, and staff of Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR) was announced as winner of the ALA-RUSA John Sessions Memorial Award. The Sessions award is named in honor of John Sessions, former American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) co-chair of the AFL-CIO/ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups. The plaque, supported by a donation from the AFL-CIO, is given to recognize a library or library system that has made a significant effort to work with the labor community and by doing so has brought recognition to the history and contribution of the labor movement to the development of the United States.

> "Under the stewardship of Constance Finlay, the James B. Carey Library has been transformed in recent years into a dynamic agent for providing in-depth and specialized information resources and services to a wide range of the labor community that includes students, scholars, union leaders and public policy practitioners," said Theodora T. Haynes, award committee chair. "The Library's recent successful initiatives document past and present work of labor and range from collaborating with the Public Employee Relations Commission on building a comprehensive database of collective bargaining contracts to mounting a historical exhibit and Website honoring James B. Carey. The award will be

presented at RUSA Awards Ceremony on June 25, 2007, from 4 to 6 p.m., during the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

§ Strikes were suspended at the Community College of Philadelphia and the California State University System as reported by Scott Jaschik in "Off the Picket Line." Both strikes included librarians.

April 2007

§ Immigration legislation stalled in spring 2007. David Bacon wrote of the connection between immigration issues and the raids of Immigration and Custom enforcement (ICE). "The AFL-CIO opposes guest worker programs, and says immigrants should be given permanent residence visas, so they have labor rights and can become normal members of the communities they live in. Since 1999, the AFL-CIO has called for legalization of the 12 million people living in the US without documents. Most unions oppose employer sanctions and the recent immigration raids, because they're often used to threaten and punish workers when they speak out for better wages and conditions."

§ National Library Workers Day was celebrated on April 17. Tuesday of National Library Week is designated National Library Workers Day; and, that on that day, interested library workers, library groups, and libraries should advocate for better compensation for all library workers and, if the day coincides with National Pay Equity Day, these individuals, groups, and libraries should recognize both days together.

May 2007

§ The REFORMA Legislative Committee visit on Capitol Hill during National Library Legislative Day focused on the following: 1) support for the repeal of the REAL ID Act, 2) support for immigration reform as stated in REFORMA's and the American Library Association resolution on immigration adopted in January 2007. 3) Bilingual Education, 4) Net Neutrality, 5) LSTA funding, 6) School Libraries (Improving Literacy through School Libraries & and No Child Left Behind), 7) Librarians Act of 2007, and 8) Copyright. REFORMA is the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. (McCook).

§ California State University faculty union members overwhelmingly approved a new labor agreement, association officials announced May 7, 2007. Last week, 97 percent of voting members of the California Faculty Association agreed to accept the tentative agreement between the union and CSU administration. CSU trustees are expected to vote on the contract at meetings on May 15 and 16. The contract would raise base pay for faculty by 20.7 percent over four years. Additional increases for longevity and merit would make the package worth 24.9 percent to many members.

§ City of Minneapolis library workers ratified an agreement on May 16 to protect their wages and pensions under the proposed merger of the Hennepin County and City of Minneapolis libraries. The merger was stalled for weeks due to a county-imposed condition that would have forced city library workers to accept lower wages and a longer workweek. "Our union negotiating team was committed to laying a strong foundation for a successful merger," said Marilyn Bell, a library aide at the Franklin Library. "We acted in the best interests of our members and library patrons." "AFSCME is proud of this agreement because it assures job security for workers, access for library patrons, and financial stability for the system," said Eliot Seide, director of AFSCME Council 5. "AFSCME members are ready to work hard with the city and county to deliver a successful merger and the finest library system in the nation."

§ Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library Employees voted for a union May 23, 2007. In a vote of 146-69, at least 75 percent of eligible employees participated in the election, as required by the library's board of directors, said Michelle Martin, an organizer. Employees began working for union representation about two years ago amid rising frustration over the management of the library and the expansion of the Central Library. Union leaders said their goal is to gain input in library decisions rather than simply to negotiate for better pay. About 350 library employees are eligible to organize with AFSCME Council 62.

June 2007

§ The AFL-CIO – ALA Joint Committee on Library Services to Labor Groups held the program, "Aging and Activism," June 25 at the ALA Annual Conference. Discussion of the need for activism to ensure social and economic justice and full civil rights for all citizens, with a special focus on retiree legislative and political issues. This program featured Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Center on Aging, Health and Humanities, George Washington University, and Edward Coyle, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans. A booth in the Exposition Hall featured labor materials, including pamphlets, brochures and bibliographies. The AFL-CIO – ALA Joint Committee on Library Services to Labor Groups initiates, develops, and foster, through the organizational structures of the ALA and the AFL-CIO, ways and means of effecting closer cooperation between the librarian and labor organizations and the large constituency represented by the labor organizations.

July 2007

§Greater Victoria Public Library (BC, Canada) launched the "Overdue" campaign to remind municipal officials of their promise to deliver on pay equity on July 5, 2007.

§Vancouver Public Library workers of CUPE 391 begin the longest strike in library history.[3] Thursday July 26th was day one of the strike. On that day 350 CUPE 391 members appeared on picket duty at the Central branch. The story of the CUPE 391 strike continues until October 20, 2007. This issue (Winter 2007/08) of *Progressive Librarian* includes the story of the strike by Anita Galanopoulos.

August 2007

§ The Progressive Librarians Guild issued a statement in solidarity with CUPE 391 on August 1, 2007.

§ Union Librarian provided extensive coverage of the CUPE 391 strike: "Knitters for Solidarity;" "Gentle Sherpas of the Public Library;" "Read-In at the Vancouver Public Library;" "Walking the Line in Vancouver," "City Breaks Off Talks;" "Rally at City Hall," "Primary Issue is Pay Equity," "We believe in lifelong learning, truth and social justice;" "Pay Equity is a Human Right;" "Writers for Vancouver Library Workers; " and the "Buttoneers."

September 2007

§ The Vancouver strike continues with the strikers honoring Ron Dutton, a longtime CUPE 391 member and former branch head, division head, and PSM who retired today, after spending the last few weeks of his distinguished VPL career on the picket line.

§ The Greater Victoria Public Library, CUPE 410 representing Library Workers in the Greater Victoria British Columbia area is now in legal strike position and took its first strike action on Friday, September 7, 2007.

§ Susan Veltfort of AFSCME Local 1857 won the Mother Jones Award from the Washington State Labor Council. Susan was one of the

prime movers in organizing Washington State's largest public library system – the King County Library System – in 2003. Susan was on the negotiations committee when Local 1857 negotiated the King County Library System's first-ever labor agreement in 2004. Soon afterward the library management delivered a shock: A wrong-headed staffing model called "clustering" which forced many employees to rotate among several worksites each week. Susan, now president of Local 1857, was a key player in helping to organize a no-confidence vote among members in which 92% registered no confidence in the library director. The vote generated media attention, which brought management to the table, where it has since made major concessions on the issue. Susan is also a founding member of IGLU, the Interest Group for Libraries and Unions, within the Washington Library Association, the state's primary organization for library workers. IGLU's purpose:

- To explore the extent of the presence and role of unions among library workers in Washington State.
- To encourage ongoing research on unionization in libraries.
- To serve as a resource for both active and developing unions of library workers in Washington State. (AFSCME Library Workers).

