

THERE IS POWER IN A UNION – 2008–2009

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In 2008, union members accounted for 12.4 percent of employed wage and salary workers, up from 12.1 percent a year earlier according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number of workers belonging to a union rose by 428,000 to 16.1 million. After democratic wins in the 2008 elections, working people and unions look forward to legislative changes under pro-worker president, Barack Obama. The first legislation signed in the Obama administration was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which allows more leeway for women and others seeking justice over pay discrimination (Abrams). George Miller, chair of the U.S. Congress. Committee on Education and Labor stated:

With President Obama's signature today, we ensure that women and other workers who are discriminated against while on the job have the ability to receive a fair remedy. Ongoing pay discrimination is an attack on all working Americans and must be stamped out. The Congress and the President restored the law today and ensured that discriminatory paychecks are not immune from challenge.

Congresswoman Hilda Solis, appointed as Secretary of the Department of Labor by president, Barack Obama is a progressive with a commitment to work with grassroots labor, environmental and immigrant worker movements. She has served on the board of American Rights at Work (Moberg). Solis is the daughter of immigrants from Mexico and Nicaragua. Her father was a union shop steward, and her mother was an assembly line worker.

In 2008 the only reporting and analysis of librarians and unions indexed in *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text* was published in the *Progressive Librarian*.

Progressive Librarian #30 (Winter 2007/2008) focused on Library Workers in Unions with "So Promising of Success": The Role of Local 88 in the Development of the Chicago Public Library, 1937-1952," by Joyce M. Latham; "An Indomitable Spirit: The Eight Hundred of CUPE 391," by Anita Galanopoulos; and "There is Power in a Union-2007." *Progressive Librarian* #31 (summer 2008) included "The Union Difference for Library

Workers, Salary Survey 2006;” “Library Workers: Facts and Figures;” and “Professional Women: Vital Statistics.”

The lack of attention to union issues in the general library press continues to be a concern that should be addressed by those who believe that library workers and their conditions of worklife contribute to better library service. As posted at American Rights at Work, “Unions are an essential part of a strong democracy and play a crucial role in America’s public and community life. Not only do they give workers a voice on the job and help negotiate fair benefits and wages for their members, but they also use their political and economic resources to raise the floor for everyone who works for a living.”

January 2008

§ Scott County (MN) librarians were added to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) after the library board turned over operational control last year to county commissioners. That non-controversial move, approved by the state Legislature, removed legal responsibilities from the library board, while retaining its sovereignty on intellectual-freedom decisions (Flecke).

§ Unionized workers from the Greater Victoria Public Library walked off the job on January 17, 2008 to protest the suspension of a colleague, said union spokesman Ed Seedhouse. The job action closed all nine branches for the day. “This is in reaction to action by management, it wasn’t planned in advance,” said Seedhouse, a member of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 410. “One of our members has been in our opinion, illegally, but certainly unfairly, suspended for a day for taking part in lawful strike action.” (Bell)

February 2008

§ LSSI which operates 15 libraries in Jackson County (OR) was forced to recognize that a majority of its employees are a member of a union to resolve a complaint filed with the National Labor Relations Board. The county closed its libraries and terminated employees in April 2007 following a reduction of federal aid to timber counties. It later rejected an SEIU bid to run the library and instead entered into a five-year contract Maryland based LSSI. The union’s Marc Stefan explained to *Library Journal* that when a new employer takes over from a previous entity that operated with a unionized work force, as long as a majority of the workforce is made up of people who used to be represented by the union, the union can request that the new employer bargain with the union (Oder).

§ Complaints by the American Federation of Government Employees Council 238 that the EPA acted “unilaterally without the benefit of” employee input in regard to the library closures were sustained by Federal Labor Relations Board Arbitrator George Larney. Though the agency

has claimed to prioritize EPA staff access to information (while virtually ignoring the public's), Larney heard the opposite from EPA scientists, enforcement agents, and other staff. Larney ordered the EPA "to engage the Union in impact and implementation bargaining in a timely manner" before taking any additional steps to reorganize the library network. The union had sought to have the closed libraries reopened, but the arbitrator declined such an order and noted that it would be impossible for EPA to reopen those libraries that had been physically dismantled. (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Orzechoskie, IN THE MATTER OF THE ARBITRATION). The Government Accountability Office in its report, *EPA Needs to Ensure That Best Practices and Procedures Are Followed When Making Further Changes to Its Library Network*, faulted EPA with failing to follow through with many of its own initial recommendations, most importantly a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis and user survey, before starting the library closures.

