

PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN

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Libraries & Archives Under Occupation
Special Issue on Palestine

PL is in transition

The editors of *Progressive Librarian* are examining the current state and future form of the Progressive Librarians Guild's journal following the release of this issue. New times need fresh eyes and minds in every realm of life, and the same is true of *Progressive Librarian* which has been in publication for the last three decades. When a new direction has been determined, we will inform our members and post an update to our website at progressivelibrariansguild.org. In the meantime, stay connected with PLG on Twitter @PLGCoordCom and in our Facebook group, Progressive Librarians Guild.

Be sure to keep abreast of the ideas, analysis, and narratives coming from those who keep a critical eye on librarianship. Venues for critical views within the profession can be found at: *In the Library With a Lead Pipe*; *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*; and *Journal of Radical Librarianship*.

As always, we thank our members and readers for their support and dedication to progressive and critical librarianship.

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Editors for special issue on Palestine: Walid Habbas, Jessa Lingel, Ethan Pullman, and Tom Twiss (with assistance from Jennifer Williams, Nathaniel Moore, David Lesniaski, Elaine Harger). Cover image: "Save Our Libraries" — the storyteller reads Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, by Ethan Pullman. Formatting by Alexis Tharp.

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Libraries, Archives, and Palestine

The Struggle Continues

We complete the editing of issue #48 of *Progressive Librarian* as 2020 draws to a close. In many ways, it has been an awful year. The COVID-19 pandemic has overshadowed everything, claiming nearly two million lives worldwide and impacting especially the elderly, the poor, and communities of color. In the United States, the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and a seemingly endless list of other unarmed Black people has horrified and sickened the nation and the world. A plague of natural disasters generated by the climate change denied by our government has continued to spread and to ravage our planet. The list goes on . . .

But these events are only part of the picture; there have also been important positive developments. The selfless work of medical professionals and researchers offers promise in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid growth of a powerful movement against racism, led by a new generation of Black activists, has begun to transform U.S. politics. There has been the electoral repudiation of a racist, authoritarian, plutocratic demagogue. And although there is still immense uncertainty about the intentions and capabilities of the incoming administration, there are now renewed opportunities for struggle by advocates of social justice, including progressive librarians.

Amid so many struggles, a thread of optimism runs throughout this issue. Each contribution addresses significant challenges. But each also suggests or documents a path forward.

For this special issue we invited Palestinian librarians, archivists, and other information providers to share their expertise on the general topic of “Palestinian libraries and archives under Israeli rule.” Our hope was to provide the opportunity for our Palestinian colleagues to speak directly to readers of *PL*, and for readers of *PL* to hear directly from them. Specifically, we sought “historical or analytical

Keywords: American Library Association, collection development, Black Lives Matter, COVID-19, elections, library unions, Middle East Librarians Association, Palestinian libraries, racism, Social Responsibilities Round Table.

studies of how the occupation or a particular Israeli policy has made it difficult to provide information;" "papers describing the experiences of the author or authors in confronting these problems;" and "papers describing current efforts to create libraries and archives."

The contributions presented here address all these topics. Included are five pieces by four authors; of these, three authors are from the West Bank and one is from Gaza. These contributions all describe the overwhelming difficulties associated with the provision of information in the occupied territories, but they also offer inspiring stories about how Palestinians are coping with these problems.

Focusing on the period from Israel's founding to the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, our first article by Anan Hamad provides a historical review of the impact of Israel's colonial settler project on Palestinian libraries. This account includes painful descriptions of the mass looting of personal libraries; restrictions on the import of books; censorship; and the confiscation of books, periodicals, and documents. But Hamad also writes of the construction of new Palestinian libraries and of the continuing preservation of Palestine's rich cultural heritage in the older libraries of Jerusalem.

Mary Fasheh's and Mosab Abu Toha's contributions contain heartbreaking accounts of the more recent Israeli assaults upon, and the continuing siege of, Gaza and how these have impacted libraries. Nevertheless, the overall tone of both Fasheh and Toha is remarkably optimistic. Mary Fasheh describes the impressive work of IBBY Palestine in a range of activities that includes the rebuilding of destroyed libraries and the organizing of workshops for librarians and children. And Mosab Abu Toha speaks proudly of the establishment of two libraries as part of the Edward Said Public Library and of the many services they have provided, including programs for traumatized children. *PL* readers who would like to help either IBBY Palestine or the Edward Said Public Library are encouraged to contribute through the links provided in the articles.

Lara Kanaan's article touches on a different challenge: the indifference of too many Palestinians to the fate of sometimes priceless family libraries they have inherited. Kanaan ends on a somber note. But hope is embedded in her article, too, in her description of the gifting of collections by some families to public and university libraries.

