The following is a review of union activity in the information sector in 2014 as documented on the Union Library Workers blog (http://unionlibraryworkers.blogspot.ca). Union Library Workers is a project of the Progressive Librarians Guild and is maintained by Sarah Barriage.

Reports & Publications

According to the United States Department of Labor’s (2015) annual survey of union membership, in 2014 overall union membership fell to 11.1% from 11.3% in 2013. Workers in education, training, and library occupations continue to have the highest unionization rate among all occupational sectors at 35.3%.

Several reports and publications related to union activity in the information sector were issued in 2014, including:

• The fourth volume of *The Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*, which was themed “Academic Collective Bargaining Under Siege.”


Sarah Barriage is a member of PLG’s coordinating committee, serving as the editor of both the *Union Library Workers blog* and the *PLG Bulletin*. She is currently a doctoral student at Rutgers University’s School of Communication and Information.

KEYWORDS: Bibliographies; Labor unions – Australia; Labor unions – Canada; Labor unions – India; Labor unions – Ireland; Labor unions – Malawi; Labor unions – United Kingdom; Labor unions – USA; Labor unions and similar labor organizations
• “‘The Union Can’t Sit Idly By’: 2013 Union Review” by Sarah Barriage in issue 42 of Progressive Librarian.

• In Solidarity: Academic Librarian Labour Activism and Union Participation in Canada, edited by Jennifer Dekker and Mary Kandiuk, and published by Library Juice Press.

Awards

• The Local History & Genealogy Department of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library was the 2014 recipient of RUSA’s John Sessions Memorial Award “for its extensive efforts in building an ongoing legacy recognizing the labor community” (“Most distinguished librarians in reference announced for 2014 achievement awards”, 2014).

• Gene Suchma, AFSCME District Council 37, won the 2014 International Labor Communications Association Visual Communication Award for Print & Internet/Best Cartoon/Local Unions for his cartoon that was included in “Communities and DC 37 mobilize to stop library sell-offs”, an article in New York DC 37’s Public Employee Press (“Labor media award winners 2014”, n.d.).

Events & Conferences

• The University of California San Diego acquired the Farmworker Movement Documentation Project, a digital archive of the United Farm Workers of America (Binkowski, 2014).

• Labor posters from the collection of activist Stephen Lewis were on display at several libraries in Massachusetts.

• The Canadian Union of Public Employees sponsored a panel session at the Canadian Library Association Conference in May 2014 (Canadian Union of Public Employees, n.d.). The session was titled “The Impact of Precarious Work in Canada’s Libraries” and featured president of Toronto Library Workers Union (CUPE 4948) Maureen O’Reilly, president of CUPE Local 2329 Dawn Lahey, and Dr. Marlea Clarke from the University of Victoria.

• The American Library Association Annual Conference held in June also featured sessions related to employment and labor. ALA-Allied Professional Association sponsored a session titled “Earn What You’re Worth: Salary Negotiation for Library Workers”. AFL-CIO-ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, RUSA sponsored a session titled “Labor Solidarity in a ‘Right-to-Work’ State” with speaker James P. Kraft.

• The Canadian Association of University Teachers hosted From Talk to Action: Building Successful Campaigns to Action, a conference for librarians and archivists on October 31 and November 1.
Union Activity

January 2014

• Librarians and other academic staff represented by the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers went on strike after failing to come to an agreement with administration on key issues of pay and workload ("Staff strike at University of New Brunswick after talks fail to produce deal", 2014). The strike ended after a deal was reached with the help of a government-appointed mediator ("University of New Brunswick strikes tentative deal to end academic staff strike", 2014).

• Librarians and other faculty at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick went on strike after being unable to reach an agreement with administration on several key issues ("Mount Allison strikers get national show of support", 2014).

• Strike action was averted at Cape Breton University after the faculty association and university administration reached an agreement ("Cape Breton University and faculty reach tentative contract deal", 2014). The previous collective agreement had expired in June 2013.

• The Treasure Valley Education Association, the union representing faculty and librarians at Treasure Valley Community College in Ontario, Oregon, issued a vote of no confidence in the college’s president (Marfice, 2014).

• Librarians and other academic staff, all members of the University and College Union, at post-secondary institutions across the United Kingdom engaged in a series of two-hour strikes in response to a wage dispute (Kershaw, 2014). Several universities responded to this strike action by threatening to withhold a full day’s pay from anyone engaging in the two-hour strikes.

• Librarians and other faculty at the University of Victoria in British Columbia engaged in a successful union drive and formed a new faculty labor union ("University of Victoria faculty vote to form a union", 2014).