§ The Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs has been honored with the John Sessions Memorial Award 2008 for its website, "No Greater Calling" devoted to the history of Walter P. Reuther and his accomplishments. The John Sessions Memorial Award recognizes a library or library system which 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. Such efforts may include outreach projects to local labor unions; establishment of, or significant expansion of, special labor collections; initiation of programs of special interest to the labor community; or other library activities that serve the labor community. It is awarded by the American Library Association Reference and User Services Association.

March 2008

§ "Scholarship is different from quick-information seeking," wrote Thomas Mann in "'On the Record' but Off the Track: A Review of the Report of The Library of Congress Working Group on The Future of Bibliographic Control, With a Further Examination of Library of Congress Cataloging Tendencies." March 14, 2008. Prepared for AFSCME 2910. The Library of Congress Professional Guild. (Mann)

§ In British Columbia members of CUPE Local 3966, representing Richmond's library workers, ratified an agreement reached with the Richmond Public Library. The five-year includes pay increases, improved extended health benefits and improved group life benefits. Both parties will meet during the term of the agreement to discuss a new job evaluation plan.

§ Alex Youngberg, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 391 was honored as a *Library Journal* "Mover and Shaker" for the three-month strike she led against the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) which exemplified her belief that issues must come not from leaders

but from the ground up. The long-simmering issue of pay equity topped members' list of grievances, particularly important in a province lacking equal pay laws. (On the Line, Galanopoulos).

§ "How to Work Positively and Constructively in a Unionized Environment" was a featured program at The Public Library Association Conference in March 2008. Managers often say that change is difficult or impossible because they "have a union." Short-circuit this perceived barrier by learning from experienced managers and union leaders how they work together effectively and constructively, while maintaining their roles. (PLA Past Conferences).

April 2008

§ Shutdown ends at Greater Victoria Public Library. "As far as we are concerned, this contract fully achieves our pay equity goals," said CUPE local 410 president Ed Seedhouse. The terms of the new contract had been overwhelmingly approved by the Victoria library staffers in his union earlier in the week. April 2, the Greater Victoria Labour Relations Association ratified a new four-year contract that will, both union and management sources agree, settle a dispute about pay equity for South Island librarians that has festered for decades. The GVLRA, which acts for the region's libraries and municipalities in labour relations matters, agreed to contract language that will, within the course of the four-year agreement, bring library wages in the regional system into line with those paid to city employees doing comparable work in Oak Bay and Esquimalt. Late in the afternoon of April 2, some workers were already back at Victoria area libraries, which had been shut down when management locked out unionized workers on Feb. 17. All nine libraries will be open to the public again by April 8. (Sandborn).

§ AFSCME's President, Gerald McEntee called for more library funding during National Library Week, 2008. AFSCME represents more than 10,000 workers in libraries nationwide, more than any other union. McEntee's call came on National Library Workers Day, April 15, a day set aside for communities, schools and universities across the country to celebrate the contributions of librarians and library workers. "Library workers have shown tremendous resiliency during these difficult times. They have adapted to the demands of the digital age, and kept our libraries running smoothly, often on shoestring budgets," he continued. AFSCME has been a leading advocate for pay increases for library workers and for funding increases for the public facilities they operate. AFSCME distributed more than 60,000 bookmarks at libraries nationwide to commemorate the work of librarians and library workers.

May 2008

§ Monroe County Public Library (Indiana) voted on Earth Day 2008 to join the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

(Higgs). MCPL labor organizer Phil Eskew said the “business-model” approach to library management is incongruent with the mission of a public library, which to serve the public good. (Eskew)

§ The Cook County, IL Treasurer recognized ALA-APA Director, Jennifer Grady, with a certificate in honor of National Library Workers Day. Ms. Grady was recognized for her efforts to honor all Library Workers and to encourage communities to recognize the valuable contributions made by all library workers (Cook County, ALA-APA).