While the remainder of our issue does not deal specifically with Palestinian libraries, the four documents and report are related in their commitment to social justice, equity, and inclusion:

Our first document, a statement issued by the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), addresses the special challenges created by COVID-19 to collection development, equity, and access to materials related to the Middle East, North Africa, and their diasporas. At a

time when the pandemic is encouraging libraries to rely ever more heavily on electronic acquisition, MELA rightly warns that such shifts threaten the diversity of library collections, the continued operation of small regional vendors, and access outside of a handful of privileged institutions to research materials related to the Middle East.¹

Our second and third documents are products of the recent discussion with the American Library Association (ALA) regarding a resolution submitted by the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) defending the free speech of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights. Not surprisingly, the resolution was defeated overwhelmingly by ALA Council, which has consistently opposed resolutions related to Palestine. Since then, more states have adopted laws targeting advocacy for Palestinian rights, bringing the current number of states with such legislation to 30.² But the good news is that recent opinion polls cited in Document 3 show a substantial majority of people in the U.S., unlike ALA Council, support the free speech rights of the movement for Palestinian rights, while a significant and growing minority supports the movement itself.

The powerful new movement against racism is represented by our fourth document, a Progressive Librarians Guild list of “Resources in Black Lives Matter.” It contains statements and links to statements of support for the movement by individuals and organizations of library and information workers; links to resource guides to becoming anti-racists personally, professionally, and within our communities; and links to resources focusing on demands to defund and demilitarize police forces and to abolish carceral practices and institutions.

Our final piece, the “Union Library Workers” blog compiled and edited by Craig Guild, reports the impressive range of union activity internationally in libraries, archives, and the information sector in 2019–2020. Especially noteworthy is the coverage of a wave of strikes and unionization efforts in response to cuts in pay, benefits,

¹ See also related statements by other library organizations: the Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation (CONSALD), <http://www.consald.org/covid.html>; the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL), https://www.eastasianlib.org/newslib/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CEAL_Statement_COVID-19_FINAL_2020.8.13.pdf; and the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) <https://salalm.org/salalm-resolution-collection-development-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>.

² See “Palestine Legal: Legislation: <https://legislation.palestinelegal.org/>.” SRRT’s International Responsibilities Task Force has posted a webpage, “Anti-BDS Legislation: The Library Connection,” that lists ALA policies violated by this legislation and links to many library-related contracts, etc. that contain explicit state-mandated prohibitions on boycotts of Israel. <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/irtf/anti-bds-legislation-library-connection#libraries>.

and services, the international strikes in September 2019 for action against climate change, the impact of COVID-19 on library workers, and the Black Lives Matter protests and statements following the murder of George Floyd.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue support the understanding *Progressive Librarian* and the Progressive Librarians Guild have held since their founding that, even in difficult times, our hope lies in collective struggle. As the great Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish reminded us, “As long as the struggle continues, the paradise is not lost but remains occupied and subject to being regained.”³

The editors of this special issue of *Progressive Librarian* would like to express our appreciation to the managing editor, Elaine Harger, and to the entire editorial team—Gary Colmenar, David Lesniaski, Nathaniel Moore, Alexis Tharp, and Jennifer Williams—for their valuable advice and assistance. Also, *Progressive Librarian* would like to thank the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania for support that has made the translations for this issue possible.

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³ Darwish, Mahmoud. *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*. New York: Archipelago Books, 2010, p. 8.

History of Palestinian Libraries and Archives Under Israeli Occupation (1948-1993)

By Anan Hamad

This article will discuss the history of Palestinian libraries under Israel from the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 until 1993, the date the Palestinian territories were returned to the Palestinian National Authority. However, for essential background we begin with a brief sketch of the development of Palestinian libraries from the Ottoman era through the period of the British occupation of Palestinian lands.

Historical Background

Historically, Palestine has been a part of the Arab and Islamic civilization in which libraries held a prominent place. While some studies indicate an absence of a specific date marking the beginning of libraries in Palestine, other studies confirm that the library as a phenomenon crystalized during the Arab Islamic conquest. The phenomenon continued to expand along with interest in education and the book, which the poet Mutanabbi (915-965 CE) called the best company of all time.

Anan Hamad has been the Director of the Palestinian Legislative Council Library since 2000. The library was honored at the 2015 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Conference in South Africa as the best electronic library in the Arab world. He has worked on many projects, including Oxford University's *Bibliography of the Palestinian Revolution (1965-1993)*, and rehabilitating, computerizing, and training the employees of al-Aqsa Mosque Library. He is currently active in Arab and international conferences on libraries.

This article was translated from the Arabic by Ethan Pullman, Senior Humanities Librarian & Lecturer of Arabic Studies, Carnegie Mellon University.

Keywords: Banned books, censorship, cultural genocide, cultural heritage, destruction, history, Israeli occupation, looting, Nakba, National Library of Israel, Palestinian libraries, settler colonialism, special collections, Zionism.

Historical and cultural studies indicate that for Palestine, like the rest of the Levant, the period since the beginning of Ottoman rule has been a time of accelerating change under the impact of colonial penetration. This has taken the form of economic and political domination and marginalization. From a historical perspective, we see the Ottoman Empire's attempt at reforming education anywhere it ruled, including Palestine. In 1856, it decreed an extension of compulsory education. Subsequently, state schools began to spread in Palestine, followed by an increase in student numbers in all Palestinian cities. Archeological institutes were established along with a number of affiliated libraries, and newspapers began to spread after 1908. Cultural exchanges between Palestine and Europe began to increase, aided by the graduation of a growing number of Palestinian Arabs from European institutions.