February 2014

• The strike at Mount Allison University ended after the Mount Allison Faculty Association and university administration agreed to binding arbitration ("Mount Allison University says strike over, classes back on", 2014).

• Post-secondary education workers across the United Kingdom went on strike, with UNISON, Unite, University and College Union, and Educational Institute of Scotland coordinating strike action ("University staff hold third strike", 2014).
• Staff at Nelson Public Library in British Columbia, members of CUPE 339, reached a new collective agreement with the city of Nelson after nearly a year and a half of negotiations (“Nelson library workers ratify new contract”, 2014).

• Librarians and other faculty at the University of Illinois-Chicago engaged in a two-day strike amid ongoing negotiations with university administration (Rajwani, 2014).

March 2014

• Librarians at British Columbia’s Okanagan Regional Library, who are represented by the Professional Employees Association, and other library staff members, who are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, reached new contract agreements with the library (“ORL agreement reached”, 2014).

April 2014

• After a vote by members of the Harvard Union of Technical and Clerical Workers, workers at Dumbarton Oaks, a Harvard library and museum located in Washington, DC, became eligible to join the union (Klein, 2014).

• The Wellesley Free Library Staff Association in Wellesley, Massachusetts reached a new collective agreement after negotiations that began in 2011 (Mayblum, 2014). Members of the association had engaged in an online campaign to bring attention to their ongoing contract dispute with the town of Wellesley (Claffey, 2014).

May 2014

• Librarians and other faculty members of the Faculty Association of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia voted to become a certified union (Driver & Abramson, 2014).

• The National Tertiary Education Union (n.d.) organized a campaign in response to proposed library restructuring at the University of Sydney in Australia.

• Members of Grand Rapids Employees Independent Union staged a protest outside of the main branch of Michigan’s Grand Rapids Public Library in response to budget cuts and the proposed elimination of 18 positions (Vande Bunte, 2014).

• Workers at the National Library of Wales, who are represented by Prospect Cymru and the Public and Commercial Services Union, planned a vote on a
motion of no confidence in the library’s administration in response to issues with wages and decision-making practices (“National Library management ‘no confidence’ threat”, 2014).

**June 2014**

- Seven school librarian positions were eliminated from the London District Catholic School Board in Ontario, leaving 29 librarians for the district’s 45 elementary schools (Daniszewski, 2014).
- Libraries were among the civic offices represented by IMPACT that engaged in a one-day strike in South Dublin County, Ireland over pay cuts (Ryan, 2014). A second one-day strike was deferred after talks began with the Labour Relations Commission.
- Workers at Gibsons and District Public Library in British Columbia, members of CUPE 391, reached a new four-year collective agreement (“Workers finalize new agreement”, 2014).

**July 2014**

- Proposed redundancies at La Trobe University in Bendigo, Australia included nearly half of library staff members (Yu, 2014).
- Amid ongoing negotiations with the Windsor University Faculty Association, University of Windsor president Alan Wildeman issued a letter denouncing the refusal of the faculty association to give in to the administration’s demands and threatened cuts to employee benefits (Pearson, 2014). The letter was condemned by the Canadian Association of University Teachers, stating that the administration had “chosen to launch an unprecedented attack on the rights and benefits of academic staff” (“University of Windsor administration condemned for ‘intimidation tactics’”, 2014).
- More than one million public sector workers, including library staff, across the United Kingdom took part in strike action in response to austerity measures (“'Poverty pay' #J10 strike begins across UK”, 2014).
- Library staff and other employees at Allahabad University in India went on strike, resulting in library closures and class cancellations (“AU staff strike hits teaching”, 2014).
- The Wisconsin Supreme Court upheld Act 10, legislation that limits public workers’ collective bargaining rights. Justice Michael J. Gableman stated “collective bargaining remains a creation of legislative grace and not constitutional obligation” (Davey, 2014).
August 2014

• Staff and supporters participated in a rally at the University of Sydney in response to planned job cuts and other changes to library services and structure (Brennan, 2014).
• Windsor University Faculty Association voted in favor of strike action (Chen, 2014a).