§ Monroe County Public Library, Indiana, "Letter to Staff," September 24, 2007 outlined the drive to secure union representation at MCPL. On September 12th, the MCPL Board of Trustees held a work session to discuss the desire of MCPL for union representation. At this meeting, the board reviewed the proposed method for union recognition submitted by the organizing committee to the board in May. They discussed this openly and invited an AFSCME representative to the table in order to better understand the proposal.

October 2007

§ The Vancouver Library Workers of CUPE 391 ended the 89-day strike on October 20, 2007. (See Galanopoulos).

§ Mitch Freedman, past president of the American Library Association, spoke to CUPE 391 on October 24 on Library Workers and Equitable Salaries.

§ The CUPE 410 Strike at the Greater Victoria Public Library continued in October. Local 410 President Ed Seedhouse spoke (Oct. 31) on CBC Radio (Victoria), along with Mayor Ted Daly of North Saanich who is chair of the Greater Victoria Labour Relations Association. The two presented their versions of the pay equity debate. The 11-minute interview is available on the CBC site as an audio file.

Notes

1. See "There is Power in a Union-2006" *Progressive Librarian* 28 (Winter 2006.07): 101-104. See also YouTube for "There is Power in a Union" sung by Utah Phillips http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O93YpTYCWRk ; Billy Bragg http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KO90EdKB-g ; and also with great graphics at OCSEA\AFSCME Local 11 slideshow http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHGsqSzfTjo
2. The Republican Congress, no friend to labor, had changed the name of the Committee to make it seem less labor oriented using the impotent sounding 'Work Force' Committee.
3. I have not been able to ascertain a longer librarian strike anywhere in the world at any time. Please contact me if any reader has information about a longer strike.

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PLG — *¡PRESENTÉ!* REPORT FROM THE UNITED STATES SOCIAL FORUM

by Elaine Harger & Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Although the joint delegation of Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) and Radical Reference (RR) members at the first United States Social Forum was small, we certainly put librarians "on the map" at this important social movement gathering. The welcome message in the USSF's Spanish/English program book read in part,

> …Corporate globalization and repressive neo-liberal policies have left deep marks on our communities: increasing poverty; multiple oppressions rooted in class, race, nationality, gender, sexuality, ability, and age; environmental destruction; and increasing militarism. The USSF is an opportunity to explore the interconnections between these critical issues. It is an opportunity to come together to share lessons and questions, to learn from each other's struggles. Finally, it is an opportunity to develop the bold collaborative visions, leadership, and strategies that we need to realize the call from our communities: Another world is possible! Another US is necessary!…Para que Otro Mundo es possible otro Estados Unidos es necesario. (United States Social Forum. p.3)

PLG's participation was rooted in our longstanding commitments to the place librarians and libraries can play in social movements for human rights and justice, and to our opposition to the marketization of public institutions, neo-liberalism and corporate globalization as articulated in our Statement of Commitments (see Appendix A) and the "Ten Point Program," the later developed at an international meeting of librarians in Vienna in 2000 (see Appendix B). Points in this program specifically connecting PLG's commitments to the USSF's are:

> 3. We insist upon the equality of access to and inclusiveness of information services, especially extending such services to the poor, marginalized and discriminated against, including the active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups and their advocates in their struggles.
>
> 6. We will support cooperative collection, organization and preservation of the documents of people's struggles and the making available of alternative materials representing a wide

range of progressive viewpoints often excluded as resources from the debates of our times.

10. We shall oppose corporate globalization which, despite its claims, reinforces existing social, economic, cultural inequalities, and insist on a democratic globalism and internationalism which respects and cultivates cultural plurality, which recognizes the sovereignty of peoples, which acknowledges the obligations of society to the individual and communities, and which prioritizes human values and needs over profits. (Appendix B contains the entire document in English and Spanish and can also be found at http://libr.org/plg/10-point.php.)

Radical Reference's participation was rooted in their commitment in using their skills as librarians to serve activist communities "on location" and via the internet. For a report of Radical Reference's activities at the USSF, see http://radicalreference.info/MRM/ussf2007.

Representing PLG were Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Elaine Harger, with Melissa Marrone representing RR, longtime PLG and RR member Dena Marger was able to attend at the last minute, and RR member Susie Husted arrived on Friday. We were joined by Mikael Böök of Finland who had participated with librarian colleagues Shiraz Durrani, Esther Ochabi and 70 others in preparing for and participating in the World Social Forum in Nairobi in January of this year (see "Libraries & Information in World Social Forum Context" at http://libr.org/isc/toc.html#24).

The PLG/RR delegation went to Atlanta with grand plans to (1) document the USSF by collecting materials distributed by organizational and individual participants, (2) survey attendees about the needs they have of libraries, (3) volunteer our skills as librarians at the Ida B. Wells Media Justice Center, and (4) learn about the social forum with an eye to determining how progressive/radical librarians might fit in as one element in this vast array of social movement activism and thought. This report offers a description of our activities and observations, reflections on our experience, and suggestions as to next steps for further engagement in the social forum.

Atlanta, June 27, 2007

…By gathering in this way, we are sending a message to peoples' movements around the world that there is an active movement in the US that is committed to challenging US empire and its policies at home and abroad….

This excerpt, again from the USSF welcome message, fairly captures at the macro-level what PLG's and RR's presence did for librarianship in Atlanta – we sent a message to the poor, marginalized, discriminated against and oppressed that members of the library community are ready

to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our sisters and brothers in social movements locally, regionally and globally. Our presence, and the simple words "library" and "librarians" let every organization and individual who noted our participation know that members of the library world share their opposition to neo-liberalism, militarism and injustice.

In homage to the USSF's statement on language accessibility, PLG's new banner read "Library" on one side and "Biblioteca" on the other for the Opening March that launched the first ever regional social forum in the United States. The forum opened on June 27th and ended on July 1st, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dena, Mikael and Elaine carried the banner in the march and, as usual, the presence of librarians caught the enthusiastic attention of other marchers – many photos, several PLG brochures handed out, and an abundance of words of gratitude, all under a scorchingly hot sun. After winding our way through downtown Atlanta for nearly two hours, our group left the march in order to meet our full delegation (plus Bill McCook, a Veterans for Peace activist and Kathleen's wonderful husband) for a dinner meeting at Mary Mac's Tea Room, which offered a most welcome air-conditioned calm and delicious Southern home-cooking for our hot, hungry and tired bodies. Much refreshed by our meal (including desserts of peach cobbler, strawberry shortcake, bread pudding and pecan pie!) we planned for our activities and Thursday morning program.

After dinner our group attended the Opening Ceremony at the Pine Street Stage to listen to speakers and relax. At one point both of us decided to try out our collection methods at the Solidarity Tents, of which there were 14 – Native American; Africa; Youth; Democracy; The People's Freedom & Solidarity; Health, Healing & Environmental Justice; Nahr Al-Bared Palestine; Tent of the Americas: South-North; Peace & Justice; Dreams & Nightmares: a photo exhibit; Immigrant Rights; Solidarity Economy; Right to Water; and Poor People's Economic Human Rights. We realized that attaching to each document a form containing archivally pertinent information was out of the question, and so decided to simply pencil directly on to each document a note about where the item was collected, the date, time, initials of person collecting, and when necessary the name of the organization producing the document.

June 28th A.M.