Meanwhile, dozens of libraries in Palestine were established, one of which is Al-Ahmadiyya Library, which was established 1781 CE (1196 AH¹) in Al-Jazzar Mosque in Acre on the Palestinian seacoast. Another was the Library of the Grand Mosque of Jaffa in 1812 CE (1227 AH). Most noteworthy was the Khaldiyyeh Library in Jerusalem, which was established in 1900 CE. Other libraries were also established in the city of Gaza and other Palestinian cities. It is important to note that at the end of the Ottoman era, the foreign libraries established by missionaries in Palestine helped to introduce organizational principles in office work. However, these European libraries remained monopolized by Europeans and orientalists and, thus, had a limited and weak impact among Palestinians.

In 1917 Palestine came under British occupation, which immediately transferred the education of the Jewish community in Palestine to a Jewish agency, keeping the Arab education under British control. Ultimately, this helped Israel occupy 78% of the historic area of Palestine. It became clear during the British occupation period that resources for formal library education, especially school libraries, were limited. In the 1920s, dozens of Palestinian schools remained without libraries. The types of books found in libraries were suitable for teachers rather than students, and the number of books was also inadequate. Moreover, British occupation authorities did not allocate rooms for school libraries.

It is noteworthy that, during the occupation from 1917 to 1948, Arab Palestinians were banned from public libraries by the British

¹ "AH" is an abbreviation for "Anno Hegirae"—or the Year of the Hegira, the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, from Mecca to Medina. According to the Western dating system that was in 622 CE.

occupation government or by the local municipalities. This made it clear that British policies were aimed at keeping the Palestinian people ignorant to facilitate occupation of their land and obliterate their identity.

However, this did not prevent private Palestinian Arab libraries from emerging in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, Acre, and other cities where knowledge was advanced in comparison to other locations. This was accompanied by the establishment of special libraries for some departments of the British Authorities: for example, the Library of the Department of Statistics, the Library of the High Court, and the Library of the Department of Agriculture. Most important was the establishment of the library of the Palestinian Museum of Antiquities in 1935. That library contained seventeen thousand books in various languages and specialized in history and archeology. Its most important holdings are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have an exceptional historical and archeological value.

1948: The Palestinian Nakba and the Great Book Robbery

In 1948, with the declaration of the state of Israel, over 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their land, abandoning all their possessions. This period is called the “Nakba,” or “Catastrophe” by Palestinians, for it had catastrophic effects on Palestinian society on multiple levels. The uprooting of the Palestinians was not limited to displacement and physical removal from their land, but also included uprooting their civilization and culture. This was done to support the Zionist myth of cultural freedom and to deny Palestinians any cultural or spiritual connection to their land, in keeping with the saying “a land without a people for a people without a land.”

Although Zionism adopted the myth of an uninhabited land as its symbol, it did not deny the existence of the native people, but rather ignored them and gave them no consideration. Representing the land as empty in the deepest sense, that is, empty of civilization, Zionism worked to obliterate and plunder any cultural heritage that contradicted that lie. Zionism did not take upon itself the burden that the white man professed to carry on his shoulders. It did not “prepare” the Palestinians, but uprooted them and seized control of their property, simply because it viewed itself as more able and efficient to preserve Palestinian land and all its property. Zionism promoted itself as an enlightened movement that recognized the value of civilization and science, and thus gave itself the legitimacy and right to steal private Palestinian libraries, including the libraries of Khalil Sakakini,²

² Alternate spellings in English are “Assakakini” and “al-Sakakini.”

Nasser Nashashibi, and other intellectuals and wealthy Palestinians in the neighborhoods of Talbieh, Bekaa, and Qatmun.

The establishment of Zionist control over the land and property was accompanied by the theft of a large number of Palestinian books from private and public libraries alike. According to a doctoral thesis by the Israeli scholar Gish Amit, more than 30,000 books and manuscripts were stolen from West Jerusalem alone. Amit confirmed what dozens and hundreds of Palestinians since the 1948 Palestinian Nakba said about the theft and looting of tens of thousands of unique and valuable Palestinian books from Palestinian homes. This looting and robbery were carried out under the protection of Jewish guerrillas and the Israeli army, and with the surveillance and assistance of the National Library of Israel. The importance of Dr. Amit's thesis is that it is the first study to examine the process of what can be called the Nakba of the Palestinian Libraries. It also sheds light on an important stage in history for the creation of Israel's National Library, which was established on the ruins of the Palestinian intellectual heritage, proving that Zionism is an integral part of the system of colonial settlement and the system of hegemony, eradication, and exile, which has been, and continues to be used to silence Palestinians historically, socially, culturally, and politically (Amit, 2014).

In the first months the theft of books was simply unsystematic looting. Afterwards, it was organized at the hand of the Custodian of Absentee Property according to Absentee Property Law through which the theft of all Palestinian property was regulated. The law legitimized the theft and looting of books in this case. The newspaper *Ha'aretz* reveals that evidence of this process can be found in the first Israeli government's decisions from the cabinet meeting held in December 1948. The then Minister of the Interior, Yitzhak Gruenbaum, announced: "Recently a committee from the university [Hebrew University] was organized, and it goes about after the army and gathers up books from the houses." Months later, a report from the university library noted, "There was a proposal that called upon the university's library to remove the books from neighborhoods that were occupied, where they are in an unsafe state, and to place them under its protection" (Aderet, 2012). As the fighting raged, Israeli soldiers and librarians were busy collecting tens of thousands of books from Palestinian homes in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, and elsewhere.