§ May 22, 2008. The Canadian Library Association Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom hosted a landmark session titled “Inside Talk: Freedom of Speech in the Library Workplace” at the Annual Conference in Vancouver. The official session description:

What are library and information workers talking about on the job? Whose voices are coming through the library channels? To what extent is self-censorship or inside censorship a common practice? What is and is not acceptable when librarians participate in citizen journalism that criticizes employers in the blogosphere? And in a professional community that holds intellectual freedom so dear, why did the ALA see the need to adopt a 2005 Resolution on Workplace Speech which states: “Libraries should encourage discussion among library workers, including library administrators, of nonconfidential professional and policy matters about the operation of the library and matters of public concern within the framework of applicable laws?” Should the CLA adopt a sister-resolution? And what about our library administrations? The pros and cons of resolutions on workplace speech for library institutions are up for debate with panelists [Kathleen de la Peña McCook], Mitch Freedman, Sam Trosow, and Paul Whitney, who will discuss just what resolutions on workplace speech might look like and mean for the CLA, library administrations, and Canadian library and information work in the 21st century. (Samek)

§ Utah Phillips, a seminal figure in American folk music who performed extensively and tirelessly for audiences on two continents for 38 years died May 24, 2008. A stint as an archivist for the State of Utah in the 1960s taught Phillips the discipline of historical research; beneath the simplest and most folksy of his songs was a rigorous attention to detail and a strong and carefully-crafted narrative structure. He was a voracious reader in a surprising variety of fields. Phillips was a member of the IWW. (Folksinger)

June 2008

§ Thirty library leaders were honored as ALA-APA Angels at the American Library Association Annual Conference June 27. ALA-APA

celebrated five years of service by honoring some of the many people and organizations that have helped it grow and flourish in its missions of providing certification and supporting better salaries. Those honored included Patricia Anderson, Montville Township Public Library; Nancy Bolt; Nancy Davenport, District of Columbia Public Library; Diane Fay; Jenna Freedman, Barnard College; Maurice "Mitch" Freedman, past-president of ALA who created the Better Salaries Task Force; Joan Goddard; Arlita Harris, University of North Texas; Nancy Kranich; Michele Leber; Margaret Myers; Dan O'Connor, Rutgers University; David Orenstein, Warren County Community College; Robert Rohlf, Robert H. Rohlf Associates; Patricia Smith, Texas Library Association; Barbara Stripling, New York City Department of Education; Teri Switzer, University of Colorado; Tom Wilding; Denise Zielinski, DuPage Library System; American Federation of State, Municipal and County Employees, AFL-CIO (AFSCME) - President Gerald McEntee; Association for Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) members - represented by President Barbara Mates; Better Salaries and Pay Equity Task Force members - represented by Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Patricia Glass Schuman; Committee on Education members - represented by President Kenley E. Neufeld; Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO - President Paul Almeida and Assistant to the President Pamela Wilson; LAMA/PLA/ASCLA Joint Committee on Certification members - represented by Eva Poole and Betty Turock; Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) members - represented by President W. Bede Mitchell; New York Public Library Guild Local 1930; District Council 37 AFSCME, AFL-CIO - represented by President Carol Thomas and Treasurer Nina Manning; Public Libraries Association (PLA) members - represented by President Jan Sanders; SirsiDynix Corporation; University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign Graduate School of Information and Library Science LEEP Program - represented by Program Director Marianne Steadley. ALA-APA thanked the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the American Federation of State, Municipal and County Employees, AFL-CIO (AFSCME) for their support of this event. (ALA-APA names 30 leaders).

§ Managers Who Have the "Union Advantage" at ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim June 27, 2009. Speakers: Tom Galante, Director, Queens Borough Public Library; Susan Veltfort, President, Local 1857, WSCCCE, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, King County Library System (WA); and John Buschman, Associate University Librarian, Georgetown University Library (DC). This program featured library managers who will offered ideas on how to achieve positive working relationships with unionized library staff.