None of us was prepared for the size of the forum with thousands of participants, and hundreds of workshops (the program listings put ALA's to shame, with nearly as many plenaries, cultural events, workshops and meetings – and zero advertising). Approximately 40 venues, including Atlanta's Central Library and the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History hosted social forum workshops, cultural events, and informal gatherings. While we knew our colleagues at the World Social Forum in Nairobi numbered 70 strong, we certainly did

not expect to need so many for this regional forum – but could have! Our collection and survey activities were tiny compared to what might have been possible had we had more people to help. At it was we collected maybe 1/2 a linear foot of documents which were sent to the Labadie Collection of Social Protest Literature at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (see Appendix C for a sample list of documents Kathleen collected). Twenty-one surveys of the 100 copies we made were completed. To be noted, additionally, was another limiting element – not all of us were able to attend the entire forum, with Dena, Kathleen and Elaine all departing from Atlanta by the 29th.

Our program had been scheduled as we requested, at the very start of the forum in the first timeslot available for workshops, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and we were placed in the best of all possible venues – the Auburn Avenue Research Library, the second largest collection of African-American materials in the U.S., located on the very street that is home to the Ebenezer Baptist Church and the gravesites of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mrs. Coretta Scott King. After our meeting, library director Francine Henderson gave us all a very warm welcome, after which librarian and archivist Sherrie Robinson gave us a tour of the beautiful facility.

In addition to our PLG and RR delegates, our meeting Thursday morning was attended by two librarians and one future library school student (all of whom expressed excitement at discovering our program "Librarians and the USSF"); a young couple from Denmark who decided ours was the "most creative" (unique?) among the listings for that timeslot; and by a Pacifica radio producer who interviewed both of us for a program that aired that afternoon. A podcast should be available soon. We had a total of 11 people at our program, and the agenda included a report from Mikael of the WSF Library work in Nairobi; descriptions and discussion of our collection, reference and survey activities at the USSF; a report from Kathleen on librarians and the immigration issue; and, at the request of one of the attendees, a report of ALA activities.

Mikael opened with an appeal that librarians participate in the upcoming January 26, 2008 mobilization event taking place globally. He then described how the WSF started, in part, as a response to concern over growing attempts via the GATTS and TRIPS economic protocols to strengthen and extend intellectual property rights, and went on to tell how Kay Raseroka of Botswana summoned all librarians to participate in the social forum movement while president of IFLA, her call taken up by the librarians who participated in the WSF in Nairobi. Mikael then described the training sessions held with 70 librarians, which were conducted by himself, Esther Obachi (Secretary of the Kenya Library Association) and Shiraz Durrani (Senior Lecturer in Information Management in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the London Metropolitan University). Part of the training sessions included a study of the WSF Charter of Principles (see http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/ main.php?id_menu=4_2&cd_language=2).

Mikael ended by describing a classification scheme for the WSF Library which is based on the 21 Actionable Items developed by the World Social Forum in 2006 as an organizing tool for the forum. The librarians revised the official classification scheme somewhat for purposes of the WSFLibrary project.

Due to time limitations, we were not able to have a full discussion of this classification system at our meeting in Atlanta, but the basic idea behind the list is that, like the Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress classification systems which organize knowledge into categories for purposes of access, the following headings (and any number of subheadings) could be used to catalog documentation from the social forums and represents a new way of looking at the organization of human knowledge – a classification system which seeks to acknowledge, explicitly, the material basis of human life and the social structure and struggle of human aspirations. See the following for the full discussion at the WSFLibrary website:
http://www.wsflibrary.org/index.php/Actionable_themes

1. Water;
2. Political institutions and democracy;
3. Peace and war;
4. Housing and human habitat;
5. Gender issues and women's struggles;
6. Dignity, human being diversity, discriminations;
7. Human rights;
8. Youth;
9. Food sovereignty, peasants and land reform;
10. Labor and workers;
11. Education;
12. Environment and energy;
13. Health;
14. Knowledge, information and communication;
15. Taxation, debt and public finance;
16. Migrations;
17. Trade and transportation;
18. Culture;
19. Transnational Corporations;
20. Children;
21. Alternative economies;

Mikael closed his presentation by recommending the book *Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy* by Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite and informing us that Esther Ochabi is preparing a manual to be used for documenting social forums, to which we who were in Atlanta might be able to contribute our experiences and insights.

Next, Elaine described our plans for collecting documentation of the USSF, and Melissa described the reference work at the Media Justice Center, which was organized by *POOR Magazine*. Of great interest regarding the

latter was the organizing principle that journalists should be collaborators in producing stories with the people who have direct experience of the matter under investigation. For example, a story on homelessness would be the product of collaboration between a person who has direct experience of being homeless and a journalist who has the skills to convey that person's story via the media. The Ida B. Wells Media Justice Center was a space (in the bowels of the Atlanta Civic Center) where people with lived experience could find an expert journalist with whom to tell a story. Melissa, Susie and Elaine all volunteered some time at the center.

Because of our small numbers, we decided at the meeting that the most we could try to do in regard to collection materials was to select specific venues and to have each volunteer collect materials from workshops being held at that location. Had we been more organized, we would also have scheduled dates and times (mornings, afternoon and evening timeslots) to coordinate collection activities. As noted earlier, each document included penciled notations identifying time and location of its distribution. We were careful to include with all the material sent to Labadie a copy of the forum program which will serve as a tool in arranging the collection.

We next discussed the survey designed to elicit information from USSF participants information that would be of assistance to librarians who hope to engage the 10-Point Program's call for "active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups [the poor, marginalized and discriminated against] and their advocates in their struggles."

Next, Kathleen informed the group of the work librarians are doing with immigrant communities and in protecting immigrant rights. In response to a question about why librarians are involved in immigrant issues, Kathleen described how libraries serve immigrants and should be known to be safe spaces for immigrants especially at a time when so much anti-immigrant sentiment drives public policy. She went on to say that presently over 1,000 pieces of legislation are being considered at the state level alone all aimed at curtailing immigrant rights. Copies of Kathleen's report were distributed both at our meeting and at other USSF events, and an updated version will appear in *Progressive Librarian* #29, Summer 2007.

Our meeting ended with a question and a charge that each of us pursue an answer – How can libraries be made less loyal to national governments and more loyal to the international community? Food for thought!

An interlude

Before continuing with this report, we wish to address objections within PLG which were raised prior to the forum on the PLG listserv (PLGnet-L) and on the international progressive librarians list (lib-plic) with the decision to form a joint delegation to the USSF with Radical Reference, and afterwards to the activities proposed by the people attending as

delegates. In an attempt to clarify concerns raised, Shiraz Durrani, a longstanding friend of PLG's in London and author most recently of *Never Be Silent: Publishing & Imperialism in Kenya 1884-1963* (London: Vita Books, 2006), posted an e-mail (see Appendix E) in early May outlining concisely – and constructively – several objections to the joint delegation and to USSF participation itself. A response to Shiraz's e-mail is long overdue, but now informed by concrete experience. We offer the following response (which represents our response only). Shiraz's statement serves to crystallize concerns raised by others, and so our response here is directed not to a specific individual who articulated the concerns of several people, but to the concerns themselves. We offer the following in the hopes that it constitutes a constructive contribution to an ongoing dialogue concerning PLG's engagement in social movement activism.