Palestinians who fled their land with the Declaration of the State of Israel 65 years ago had to leave all their possessions, including their libraries and books, which they never saw afterwards. In May 1948, attorney Omar Salih Barghouthi was forced to flee his office on Jaffa Street and his home in the Qatmun neighborhood of Jerusalem, where he had collected some 256 books. For years, Barghouthi's family searched

for their library, all too certain that it was locked in one of the Israeli National Library cellars. Palestinian poet Khalil Sakakini (1878-1953), who had taken refuge in Cairo, expressed the same concern:

Farewell, my library! Goodbye, my books! I know not what has become of you after we left: Were you looted? Burnt? Have you been ceremonially transferred to a private or public library? Did you end up on the shelves of grocery stores with your pages used to wrap onions? (Amit, 2008).

The books were initially placed in the Institute of Oriental Sciences of the Hebrew University and were assigned a purely Orientalist role: they were used to study the Arab and Palestinian society. In a September 1948 document titled "Processing of the Arab Books from the Occupied Territories," Eliyahu Strauss (later, Eliyahu Ashtor), director of the Department of Oriental Studies, wrote about the significance of these books to the University's establishment: "The number of books that were brought to the library in this manner is greater than the number of Arab books that were collected by us during all the years the institution has been in existence. We were given the opportunity to expand our collection substantially." He also stated that the transfer of these books would expand the possibilities of research and should not be compromised in any way, particularly because the center surpassed any similar Arab center in the region (Aderet, 2012; Amit, 2011).

Ultimately, tens of thousands of Palestinian works, religious books, notes, textbooks and poetry books were stored under the heading "abandoned property." Gish Amit has noted, "What I found out was that around 30,000 books were taken from Palestinians, mostly from private homes....They took every book that was found, then they started to catalogue. The whole process took something like 10 to 15 years." In the first stage, before the 1960s, the books had a serial number, under which the owner's name was recorded in English according to specific abbreviations. Uri Palit, a book expert who participated in the process in the department of Oriental studies at the Israeli library, said, "We wrote the name of the owner in pencil on the books ... because we wanted to return it someday when there is peace.... It was not a secret." (Hussein, 2013). Later, however, the stickers were removed, and the books were categorized and cataloged again. The initials "AP", which means "abandoned property" were used to replace the owners' names. Regarding this process, Benny Brunner—the Israeli director of the documentary film *The Great Book Robbery* that deals with these events—has observed, "They simply deleted the relationship between the book and the place it came from" (Aderet, 2012).

Many of these books can still be found in Israel's National Library. According to the recent report in *Ha'aretz*,

In the storage center of the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, there is a collection of some 8,000 books labeled "AP." Officially these initials stand for Abandoned Property. But the library staff likes to joke that AP stands for *apotropos*, the Hebrew word for "custodian" as in, "the custodian of absentee property," who is in charge of these books. (Aderet, 2012).

These include books previously owned by Nashashibi and Sakakini. On one of the books found on the shelves of the library appears the phrase "To Nasser Eddin [Nashashibi], the promising writer." Also, the books of Palestinian writer and educator Khalil Sakakini, who fled under bombardment from his home in the Qatmun neighborhood, are still on the university shelves, and his signature is still visible in black ink on some of these books to this day. Written on the back of one of these books is the phrase "Sari Sakakini, Jerusalem, 1940" (Aderet, 2012).

When asked by *Ha'aretz* about the possibility of returning these books to their owners, handing them over to the Palestinian Authority, or to a university in the Palestinian territories, the officials of the absentees' property office and the Finance Ministry did not answer the question. In response to a question as to the reason why these libraries were not returned to their owners, the Israeli Justice Ministry told Agence France Presse that the task of presenting the evidence of ownership belongs to the original owner of the book, otherwise it will remain "abandoned property." In line with that, Rasha Barghouthi said that the National Library of Israel had never contacted her and confirmed that she had no illusions about this matter, for she resides in the Palestinian territories and needs special permission to go to Jerusalem. She added, "I don't believe they would do anything to help me." Another question that remains unresolved is what happened to the thousands of other books that "fell" into the hands of the Israeli army but are not already a part of the library's records. Other unclassified documents indicate that some of these books were auctioned, and some may have been buried in the University archives or destroyed (Aderet, 2012; Hussein, 2013).

There are conflicting views of the significance of the appropriation of Palestinian books. Gish Amit has stated, "At the National Library they believed and still believe that what is at issue is the act of saving a culture, which but for its [the library's] intervention a large part of it, if not all, would have been lost for good, stolen by private dealers or missing." On the other hand, the Palestinians consider this, in reality, a cultural theft that was an integral part of the Nakba that resulted from war. As one of the people in Brunner's film said: "This is an unbelievable treachery—the people of Israel are

stealing books from abandoned Palestinian homes and placing them in their national library.”