§ The ALA-APA Council passed a living wage resolution for library employees at the American Library Association Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif. On Monday, June 30, the ALA-APA Standing Committee on the Salaries and Status of Library Workers, represented by incoming chair Patty Anderson, brought forward a resolution supporting an increase

in minimum salary for librarians to \$41,680 per year and library workers at \$13 an hour.

WHEREAS, the American Library Assoc. – Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) council, at its January 2007 Midwinter Meeting, adopted a resolution entitled “Endorsement of a Nonbinding Minimum Salary for Professional Librarians;” and

WHEREAS, the resolution resulted in a nonbinding endorsement of a “minimum salary for professional librarians of not less than \$40,000 per year; which, adjusted for inflation now amounts to \$41,680, and

WHEREAS, the ALA-APA Standing Committee on the Salaries and Status of Library Workers is charged “to guide ALA-APA activities in support of better salaries, comparable worth, pay equity, and similar programs related to the status of librarians and other library workers;” and

WHEREAS, the aforementioned Standing Committee sees the need to strengthen ALA-ALA’s position with regard to wages and salaries for all library employees, and with regard to variable costs of living over time and across geographical locations; and

WHEREAS, a living wage is defined as “net” or “take home” pay earned during a full-time workweek, not to exceed forty (40) hours per week. A living wage provides for the basic needs (housing, energy, nutrition, clothing, healthcare, education, childcare, transportation, and savings) of an average family unit; and

WHEREAS, the family of four Federal poverty guideline for 2008 is \$21,200, a recommended minimum hourly wage of \$10.20 is necessary for a full-time, year-round worker to exceed the poverty guideline and sustain a basic living; and

WHEREAS, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes the All-Urban Consumer Price Index (CPI), the standard measure for inflation of goods and services, which is adjusted monthly to reflect price inflation; now, be it

RESOLVED, that the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association endorses a minimum entry-level salary for professional librarians of \$41,680 that is adjusted annually, according to the latest cost of living index/CPI data; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that in recognition of the skills and competencies required of all library workers, the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association endorses a minimum wage for all library workers of at least \$13.00 per hour, to be adjusted annually in relation to the Federal poverty guidelines.

July 2008

The “Resolution Concerning ALA Policy Opposing Sweatshop Labor and Support Union Businesses” was passed by the American Library Association Council on July, 2008. Text:

WHEREAS, The American Library Association (ALA) has broad social responsibilities (Policy 1.1); and
WHEREAS, ALA and its divisions, round tables, and other various units purchase all kinds of products for distribution to membership, such as tee shirts, conference bags, etc; and
WHEREAS, A large proportion of those available products are produced in sweatshop conditions; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That the American Library Association (ALA) and its divisions, round tables, and all other units should purchase all products for distribution to membership from sweatshop free producers; and that this resolution and information about how to comply with it shall be distributed to all ALA divisions, round tables, all other units and ALA staff. (Kagan).

§ The “Guideline on Collective Bargaining” was reaffirmed for academic librarians in July 2008. It was originally developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Academic Status Committee and approved by the ACRL Board of Directors and the ALA Standards Committee at the 1993 Midwinter Meeting. It was reaffirmed in 2000 and the ACRL Board of Directors again reaffirmed the guideline at the 2008 Annual Conference: The guideline: “The policy of the Association of College and Research Libraries is that academic librarians shall be included on the same basis as their faculty colleagues in units for collective bargaining. Such units shall be guided by the standards and guidelines of ACRL pertaining to faculty and academic status.” (Association of College and Research Libraries).”

§ In the July issue of *Library Worklife* Diane Faye describes how working within a union can be a very effective strategy to achieve pay equity and better salaries.

August 2008

§ There is a union difference for library workers. The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO analyzed 2006 data from the *ALA Salary Survey: Non-MLS - Public and Academic* and found that salaries were typically higher for staff in unionized libraries. This publication clearly demonstrates the power of unions to raise salaries in the predominantly female, underpaid library world. The percentages on the graphs indicate the union difference as the raise that would be required to equalize the union and non-union salaries. (Union Difference for Library Workers).