At the end of his e-mail, Shiraz states, "It is only on the basis of (1) a clear socialist programme; (2) a strong organisational frame work that progressive librarians can have an impact on USSF and be able to continue useful work after USSF…"

Regarding the first point, unfortunately, PLG is not a socialist organization. We certainly could be, but we have never articulated a political program. Perhaps it is time to formulate one. We have relied for too long on the knowledge that underlying PLG's statement of purpose are socialist sentiments, but they are nowhere articulated in any direct way, not even in the 10-Point Program. New PLG members have no reason to know that the guiding spirits of PLG's existence are both the ideals of socialism, in the economic sphere, and democracy, in the political sphere. Only people who can "read between the lines" and who have a grounding in the history of the Left can connect PLG's documents to socialist sentiments.

Regarding the second point, Shiraz is absolutely correct in noting the need for organizational frameworks for effective engagement within the social forum milieu. Here, however, it is important to distinguish between two arenas of engagement within the forum:

1) PLG's relations with other library organizations, and
2) PLG's relations with other (non-library) activist organizations.

The proposal for a joint PLG and RR delegation did, indeed, follow Shiraz's suggestion that "Cooperation for USSF be only on the basis of 'organization-to-organization'…" Although these two groups have very different organizational structures, they both do (1) have members and (2) engage in activities. In regard to the extent to which they "organize at home," one must ask, "How is home defined?" Neither PLG nor RR has a home per se, no single city or town serves as a base for either, and our memberships are broadly dispersed, with communications based almost solely over the internet.

The next suggestion is that PLG serve as "host organization" for all

librarian work at USSF, and that other library groups submit agendas and programs to PLG for approval. This sort of hierarchy and self-appointed authority is, however, in violation of the fundamental principles of the social forum, which itself only requires that participating organizations adhere to a general position of opposition to neo-liberalism and militarism. That said, the social forum is certainly a space within which to begin to build organizational relationships based on jointly arrived-at and shared principles – the 10-Point Program being an excellent place to start.

In regard to the 10-Point Program, clearly the raison d'etre of Radical Reference is described quite well by point #3, and the activities at the USSF's Media Justice Center embody, not only the sentiments expressed by these words, but the fact of actual "active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups and their advocates in their struggles." Perhaps a next step for PLG is to present the 10-Point Program to Radical Reference with an invitation to endorse it.

Shiraz's next point is that "Any 'library' activity undertaken would not be to collect, disseminate etc. material that does not meet our programme… [but] to collect alternative material which focus on the 10 point programme and have socialism as their vision." Again, it will be helpful in responding to clarify the purpose of any collection activities.

At the USSF our tiny troop hoped simply to collect materials documenting the event and its participants. This seems in keeping with the intentions of our colleagues at the World Social Forum in Nairobi. If, however, we had sought only to document the presence of groups that had signed on to the 10-Point Program, we would have nothing to collect except PLG's own documents. Similarly, had we focused exclusively on collecting documentation from only socialist organizations, we would surely have (1) gotten bogged down in trying to determine the politics behind each document and (2) violated point #6 of the 10-Point Program itself, which calls for collection of "…materials representing a wide range of progressive viewpoints…" Important to note, as an aside, is that organizations which claim to adhere to socialist ideals sometimes do not, and some organizations that don't ever use the word "socialist" are, at heart, exactly that.

At this point in time, within the U.S. in any event, we simply do not have the benefit of political clarity that informed many of the struggles of the 20th century and earlier times. This is not to say that political clarity and unity is irrelevant – quite the contrary. And it is precisely here that the social forum, as a meeting grounds, exhibits an understanding of the present that we ignore, or dismiss, or ridicule only at our own expense.

One of PLG's greatest strengths is the presence within our ranks of members of the New Left, who have an appreciation for and historic understanding of the Old Left – Shiraz, Mark Rosenzweig, John Buschman, ourselves and many others. Another strength is PLG's commitment to the power of the human intellect grounded in a material reality that can be known

and shared. What has been largely missing from our commitment to understanding the world, is compassion, patience and the ability to engage – from a foundation of mutual respect – in constructive communication with colleagues whose lives have been shaped by a political climate quite different from that of our own generation's. A very important, and extremely frustrating, aspect of the political climate today which makes communications difficult, is the unrelenting anti-intellectual milieu within which political perspectives are formed.

A recent article by Steve Sherman entitled "Achievements & Limits of the First United States Social Forum" has something quite relevant to say in this regard,

> …I think the weakness of the forum was its anti-intellectualism… pervasive in American life. It was visible [at the forum] in a number of forms – the tendency on plenaries to conflate capitalism and racism, class and race; the priority given to "popular education" (indistinguishable from the sorts of games and group activities widely promoted by the educational establishment in the US as an alternative to the demanding and sometimes unpleasurable activities of reading and listening) over analysis and debate in workshops; and, perhaps most significantly, the exclusion of any academic voices from the plenaries…. And these debates would greatly benefit from the participation of left academics. I know why the organizers are so suspicious of academics. They can be arrogant, obscurantist, competitive, oblivious to alternative ways of talking about realities….Academics frequently use the experience of activists as fodder to advance their careers. This does not, however, mean that they are irrelevant.

Or, we might add, incapable of change in a direction characterized by mutual respect between people of the academy and those of the world beyond the campus periphery.

Sherman captures, in a nutshell, a dynamic we have observed directly within the progressive library community. When we sit around the table at a PLG meeting, who is it that does most of the talking? What might those who don't speak be thinking and perhaps wanting to say? Is not our first task to find out what new people might be bringing to the table? And, they have come for a reason – what PLG has said and done is meaningful to them. But do they find a place? Are they brought into the fold, given a warm and genuine welcome? In the words of José Corrêa Leite, in his book *The World Social Forum: Strategies of Resistance*, "The WSF united without commanding, and preserved ideological and organizational diversity – a practice that is still strange for a large part of the Left." (p.109)

We believe that this experience with the USSF, as with concerns raised at the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (see "Report from the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color" at http://libr.org/plg/jclc2006.php),

provides PLG with an opportunity to reflect on our organizational culture and to consider the next stage in our development as an organization. PLG has a strong history of activism and knowledge to bring to the social forum movement. As PLGer Susan Maret recently asked when discussing matters we could bring to the social forum, "What about the issues that challenge libraries and info workers in this era of globalization, continuing media control, war, lies, censorship, commodification, and worldwide government restriction of info? Assaults on the right to communicate?" These are, indeed, matters that PLG could and should bring to venues like the USSF. We also need to balance the knowledge we have to share, with the knowledge we have yet to learn. And it is at this intersection that each of us, as individual human beings, need to be aware of, and open to, the presence, experience and knowledge of other individual human beings.

In concluding this interlude, we note that Shiraz called for political definition, clarity and unity – we agree wholeheartedly. We see PLG's participation in the USSF as one step in the process of maturing politically as an organization.

June 29th, a tale of three surveys

> …We are reaching out to our sisters and brothers around the world to help build a cooperative world of peace, justice, equality, solidarity, and self-determination….