Amit believes that these two positions can be reconciled: “This is a story of looting that took place alongside an act of preservation. It is looting that is at the same time a protective act. They are not mutually exclusive.” *Ha’aretz* points out that this complexity was embodied in a memorandum submitted by the National Library in March 1949: “Although saving the books was done ... to save spiritual property from loss and destruction, we did not conceal from the relevant authorities our hope that a way could be found to transfer the books, in part, and perhaps in large part, to the university’s possession when the time came” (Aderet, 2012).

But as Amit notes, “The worst thing is the library’s refusal to acknowledge the injustice that was done to the Palestinians. When I talked to the librarians there, they kept telling me that this was an act of rescue, even today. This I cannot accept.” It is something he describes as “colonial attitudes” (Hussein, 2013). Aside from that, as Amit also observes, the very fact that the books were collected clearly contradicts Zionism’s denial of the presence and existence of Palestinians born in the country (Aderet, 2012).

Palestinian Libraries: 1967 - 1983

During this period the Israeli forces occupied the rest of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces completed what they began in 1948, especially in the cultural domain, starting with Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem has long been a place of pilgrimage to all who sought it. Its sanctity gave it prestige, and in all souls it inspired love that attracted masses from every corner of the earth and united people—kings and paupers alike. They were all drawn to the city despite differences of religion or geography, seeking to visit or reside close to this holy and blessed place. The city of Jerusalem was considered by all to be the first city of knowledge in Palestine, whether for its scholars, or its role in science, or its abundant libraries.

Jerusalem’s libraries and bookshelves were abundant, with more than sixty public and private libraries whose shelves contained books and rare publications that one is hard-pressed to find in other countries. Among the libraries that existed in Jerusalem before 1967 were Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa Library, Al-Khalidiya Library, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khalidi Library, Al-Alama Library, Khalil Al-Khalidi Library, Ahmed Sameh Al-Khalidi Library, Hassan Al-Turgoman Library, Al-Budeiri Library, Abi Al-Saud Library (Mohammad Taher) Al-Khatib Library, Al-Fatihani Library, Al-Lahham Library, Hassan Al-Husseini Library, Ishaq Mousi Al-Husseini Library,

Nashashibi Library, Khalil Baidas Library, Honorary Books Library, Hebron Library, Al-Tameem Library, Al Qutaina Library, Abdullah Mukhlis Library, Al Jar Allah Library, School Authority Library, Arab College Library, Bukhariy'a Corner (Nukshbandi) Library, Ashrafieh Royal School Library, Ameeniya School Library, and Nazareth Corner Library (see Appendix).

When the Israeli forces occupied the city of Jerusalem in 1967, Jerusalem's private and public libraries had more than 100,000 books and more than half a million documents, manuscripts and records. Since that forced occupation, the city has been subjected to extremely dangerous measures with the main objective of Judaizing Jerusalem on the one hand and eliminating its heritage on the other hand.

Professor Ishaq al-Budeiri (al-Budeiri, 2000, p. 8) summarizes the overall manifestations of these violations regarding books and libraries:

1. The confiscation, immediately after the occupation, of all books and periodicals of Jerusalem's Public Library. The Israeli authority transferred the ownership and management from the Arab Jerusalem Municipality to the so-called unified Jerusalem municipality. They simultaneously banned and transferred the confiscated books and periodicals to an unknown place, in addition to limiting the type of books and periodicals allowed to enter the library.
2. The banning of importation, distribution, and circulation of many books in Jerusalem's libraries and markets. The ban was not confined to political books and books on Palestine or Palestinian issues; it also extended to some books of history, translations, and literature, especially poetry.
3. A strict control, imposed by Israeli authorities, over the printing and publication of Arabic books in Jerusalem. Military orders were issued that required the Israeli Military Censor to inspect any published work and to give publication permission. This led to a notable and significant decline of Jerusalem's authoring and publishing movement.
4. The prevention of East Jerusalem (Arab Jerusalem) libraries from acquiring and circulating what West Jerusalem libraries acquired or circulated. For example, books published by the Institute for Palestine Studies and the Palestinian Research Center were found in the libraries of Israeli universities and institutes but were banned in the libraries of Arab Jerusalem.
5. The closure of many cultural institutions in Arab Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation authorities closed the Arab Studies Society for four years and confiscated its books and documents, seriously damaging the library and its archives. Also, the Writers Union and many other cultural institutions were closed.

6. The strict control of newspapers and periodicals issued in Jerusalem on the grounds of maintaining the security of the state. The occupying authorities obliged all newspapers and magazines to send all material to the military censor. The Jerusalem newspapers suffered a great deal from these procedures, for the resulting edits and deletions sometimes amounted to half the size of the newspaper.
7. The seizure of documents, papers, and records of the Sharia Court in Jerusalem. This court contains documents and information of great importance because they concern the lives of Muslims in Jerusalem since 1517 CE.
8. The enforcement of arrest and deportation policies, imposition of house arrest, and prevention of travel for dozens of writers, researchers, writers, and intellectuals of the people of Jerusalem, especially those who had been active in defending the Arabism of Jerusalem.
9. Jerusalem's closure, the denial of entry to the city, and the isolation it had from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This denied university professors, researchers, and students access to the city's research centers and libraries and prevented them from taking advantage of its books and resources.