September 2008

§ “How a Librarians’ Guild Maneuvered a Win for Salary Increases,” by Roy Stone, president of the Librarians’ Guild at the Los Angeles Public Library System and affiliated with the library workers union, AFSCME. The speech, reprinted in the September 2008 issue of *Library Worklife* was

presented at the SirsiDynix - ALA-APA Networking Breakfast during the 2008 ALA conference in Anaheim, California.

October 2008

§ The 2008 *ALA-APA Salary Survey: Librarian – Public and Academic (Librarian Salary Survey)* indicates that real salary gains of recent years might be endangered by rising inflation (Bragg). According to the surveys, the mean salary of librarians did not outpace inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. According to the 2008 *Librarian Salary Survey*, the mean librarian salary rose to \$58,960, an increase of \$1,151 from 2007. Significantly, this increase of 2.0 percent was half that of the Consumer Price Index for the same time period: 4.0 percent (February 2008).

§ The ALA document, “ALA Ahead to 2010,” included as an accomplishment that:

ALA-APA & ALA OGR joined labor coalitions monitoring the Universal Health Care & Employee Free Choice Act; OGR participated in AFL-CIO briefings on key issues.

November 2008.

§ In a grim November 6 speech in which he called for sweeping job cuts and service reductions in many city departments, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter announced the permanent closing of 11 out of 54 library branches and the elimination of Sunday hours at the three regional branches. (Branch Closings and Budget Cuts.)

§ National Labor College (NLC) president William E. Scheuerman announced the appointment of Dr. Thomas J. Kriger as the College’s new vice president of academic affairs and provost on November 7, 2008. The NLC, established as a training center by AFL-CIO in 1969 to strengthen union member education and organizing skills, is now the nation’s only accredited higher education institution devoted exclusively to educating union leaders, members and activists. The NLC became a degree granting college in 1997. The college is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an independent, regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. (Labor Scholar and Unionist).

§ In the *Library Worklife* article, “Can We Bargain—Amicably? A Primer on Interest-Based Bargaining” Mary T. Kalnin discusses interest-based bargaining (IBB) – a process that requires commitment; at its very core. IBB requires that each participant respect others and their views. Interest-based bargaining requires brainstorming, discussion, exploration and willingness to seek a hidden solution. It requires the participants to change their thinking processes and to listen, really listen, to their colleagues and counterparts. Above all, interest-based bargaining requires absolute trust

in their negotiating partners and their counterparts. Examples include the Camden County (NJ) Library System.

§ Jenifer Grady analyzed benefits offered by public and academic libraries using survey data from the *ALA-APA Salary Survey*. Both library types are offering fewer financial benefits (retirement savings, professional memberships, pension plans) than in 2003.

December 2008

§ Philadelphia library workers are members of AFSCME District Council 47 Locals 2186 and 2187. The city has forbidden library employees to speak publicly on the issue. But library workers, who hold union leadership, including Local 2187 recording secretary Steven Wright, are protected and can speak on behalf of their colleagues: "My colleagues feel they are tied to the communities. They feel they're being ripped out of the communities and feel a great sense of loss. They feel a great responsibility towards the communities, especially the 11 branches that are targeted for closing." (Marudas).

§ A Philadelphia judge has ordered Mayor Michael Nutter to halt his planned closing of 11 branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Court of Common Pleas Judge Idee C. Fox issued the ruling December 30 in response to an emergency motion filed by three city council members who argued that the closures would violate a 1988 city ordinance requiring the mayor to obtain council approval before shutting any city-owned facility. Cox's order requires the branches, which were scheduled to close the last day of December, to remain open with reduced staff until city council or an appeals court decides otherwise, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported December 31. Some 40 branch library employees have already been laid off or reassigned, according to the mayor's office. (Judge Overrules).

§ The closing 2008 issue of *Library Worklife* looked ahead to key labor issues. The review by Christine Martin identified equal pay for women, the Employee Free Choice Act, Expansion of the Family Medical Leave to include paid family leave, paid sick leave, and the closure of USEPA libraries. The American Library Association has issued a statement in support of the Employee Free Choice Act (Sheketoff).

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