Underlying all of PLG's work is our explicit recognition of librarianship as a contested terrain between the forces of corporate-driven agendas and the defenders of the public sphere. Not always explicit, however, is PLG's solidarity with other social sectors also actively opposed to corporate agendas. The bulk of PLG's work is done within the confines of our profession, where we work diligently to bring issues from the larger world to the attention of our colleagues. For example, in recent years the American Library Association took positions on torture and disinformation campaigns. The resolutions on which these positions were based were written by and shepherded through the ALA bureaucracy by PLG members and others. We have done quite well in helping ALA live up to its declarations regarding social responsibilities. When it comes to connecting librarianship to social activism beyond the walls of our profession, however, PLG falls short – a failure prompting our support for involvement in the USSF, and for a joint delegation with Radical Reference.

The quote above, again from the welcome message from the USSF program, ties to another of the PLG and RR activities at the forum – the survey – which sought to address the construction of relationships between library activists and others. How are we librarians to know how to help if we don't know what help might be needed? None of us are omniscient. We can only know how to help if we let it be known that (1) we want to

help and (2) that we are willing to listen to people's questions and actively address their needs. Thus the survey.

Members of our PLG and RR delegation saw our participation at the USSF as a golden opportunity to find out something about what relationship (if any) social movement activists might have with libraries. Reflecting our differences as organizations, the nature of the questions each of us were interested in posing were quite different, but we managed to come up with a single survey satisfactory to all (see Appendix D). The survey could be completed in three different ways: as an interview between librarian and activist or as a form filled out in the presence of the librarian, or completed at leisure to be deposited in a central location. On Friday morning, Elaine conducted three interviews, a brief report of which will suffice to give an indication of what information might be learned from such a survey.

Before offering the report, however, one important note must be made. In formulating the survey we considered what sort of demographic information we might need from the individuals responding. We decided on only two – age and residence. We certainly considered asking for other identifiers – race, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity – but decided against these specificities. We also considered asking responders to self-identify themselves, but again decided against this. We made this decision on the grounds that the social forum is bringing together human beings whose fundamental identification is as humans reaching out to other humans and to all beings with whom we share this planet. At our meeting on Thursday morning we discussed this approach and those attending thought it reasonable. However, we do not know if this was wise or not, and we would like very much for you, dear reader, to let us know what you think of this decision. As you read the report below, please ask yourself if it would have been helpful to know more about the identity of the individuals responding to the survey.

1st Interview: A Veterans for Peace Activist

The first person interviewed was 56-65 years old, currently living in Madison, Wisconsin, but originally from Mississippi, and active in counter-recruitment, specifically in TAME (Truth and Alternatives to the Military through Education). This person had been an activist since September 11, 2001, and was inspired towards activist work through things a grandmother had said when this person was a child, through personal experiences in Vietnam, and through knowledge of the ignorance people in the U.S. have about the realities of war.

This person keeps informed about issues by reading "about the truth about this country" and recommends to others the Veterans for Peace website (http://www.veteransforpeace.org/) as a good source of information regarding counter-recruitment and peace activism. When in need of information this person sometimes utilizes friends, family members, other knowledgeable people, print materials, and databases; frequently

uses information available freely over the internet; and uses the library to "brush up on something from the past." This person has no trouble finding information, with the exception of statistics and is helped by their spouse when this sort of information is needed.

Concerning library use, this person reports using public library for activist work for "books that have information about previous activists like Gandhi, and if [I'm] speaking [at an event, I use the library] to verify quotes." The most important service the library provides is "knowledge." In response to the question about how the library could be improved, the person said "have more [libraries]." Also used by this activist is "a place in Madison called Infoshop on Williamson Street." The main library in Madison hosts all the TAME and Veterans for Peace meetings attended by this person. Radical Reference workshops of interest to this person are "Fact-up: Fact-Checking and FOIA," "Free Information! Free Space! Using Your Public Library," and "Beyond Googling It: News and Government Information 'Web 2.0' Style." This person would like to see a resource guide on the topic of counter-recruitment, one that makes sure to inform people about the provisions in the No Child Left Behind legislation that requires schools to give military recruiters the names and contact information of students.

When asked for comments or suggestions for librarians this person replied "Keep up the good work!"

2nd Interview: An Environmental Activist

The second person interviewed was 26-30 years old from the Chicago suburbs, but traveling frequently to New Orleans and has been an activist on environmental issues for 7 years. This person didn't hesitate to name two books that inspired their activism, both by Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* and *The Story of B*.

To keep informed this person regularly uses listservs, the *New York Times* website and Democracy Now, and recommends to others that websites are "easiest" to keep informed about environmental issues. In response to questions about information sources, this person sometimes gets it from friends et al., print sources and databases; frequently uses the internet; uses television "less than sometimes" and doesn't trust National Public Radio. The only information not easily found by this person are statistics.

Regarding library use, this person does use a library for "books that I need" and internet access. Improvements would be "coffee" and "closer to home." Infoshops used included Lucy Parsons in Boston, Iron Rail in New Orleans and Brian MacKenzie Infoshop in Washington DC. This person has never attended a meeting related to activist work in a library and expressed surprise that libraries can be used for such events. This person was interested in all the RR workshops listed in the survey, and would like to see added to this list a workshop on "being more organized and focused." Resource guides this person suggests are on "science-related

activism, using science for organizing, radical science information, DIY projects [like] work with sunflowers [that extract lead from contaminated soil]."

When asked for comments or suggestions for librarians this person replied "Keep it up!"

3rd Interview: Criminal Justice & Disabilities Activist

The third person interviewed was 31-35 years old, from Worchester, Massachusetts, and an activist on criminal justice and disabilities for the past five years. A personal experience inspired this person's activism:

> My mother worked with autistic children. I was 10 years old and one of her students wanted to meet me. I took two bags full of toys. She was wearing a helmet. [When we were playing she suddenly started using abusive language and] orderlies went to restrain the girl. I kicked the orderlies [because I thought they were hurting her]. My sense of injustice came from that experience.

To keep informed this person uses blog sites, e-mail and goes to meetings. To help others become informed criminal justice and disabilities this person said "I'd give them my business card and introduce them to the organization." When in need of information this person always uses all of the sources listed in the survey, plus "networking." The one area the person has trouble finding information in is financial information in the area of criminal justice.

When asked "Do you use a library," the person replied "Oh, heck yea!" and went on to describe the local history section of their public library. The person would like more weekend hours at the library, has never used a library for any activist-related work, and has not used an infoshop. The only RR workshop of interest was "Research Like a Librarian."

This activist had no other comments or suggestions for librarians.

What do these interviews have to tell us? Although only the sketchiest of conclusions can be drawn from this miniscule sample of interviews, we can state the following: (1) that either life experience or books can inspire activism at any point in life (a bibliography compiled from a large number of surveys, it might prove quite interesting and helpful); (2) that these people know where to get information, but sometimes might need help in some areas; (3) that they use libraries; (4) that some libraries provide a site for activist work (it would be worth exploring what factors make this possible); (5) that some activists are unaware that the library has a role to play in this regard (a situation that we progressive librarians might be in a position to remedy); and (6) that there is a need for and interest in services provided by libraries, infoshops and activist librarians. What we choose do with this sort of information is up to us.

At the end of the day, when all is said and done…

> We [PLG] insist upon…the active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups [poor, marginalized and discriminated against] and their advocates in their struggles.

When one considers that many PLG members are among "the poor, marginalized and [/or] discriminated against," the above quote from the 10-Point Program should end with the words "our struggles." PLG has done no demographic analysis of our membership, so we cannot make any reliable claims one way or another, but it is probable that as a whole PLG members belong to the increasingly downwardly mobile middle class. We do have one member who reports an annual household income of $8,000, which is very low. The point here being that although PLG seems to distance itself in the above quote from those who struggle against the greater forces of oppression, any such distancing is both a mistake and an inaccuracy.