Mr. Kamel Asali (*Libraries in Palestine* (2016), vol. 11, pp. 296-297) cites the following Israeli violations against books and libraries in the city of Jerusalem:

1. Some libraries were partially or completely destroyed by military operations. One of these was the library of Abdullah Mukhles, who hid it in the Qirban monastery in Jerusalem. The library was destroyed when the Israelis bombed the monastery, and it was lost under the rubble. The Israeli soldiers are said to have stolen and looted many of the books before the bombing.
2. Libraries were banned from acquiring and circulating many books. From 1967 until the beginning of 1985, 5,410 books were banned. Many of these dealt with Islam, Arab issues, and the Palestinian cause. The effect was to sever the connection between the Palestinian Arab citizen and Palestinian heritage and history.
3. Due to severe restrictions on publishing, the number of publishing houses in the West Bank decreased from 23 to four, three of which were in Jerusalem.
4. The Israelis prevented the establishment of new public libraries in Jerusalem.

Ali Touqan (Director of the Library of the Municipality of Nablus and the General Assembly of the Palestinian Library and Information Society) who has researched offenses against books and libraries in Palestine, says that, following the occupation of the West Bank

and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the Israeli occupation authorities imposed strict restrictions on cultural and intellectual life in Palestine. They controlled the personal possessions of arriving and departing individuals, especially books, confiscated under the pretext of security. These restrictions played a central role in hindering the growth of public and school libraries, which were forcefully compelled to withdraw forbidden books from their shelves and hand them over to the military administration. All this created a great void in cultural life and contributed to its isolation from the outside world. Between 1967 and 1990, 6,500 books were confiscated from Palestinian citizens. These originally belonged to the Public Library of Nablus. Touqan tried to review some of the forbidden books and found that the reasons for confiscation were flimsy, such as the use of the word "Palestine" on a map instead of "Israel," or a phrase in poetry or a novel referring to actions supporting the Palestinian people (Touqan, 2000).

Israel's Policy Against Culture in Palestine from 1967 to 1993

Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, newspapers and magazines reported the withdrawal of books from libraries by the censoring authorities. In addition, banning concerts for well-known singers such as Mustafa Kurd became common. Lists, published by the Israeli Education Department, of banned and withdrawn books continuously came across the desks of school principals. Not tens, but hundreds of books were withdrawn from school and public libraries. Not only the Israeli Education officers, but also officers stationed at bridge crossings confiscated books discovered to be brought by Palestinians returning to the West Bank from the Arab world. The bridge police confiscated whatever they deemed necessary under the pretext of security—Israeli state security, that is. This also depended on the list of banned books the officer had and his mood; most of the time, the books were sold to Israeli universities.

After Israel occupied the remaining Palestinian territories (Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza Strip) in 1967, it imposed restrictions and prohibitions on cultural and educational life in the occupied territories. In 1992, Article 19, a human rights organization based in the British capital, stated that the Palestinian media and the cultural and educational institutes in the occupied territories were subject to Israeli restrictions. According to the report prepared by the organization, the occupation authorities had banned approximately 4,000 books since 1967. A third of these banned books were works of folklore and children's stories. They also included the book *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe, the Arabic translation of the book *The Battle for Peace* by the Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, and novels

by the Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz and the Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani (Essoulami, 1992, pp. 26-32).

The report, called *Cry for Change* noted that the most dramatic censorship and persecution measures were directed at the Palestinian media in the territories occupied in 1967. These measures required the daily submission of drafts of news articles to the Israeli censor, as well as daily permits for printing and distribution. The report described the repression, persecution and methods of censorship and prevention of Palestinian freedom of expression by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1990 and noted that censorship of Palestinian newspapers was the worst during the Gulf War (Essoulami, 1992, pp. 3-15).

Also, censorship was imposed on books from Arab countries to Palestine, so that no books dealing with the Palestinian issue or the Zionist movement and Israel were allowed to enter the occupied Palestinian territories. For many years this led to the isolation of Palestinian writers, prohibiting them from keeping up with works published in Arab countries.

In addition to preventing Arab newspapers and magazines from being distributed in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and even in the parts of Palestine occupied in 1948, the Israelis stationed a sergeant to read articles to be published in newspapers and magazines in Jerusalem for distribution in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The material was sent to the sergeant who prohibited what he saw as a threat to the Israeli state, all of which had a clear impact on press freedoms and literary writing. Rather, matters went beyond censoring articles or studies and sometimes reached the point of closing the newspaper or magazine for months or arresting the authors.

Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip have had a bitter experience with Israeli Military Censorship, the prevention of the circulation of books, the confiscation of newspapers and magazines, the removal of many collections, and the prevention of publication, which continued until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

When the Zionist occupation forces invaded Lebanon in 1982, their first act when they occupied Beirut was to attack the PLO Research Center and seize its library and all the documents and the central archive in it. In a recent interview, Faisal Hourani recalled the “thirty-five military trucks ready to transport the assets of the Center loaded by Israeli soldiers” and that four of the six floors belonging to the Center had been stripped of their content (*Romman Magazine*, 2017). If any of the contents of the two remaining floors survived the looting, it was because the Israeli looters received an order to withdraw from the Center. It was comprehensive looting by the

occupation soldiers to empty the Palestinian present (or the future, equally) of its history, to remove it from Palestinian land—just as they tried to rob it of its humanity during the Nakba.