September 2014

• Staff at the National Library of Wales went on strike over a wage dispute (“National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth shut over strike”, 2014).
• Teachers in British Columbia accepted a new collective agreement, ending strike action that began at the end of the previous school year (“B.C. teachers’ strike is over”, 2014).
• Faculty at the University of Windsor took part in a one-day strike (Chen, 2014b).
• UNISON, the biggest public sector union in Wales, organized a demonstration across the country in response to job losses and wage cuts (Shipton, 2014).
• A proposal put forward by the Education and Library Sciences Group of the Public Service Alliance of Canada faced scrutiny for its requested inclusion of “aboriginal spirit friend” to the list of individuals for whom employees can take bereavement leave (Hume, 2014).
• The union representing library workers at Louisville Free Public Library in Kentucky filed a lawsuit against Louisville Metro Government, alleging that the government violated their collective agreement by filling full-time positions with part-time and subcontract workers (Sonka, 2014).
• Workers at Sechelt Public Library in British Columbia, members of CUPE 391, signed a new four-year collective agreement that grants the library workers wage increases and better benefits (“Sechelt library workers ink four-year deal”, 2014).

October 2014

• Workers at Lincoln Public Library in Rhode Island signed a new three year contract that includes wage increases but also increases in pension payments and health insurance premiums (Boisclair, 2014).
• Service Employees International Union Local 205, which represents staff at Chattanooga Public Library in Tennessee, was excluded from discussions
regarding the library’s adoption of city personnel policies (Smith, 2014). A union representative stated that this exclusion is a violation of the memorandum of understanding between the city and the union.

- A new three-year agreement was reached with the California Faculty Association, which represents librarians, coaches, counselors, and other faculty at California State University, and the university administration (“California State University reaches tentative three-year labor contract with faculty union”, 2014).
- Staff at Greenwich Library Service engaged in multiple one day strikes, resulting in all but two of the system’s branches being closed (“100% strike turnout [sic] of Unite members in Greenwich Library Service”, 2014; Read, 2014a).
- Huge demonstrations once again took place across the United Kingdom, with thousands of members from unions including Unite and UNISON marching and engaging in rallies and demonstrations (Johnston, 2014).
- After months of negotiations, the Windsor University Faculty Association signed a three-year collective agreement with the University of Windsor that includes pay increases for full- and part-time faculty (Chen, 2014c).
- Staff at the National Library of Wales again walked off the job in response to an ongoing wage dispute (“Library staff walk out for third time over pay row”, 2014).
- Library staff at Brown University in Rhode Island were joined by members of the Brown Student Labor Alliance in handing out fliers and gathering signatures for a petition showing solidarity with unionized staff amid ongoing negotiations with university administration (Gantz, 2014a).
- Queens Borough Public Library in New York ended the private contract for custodial services that had replaced unionized custodians in 2013 (Colangelo, 2014).

November 2014

- Workers at Quincy Public Library in Illinois reached an agreement with the library board after earlier voting to strike (“Quincy Public Library union employees agree to new deal”, 2014).
- Further strike action by staff at Greenwich Library Service was prevented after they reached an agreement with Greenwich Leisure Limited (Read, 2014b).
- Workers at New Hampshire’s Rochester Public Library, members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, signed a new two-year collective agreement (Markhlevskaya, 2014).
- Prospect union launched a petition in protest of the proposed closure of England’s Imperial War Museum library (“Petition opposing closure
of Imperial War Museum library receives more than 5,500 signatures”, 2014).

- Staff at Stark County District Library in Canton, Ohio, members of SEIU District 119, signed a new collective agreement (“Stark County District Library board OKs contract with union”, 2014).

- IMPACT trade union stated that the union does not support a new plan for staffless libraries in several counties in Ireland (Rogers, 2014).

- Unison launched a petition against plans by Leicestershire County Council in the UK to look for volunteers to take over thirty-six of its library branches (Martin, 2014).

**December 2014**

- Library workers were among the thousands of Montreal, Quebec city workers that took part in a one-day strike in protest of proposed changes to pension plans (“White-collar workers in Montreal holding one-day strike”, 2014).

- Library workers and other staff at the University of Malawi engaged in strike action, demanding a 45% wage increase (Muheya, 2014).

- Library media specialist in Calaveras Unified School District in California are among employees slated to be laid off in 2015 (Castro, 2014).

- Librarians and other faculty at the University of Vermont approved a new collective agreement (“UVM says faculty approves union contract”, 2014).

- Four unions representing employees of the city of Chicago, Illinois, as well as twelve current and former employees, filed a lawsuit against the city in response to proposed changes to employee pension plans (Spielman, 2014).

- The National Labor Relations Board ruled that non-tenure track faculty at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington are not managerial employees and therefore have the right to unionize (Jaschik, 2014). The ruling will impact many private colleges and universities as it included a set of standards for determining if faculty are considered managerial employees.

- Library workers at Brown University signed a new three-year collective agreement with the university administration (Gantz, 2014b).

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