Through participation in the USSF, PLG acknowledged that the struggles of the poor, marginalized and discriminated against are, indeed, our struggles too, and that we are committed to putting into practice the words that were penned to paper in Vienna seven years ago. The challenge is to actually make connections in order to establish solidarity-based relationships with others outside of librarianship, a task with calls for openness, trust and mutual respect.

After briefly distinguishing "character" from "personality" in his book *Respect in a World of Inequality*, Richard Sennett writes:

> We can know personally very few individuals; in complex societies a varied cast of social types crowds the scene, their lives not instantly comprehensible. What is in us then, which responds to those whom we don't personally know?…it is a matter of character rather than personality…[and character makes possible] treating with respect the need perceived in another when acting together. p.52-53

The task of social transformation requires a great deal of "acting together" not "doing for." To the extent that PLG is capable of participating in the creation of "another world" and "another U.S." we must engage with others, many others, from all walks of life. Later on in his book, Sennett notes that, "it would be naïve, indeed folly, to believe that society encourages… change," and refers to the idea that "for the mass of modern workers, risk-taking inspires depression and foreboding rather than hope." p. 240-1. It is not easy to engage in social change, not only does simple social inertia make it difficult, but forces intent on defending the status quo and inner turmoil as well apply enormous pressure on the individual activist from without and from within. We believe that PLG's participation at the United States Social Forum, was a step forward in putting into practice the ideals of our organization.

APPENDIX A

PLG's Commitment

* providing a forum for the open exchange of radical views on library issues.
* conducting campaigns to support progressive and democratic library activities locally, nationally and internationally.
* supporting activist librarians as they work to effect changes in their own libraries and communities.
* bridging the artificial and destructive gaps between school, public, academic and special libraries, and between public and technical services.
* encouraging debate about prevailing management strategies adopted directly from the business world, to propose democratic forms of library administration, and to foster unity between librarians and other library workers.
* critically considering the impact of technological change in the library workplace, on the provision of library services, and on the character of public discourse.
* monitoring the professional ethics of librarianship from a perspective of social responsibility.
* facilitating contacts between progressive librarians and other professional and scholarly groups dealing with communications and all the political, social, economic and cultural trends which impact upon it worldwide, in a global context.

APPENDIX B

Progressive Librarians Guild

Ten point program presented and adopted, 2000, Conference of progressive librarians sponsored by KRIBIBIE, Vienna

1. We shall work towards an international agenda as the basis of common action of librarians everywhere actively committed, as librarians, to social justice, equality, human welfare, and the development of cultural democracy.

2. We will unite librarians and information workers in opposition to the marketization of public goods, to privatization of social resources and to outsourcing of services and will oppose international treaties and institutions, which advance destructive neo-liberal policies.

3. We insist upon the equality of access to and inclusiveness of information services, especially extending such services to the poor, marginalized and discriminated against, including the active solidarity-based provision of information assistance to these groups and their advocates in their struggles.

4. We shall encourage the exploration of alternative models of human services; promote and disseminate critical analysis of information technology's impact on libraries and societies; and support the fundamental democratization of existing institutions of education, culture, communications.

5. We shall undertake joint, interdisciplinary research into fundamental library issues (e.g. into the political economy of information in the age of neo-liberalism and corporate globalization) in order to lay the basis for effective action in our spheres of work.

6. We will support cooperative collection, organization and preservation of the documents of people's struggles and the making available of alternative materials representing a wide range of progressive viewpoints often excluded as resources from the debates of our times.

7. We will investigate and organize efforts to make the library-as-workplace more democratic and encourage resistance to the managerialism of the present library culture.

8. We will lead in promoting international solidarity among librarians and cooperation between libraries across borders on the basis of our joint commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related covenants which create a democratic framework for constructive cooperative endeavours.

9. We will organize in common with other cultural and educational progressives, to help put issues of social responsibility on the agendas of international bodies such as IFLA and UNESCO.

10. We shall oppose corporate globalization which, despite its claims, reinforces existing social, economic, cultural inequalities, and insist on a democratic globalism and internationalism which respects and cultivates cultural plurality, which recognizes the sovereignty of peoples, which acknowledges the obligations of society to the individual and communities, and which prioritizes human values and needs over profits.

El programa de diez puntos presentado a los grupos reunidos en la Conferencia de Viena de bibliotecarios progresistas, patrocinada por KRIBIBIE, 2000

1. Trabajar una agenda internacional con base en la labor de bibliotecarios activamente comprometidos con la justicia social, la igualdad, el bienestar humano y el desarrollo de la democracia cultural.

2. Unificar a los bibliotecarios y a los trabajadores de la informacion en contra de la mercantilizacion de los bienes publicos, de la privatizacion de los recursos sociales asi como oponerse a los tratados internacionales e instituciones que incluyan politicas neo-liberales.

3. Insistir en la igualdad del acceso y la inclusion social en los servicios de informacion y extender estos servicios a grupos de pobres, marginados o discriminados apoyandolos con informacion solidaria asi como en el respaldo de sus luchas sociales.

4. Fomentar la busqueda de modelos alternativos de servicios, promover y diseminar analisis criticos del impacto de la tecnologia sobre las

bibliotecas y la sociedad asi como apoyar la democracia fundamental de las instituciones existentes de educacion, cultura y comunicación.

5. Fortalecer la investigacion interdisciplinaria de temas bibliotecarios fundamentales (p. ej. La economia politica de la informacion en la era del neo-liberalismo y la globalizacion corporativa) para sentar las bases de una accion efectiva en nuestras esferas de trabajo.

6. Apoyar la recoleccion, la organización y la preservacion de documentos de las luchas sociales de diversos grupos asi como poner a disposicion del publico un espectro de materiales alternativos que representen un amplio panorama de puntos de vista progresistas que frecuentemente son excluidos del debate social.

7. Investigar y organizar esfuerzos para hacer a la biblioteca un lugar de trabajo mas democratico y fomentar la resistencia a la ^Ógerencializacion^Ô de la cultura bibliotecaria actual.

8. Promover la solidaridad internacional entre bibliotecarios y la cooperacion entre las bibliotecas basandose en un compromiso con la Declaracion Universal de los Derechos Humanos y todos los Convenios relacionados que buscan crear un marco democratico para la construccion de esfuerzos cooperativos

9. Organizarse con otros grupos educativos y culturales progresistas para ayudar a la construccion tematica de las agendas que traten sobre la responsabilidad social de organismos internacionales tales como IFLA o UNESCO.

10. Oponerse a la globalizacion corporativa que, a pesar de sus defensores, refuerza la desigualdad social, economica y cultural e insistir en una globalizacion democratica e internacional que respete y cultive la pluralidad, que reconozca la soberanía de los pueblos, que reconozca la obligacion de la sociedad con sus individuos y comunidades y que haga prioritario los valores humanos por sobre las ganancias mercantiles.