It is estimated that—excluding magazines and periodicals—about twenty thousand volumes, including fifteen thousand in English, were plundered. The Israeli occupation then put these materials in the Hebrew University Department of Palestinian Studies. After the exchange of prisoners between the Palestinian resistance and the Israelis in 1985, Israel returned most of the books and other materials, but only after filming them.

It should be noted that, despite all these Israeli practices against books and libraries, many libraries were established in the 1980s and early 1990s in the city of Jerusalem or its suburbs. The most famous of these libraries are:

1. Library of the Arab Studies Association established 1980.
2. Library of Islamic Heritage Revival Section established 1983.
3. Al-Quds University Library established 1984. It includes the College of Da'wah and Religion Principles Library, the Library of the College of Science and Technology, the College of Mixed Arts Library.
4. Early Childhood Resource Center Library established 1985.
5. Palestinian Center for Nonviolence Studies established 1985.
6. Library of the Center for Islamic Research established 1986.
7. Jerusalem Research Center Library established 1986.
8. Library of the Palestinian Academic Society for International Affairs established 1987.
9. Library of the Center for Women Studies established 1989.
10. Library of the Center for Developmental Action established 1989.
11. Panorama Palestinian Center for Alternative Information Circulation established 1992.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that Palestinian cultural life before the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories was at a level competitive with many countries in the region, though it was not very advanced. For many years Palestine was the destination for many men of science from different countries of the world and did not lack theaters, cinemas, and both public and private libraries. After the occupation of Palestine by the Israeli gangs, the stage of persecution, theft, and plundering of Palestinian cultural property began. Then during the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel confiscated and regulated hundreds of public libraries and thousands of private

libraries. At that time, the Arab minority did not possess its own public libraries.

The later history of Palestinian libraries and cultural resources is beyond the scope of this article. However, we can briefly note that there have been both positive and negative developments since 1994. On one hand, dozens of new and modern libraries have been created and launched, while scores of Palestinian schools and universities and both partisan and nonpartisan newspapers have been established. On the other, during the period of the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2005 CE) Israel employed systemic policies to keep the Palestinian people in the dark. These policies included the destruction of more than ten schools along with their libraries. And since then, there have also been the harmful effects of the Wall on Palestinian education, economics, and socio-cultural life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Thus, it is clear the Palestinian territories will not witness notable and qualitative improvement in library construction and development anytime soon. This will require a formal and nationally embraced Arab effort to limit the Wall's apartheid effect and its impact on culture and education in the Palestinian territories.

Some of the Most Important Libraries in Jerusalem Since the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Al-Aqsa Mosque Library

This library is considered one of the most important libraries in Jerusalem due to its scientific and religious status, presence in the Mosque's Square, and its unique holdings and the number of books and manuscripts in it, which were collected as gifts from senior scholars, rulers, and politicians, who at one point or another came to or ruled Palestine. This library contained many seminal works in history, literature and interpretation, jurisprudence, logic, and Arab sciences, in addition to many writings of scholars who worked in the mosque. Al-Aqsa was also a meeting place for many Muslim scholars and students from all over the world, reaching up to 360 teachers by the end of the fifth century AH or eleventh century CE (Arif, 1951, p. 33).

But the turning point in al-Aqsa especially began in 1187 CE when Salah Uddin Ayyubi liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders and placed in the vaults of al-Aqsa many copies of the Qur'an and numerous books brought from Damascus. All the rulers, governors, and ruling officials who came after Salah Uddin followed suit and



Figure 1. Al-Aqsa Mosque Library, 1936.



Figure 2. The entrance to the Khattani library, which belongs to the library of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.



Figure 3. One of the halls of Al-Aqsa Library, which contains books of literature and poetry. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.

supplied al-Aqsa's shelves with seminal books and manuscripts. Among them were Sultan Abu Saeed Usman bin Abi Yusuf al-Marini, Sultan of Morocco, al-Azhar Jumqaq, al-Ashraf Anial, al-Ashraf Barasbay, al-Daher Khashaqdam, Sultan Suleiman al-Qanuni, the Ottoman minister Sanan Pasha, the Ottoman warlord Anwar Pasha, and others (Asali, 1981, p. 79).

After that came the disastrous Balfour Declaration of 1917, which announced British support for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. This declaration made the Palestinians feel an imminent danger to their homeland and led to the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Council in 1921. One of the decisions of the council included the creation in 1922 of al-Aqsa Library to preserve the holdings of documents, manuscripts, and rare books that existed in al-Aqsa Mosque.