APPENDIX C

List of items collected at the US Social Forum, June 2007.
By members of the Progressive Librarians Guild

ACT for Canada's water. Flyer. www.canadians.org
Alliance for Democracy. Flyer. www.thealliancefordemocracy.org
Arab Movement of Women Arising for Justice (AMWJ). List of events, one page.
The Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History. Flyer. http://af.public.lib.ga.us/aarl/mission.html
A CALL TO ALL ARABS. Flyer. JUSTICE@ARABORGANIZING. ORG
Celebrate Blue October. Flyer. www.blueoctobercampaign.org
Choice USA. Flyer. One page folded in three. www.choiceusa.org
Choice USA. Fairness in Flowers: Making Global Connections between

Economic and Reproductive Justice. Flyer. www.choiceusa.org
Classified: How To Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use It For Social Change. Postcard. www.classifiedbook.com
Critical Resistance 10th Anniversary. Postcard. www.criticalresistance.org
Corporate Personhood and the "Right" to Harm the Environment. Edwards, Jan, and Valencia, Alis. Paper, 3 pages. Philadelphia: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. www.wilpf.org
Cuba and the US Social Forum. www.cubasolidarity.com
Cuban Five. International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five. The Case of the Cuban 5. One page folded in thirds. libertadalos5ya@gamil.com ; www.antiterrroristas.cu Who are the Cuban Five? Flyer. www.freethefive.org; www.antiterroristas.cu
Defend the Global Commons. Food & Water Watch. Flyer, 2 sheets. www.foodandwaterwatch.org
Democracy at the US SocialForum. Booklet listing sessions sponsored by various groups. 2 copies
Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County. Pamphlet. www.DUHC.org
Democratizing Education. Manski, Ben . 2 pages. http://DemocratizingEducation.org
DIGITAL RESISTANCE. YOUTH SOLIDARITY NETWORK. One page sign-up sheet. www.youthsolidarity.net
Do it in Denver. Flyer. www.recreate68.org
Global Women's Strike. Flyer. www.globalwomenstrike.net ; www.refusingtokill.net
Green Institute News.. www.greeninstitute.net
Green Institute. Flyer. www.greeninstitute.net
Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission. 16 page booklet. www.greensborotrc.org
INTERFAITH PEACE BUILDERS. American Friends Service Committee. Flyer. www.forusa.org/programs/ipb/default.html ; www.afsc.org/faces-of-hope
International Action Center. Flyer. www.iacenter.org
International Jewish Solidarity. The Role of anti-Zionist Jews in the Palestine Solidarity Movement (a panel) and Unlearning Zionism: Transforming Collective Trauma towards Justice. One page announcement of sessions. www.jewishsolidarity.info
Jobs with Justice. Cardboard and wood fan.
http://www.jwj.org/
Just Chicken. Flyer announcing session on the poultry industry; various sponsors.
https://www.ussf2007.org/en/node/2843
Librarians as Advocates for the Human Rights of Immigrants. By Kathleen de la Peña McCook (reprint). Progressive Librarian. 29 Summer 2007. http://www.cas.usf.edu/lis/mccook/
Media Action Grassroots Network. Cardboard and wood fan. 2 copies. www.mediagrassroots.net
Midwest Social Forum. Events. www.mwsocialforum.org
Palestine and Middle East Solidarity Track. 4 pages. ussfpalestinesolidarity.

org

The Palestine Freedom Project: Cultivating Peace, Empowering the Grassroots. Flyer. www.pfproject.org

Palestine Israel Education Project. One glossy page folded in three. (Two copies.) www.thinkpep.net

Palestine Solidarity Project. One page folded in three. http://Palestinesolidarityproject.org

Palestine Unites Us: First Popular Conference for Palestinians in the U.S. One page folded in three. palestineconferenceusa@yahoo.com

LUIS POSADA CARRILES [See Should the United States harbor an international terrorist?]

Progressive Democrats of America. Three half-page leaflets: Healthcare for All; Clean Fair Transparent Elections; Stop Global Warming. One reprinted article from San Diego Union-Tribune. www.pdamerica.org

Progressive Librarians Guild. 1 page folded in three. 2 copies. And USSF 2007 Survey. http://libr.org/plg/chapter.php

Project South. www.projectsouth.org

Protect America's Water: Creating a Clean Water Trust Fund to Keep our Water Clean and Safe. Food & Water Watch. Flyer. www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/americaswater

Protecting America's Water. Food & Water Watch. Flyer. www.foodandwaterwatch.org

Radical Reference. Flyer. http://radicalreference.info

Resource Generation. 3 flyers. www.resourcegeneration.org

Revolution Books Outlet in Little 5 Points. Postcard advertisement. http://rbo-atlanta.blogspot.com/2005/10/what-revolution-books-outlet-atlanta.html

The Right to Water Movement. Flyer. Lists multiple links.

The Right to Water: The Campaign for a United Nations Treaty. Barlow, Maude Flyer. www.blueplanetproject.net

SDS GUIDE to the USSF. 4 pages. And SDS at the USSF. 3 sheets. http://newsds.org

Sierra Club Corporate Accountability Committee Water Privatization Task Force. One page folded in three. (Two copies.) www.sierraclub.org/cac/water

Sierra Club Mother Lode Chapter. Postcard to Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Should the United States harbor an international terrorist? [LUIS POSADA CARRILES] Full-page advertisement from The New York Times, September 18, 2005, p.A17. Reprinted on news-sheet. www.FamiliesForJustice.cu

Social Responsibilities Round Table. American Library Association. One page folded in three. 2 copies. www.libr.org/SSRT/

Student Labor Action Protest. Flyer. www.americanrights@work.org

Technology for Another World. 12 pages newsprint, info@democracyinaction.org

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOTTLE: CHALLENGE CORPORATE CONTROL OF WATER. 1/2 page flyer. (2 copies.) www.Stop CorporateAbuse.org

Top Ten: Why Water Privatization Fails. Food & Water Watch. Flyer. www.foodandwaterwatch.org
USSF Film Festival. Schedule
We are the Alliance for Democracy. Flyer. www.thealliancefordemocracy.org
WISER EARTH. Flyer. www.wiserearth.org
The World Can't Wait. 2008 is too late. Flyer, 10 copies. worldcantwait.org
World Can't Wait Workshops at the USSF. worldcantwait.org
Yes! Magazine. Flyer. www.yesmagazine.org/ussf
Young Communist League. Youth Bill of Rights for the 2008 Elections. 1 sheet folded in half. www.yclusa.org

APPENDIX D

USSF 2007 SURVEY
Help Librarians Help You!

Progressive Librarians Guild & Radical Reference
www.libr.org/PLG www.radicalreference.info

Return completed survey to Library Box at the Media Center check-in located inside the Civic Center

What is your age?

10-15____	26-30____	46-55____
16-20____	31-35____	56-65____
21-25____	36-45____	65- ____

Where are you from (town and country)?

What is/are your area(s) of activism?

How long have you been an activist?

Was there anything you read (or had read to you) at any time in your life that inspired your activism?
Yes____ No____
If so, what was it?

How do you keep informed about the issues that concern you?

If someone wanted to become informed about the area you are most active

in, what source/s of information would you recommend?

When you need information about something, you go to... (write “A” for always, “F” for frequently, “S” for sometimes, and “N” for never)
____a friend, family member or other knowledgeable person
____print materials (books, directories, magazines, etc.)
____the Internet - freely available sites and resources
____the Internet - periodical databases, online encyclopedias, and other fee-based resources accessible through public or academic libraries
____other _____

Areas of information you can’t easily find or have struggled with, by any method, include... (check all that apply)
____news and current events
____statistics
____local information about my community (organizations, activities, etc.)
____facts about my community (demographics, government information, etc.)
____financial figures (government budgets, campaign contributions, etc.)
____other _____

Do you use a library? Yes____ No____

Do you use your library for anything related to your activist work?

If yes, in what manner?

If no, why don’t you?
____the library does not have needed materials
____the library has limited hours
____the library is in an inconvenient location
____the library and its staff are not welcoming
____other, please describe briefly

What is the most important service your library provides for you?

If you could make one improvement to your library, what would it be?

Have you ever used an activist library or archive? (eg. Zine library, GLBT archive, union library, infoshop)
Yes____ No____
If yes, please specify:

Have you ever attended or held a meeting related to your activist work at a library?
Yes____ No____
If yes, please specify:

These are workshops Radical Reference has conducted in the past in various cities. If one of these were offered in your area, would you attend? (check all that apply)
____Research Like a Librarian
____Fact-Up: Fact-Checking & FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] Requests
____Free Information! Free Space! Using Your Public Library
____Wouldn't You Like to Be a Blogger, Too?
____Beyond Googling It: News and Government Information "Web 2.0" Style

Can you suggest any other skills that would help you find and use information in the campaigns you are active in?

The resource guides on the Radical Reference website include topics like Tools for Statistics; Alternative Radio and Audio Resources; Bicycling Resources; The Green Scare; and Anti-Racism for Activists: a Bibliography. What are some other topics you'd find useful in an online guide written by librarians?

Any other comments or suggestions for us?

Thank you so much for your time. Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the results of our survey? If so, please provide your mailing and/or e-mail address below.

APPENDIX E

E-mail from Shiraz Durrani to lib-plic, May 9, 2007

Perhaps there is a need for a brief pause to see where we go with all this. WSFs come and go, and WSF is not a socialist forum, but a "social" one with all sorts of tendencies - some left, some right, all having equal weight. It is easy to get mesmerised by thousands of people and programmes. One needs to be clear about where "we" go in this context - and also to know who "we" are.

Going by the experience of the Kenyan politics some years back, we formed a political movement of Kenyans overseas (called Ukenya; Umoja). But the key aspects we were interested in keeping in sight were:

1. Keeping politics in command - there are thousands of Kenyans all over the world, but we were interested only in those who were interested in a socialist Kenya
2. Only those who were or wanted to be active in the organisation - not to be fee paying members who could go to sleep rest of the time, but wake up and make noise from time to time (as happens with political parties in

Kenya) – we called it the KANU politics
3. Only those who were in active organisations. Thus we formed seven Ukenya branches in Scandinavia, USA, Zimbabwe, England, Australia etc. Only the elected representatives of these organisations could be part of the decision-making body which was based in London
4. The organisation was closely linked to the underground political party in Kenya (December Twelve Movement-Mwakenya) so that we were linked to the real struggles of workers and peasants.

All this may seem rather remote from USSF, BUT I think it is important to set up clear goals and learn from past experience. I was not at the Nairobi
WSF (though I took part in the pre-conference Workshops), but am rather disappointed to note that there has been no political programme, organisation or action that has emerged from the involvement of so many librarians (I would be most happy to be proved wrong on this point). There is a danger of getting involved in WSF activities only as "professionals" and leave our politics locked up at home.

I do not believe that this is what PLG stands for or wants.

I suggest:

1. Cooperation for USSF be only on the basis of "organisation-to-organisation" with each organisation actively organizing in their home front - they need to have members and take up activities and organize at home. Only this can give them credibility
2. Each organisation to submit their agenda/programme to PLG who, as host organisation, should be the co-ordinating body for all activities and programmes
3. Joint work can then be undertaken on the basis that all adhere to the 10-point programme (prepared by Mark and others)
4. Such co-operation should not be on the basis of individual participation - or on the basis of "official" library associations which do not subscribe to the 10-point plan.
5. Any "library" activity undertaken would not be to collect, disseminate etc material that does not meet our programme - there are lots of others doing it - our job should be to collect alternative material which focus on the 10 point programme and have socialism as their vision. We should not become slaves of those who oppose our vision, organizations and programmes.

It is only on the basis of (1) a clear socialist programme; (2) a strong organisational framework that progressive librarians can have an impact on USSF and be able to continue useful work after USSF which is perhaps also an important aspect that need to be thought about. The key point is to keep politics in command.

shiraz

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"Rad Ref at the 2007 USSF." MRM's Blog. http://radicalreference.info/blog/159.

"Report from the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color" In October, Kathleen, Elaine and Isabel Espinal presented a program at the first, and historic, Joint Conference of Librarians of Color in Dallas, Texas. Sponsored by the Black Caucus of ALA, American Indian Library Association, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, Chinese-American Librarians Association and REFORMA (National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking), the conference brought together librarians of all colors to share experiences, best practices, research, theory, and to make new connections, build and strengthen coalitions. Our presentations were well received by a large, standing-room-only audience, and can be found at http://libr.org/plg/jclc2006.html.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Anita Galanopoulos, born in Victoria, British Columbia of Greco-Canadian heritage, is a practicing and proud reference librarian at the Vancouver Public Library. She played a leadership role in the establishment of the Public Librarians Interest Group of the British Columbia Library Association. She has served as secretary for a British Columbia librarians advocacy group for the past three years.

Elaine Harger is the librarian at Mount Si High School in Snoqualmie, Washington, and managing editor of *Progressive Librarian*.

Joyce M. Latham is the Executive Director of the Onondaga County Public Library system in Syracuse, N.Y. Her research focuses on the politics of public libraries.

Jeff Lilburn, M.A., M.L.I.S., is Public Services Librarian at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada. His research interests include access to alternative and independent media materials in academic libraries and the impact of broad social and political issues on library practice and theory. His most recent publication appeared in SIMILE: Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the LRS IV Conference, The Library in its Socio-Cultural Context: Issues for Research and Practice, in London, Ontario, in October 2007.

Miranda Mallinson is a practicing artist and a Library Assistant at VPL, studying to be a Library Technician. She loves her job and the people she works with. She is passionate about social justice, and about facilitating access to knowledge for all citizens - its what we do and its why we're here. The artwork for the buttons was original - inspired by, but not directly copied from the graphics and publicity campaign on VPL's website. Miranda appreciatively acknowledges the initial artwork and the people who created it.

Kathleen de la Peña McCook is an active member of the United Faculty of Florida, AFT Local 7463, at the University of South Florida in Tampa where she is a Distinguished University Professor in Library and Information Science.

Katharine Phenix lives in Boulder, Colorado and is an Adult Services Librarian for the Rangeview Library District. Her commitment to libraries and human rights is informed by the quotation carved over the front door of the library at the University of New Hamphire in Durham where she grew up. "And you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Laura Safarian is a librarian, Vice President of CUPE 391, and member of the Bargaining Committee. She has been a librarian for 6 years and previous to this 15 years of information management experience. She has a committment to social justice and feminist issues.

Diana Thompson, who did the artwork on page 75 with colleagues on the bike brigade who helped conceptualize the design, has been with Vancouver Public Library for 29 years – for the past 12 years, as a graphic designer. She jokes about being born in a library, with 35 years of paid work preceded by volunteering in her school library in grades 4-6.