According to professor Arif al-Arif, the total holdings of the library in 1927 reached about 1,800 books and manuscripts. Then, around 1929 AD, the building was transferred to the Islamic Museum, and it remained closed for about five decades. Many of the books in this building were in a tattered state, and the situation was dark until 1976 when the the Department of Islamic Endowments in Jerusalem decided to revive the library. In 1976, the department reopened the library under the name of the al-Aqsa Mosque Library. The number of its holdings reached 14,000 volumes and books. Many scholars and writers gifted al-Aqsa library with books and manuscripts. Among them, Sheikh Khalil al-Khalidi donated his personal collection, which contained 3,480 books and 500 hundred manuscripts, to al-Aqsa Library. Also donated was the library of Sheikh Sabri Abdeen, the collections of many Egyptian scientists such as Ahmed Zaki and Mahmoud Timor, Syrian scientists such as Rafiq al-Azm, and from Iraq the scientist Rashid Aali al-Kilani and the poet al-Rasafi (Arif, 1986, p. 449). By then, al-Aqsa Library had become a scientific and research beacon for many researchers

and students from inside and outside Jerusalem.

Al-Aqsa library now has about 140,000 books in various disciplines and sciences and is divided into two sections. The first section is the Khattani library, which is located below al-Aqsa Mosque, and which extends outside the mosque on the south side. It was built by Salah Uddin al-Ayyubi to close off the Prophet's Door³ and obstruct danger



Figure 4. The entrance to al-Aqsa Mosque Library. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.



Figure 5. The Palestinian section of al-Aqsa Mosque Library. Photo by Anan Hamad, 2018.

³ The Prophet's Door is the Arabic name for David's Gate, one of

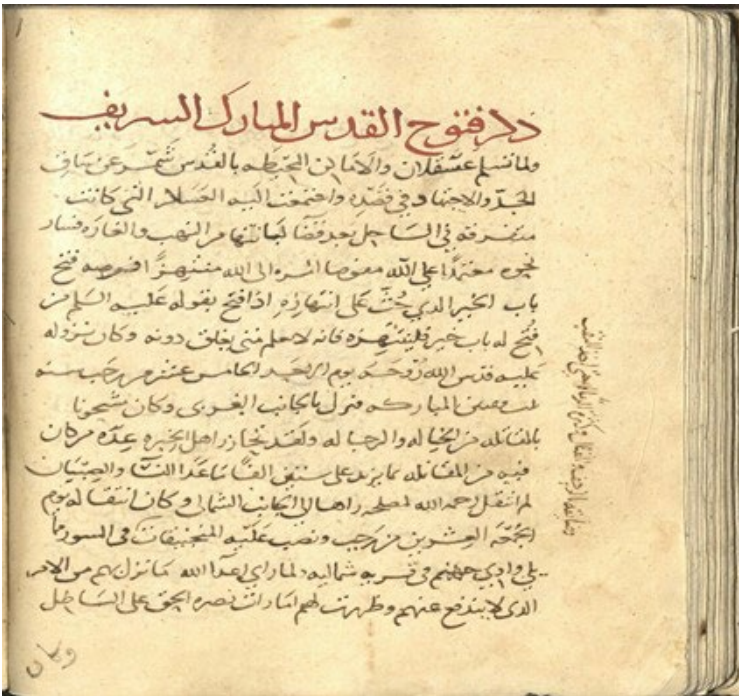


Figure 6. One of the manuscripts located in al-Aqsa Mosque Library.

from the Crusaders. The al-Khattani library started out as a Sharia school and was called “Khattani” after Abdullah al-Khattani, one of the most distinguished men known to this school. The library continued to play an important role in educational life until the end of the Ottoman rule, when laxity and neglect turned it into storage for lamps and lanterns that illuminated al-Aqsa Mosque, including the second section, which was located next to the Islamic Museum. Matters remained as such until 2013 when it was decided to keep the Khattani library solely as a religious law and Arabic language collection because the place was narrow and did not have the capacity to acquire additional books. After that, they moved the books from al-Khattaniya to specialized areas and corners of the ancient majestic library, al-Aqsa Mosque’s Library, and reordered them.

The Hebron Library

The Hebron Library of Sheikh Mu’ti al-Khalili, the mufti of al-Shaa-fa’i in Jerusalem and one of the scholars of the al-Aqsa Mosque. The library was established in 1725 and contained an estimated 7,000 volumes and 450 manuscripts. It was considered to be the first public library erected by Jerusalem residents, and it served all scholars in various areas of science and knowledge. Following al-Khalili’s death, the library was transferred to his family. After the 1967 war, the doors of the library were found destroyed. An inventory of its holdings revealed that the Israeli occupation army had looted many of its manuscripts. The remaining 360 Arabic manuscripts were transferred to the library of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Dar Al-Khalidiya

Dar Al-Khalidiya, or the Khalidiya Public Library, is considered one of the most important libraries in Jerusalem. It is located at Bab al-Silasirah, at a school known as Baraka Khan. The number of books in the Khalidiya library reached about 4,000 volumes in 1917, a third of which were rare manuscripts and precious publications imported by some orientologists. In 1936 the size of the library’s collection reached



Figure 7. The Khalidiya Library opening, 1900; Appearing right to left: Haj Raghib al-Khaldi, sheikh Tahir al-Jaza’iri (al-Dimashqi), sheikh Mousa Shafiq al-Khaldi, sheikh Khalil al-Khaldi, sheikh Mohammed al-Habbal (al-Bairuti).

Old Jerusalem’s seven gates.

7,000 books and manuscripts. When Arif al-Aref visited it in 1945, he said that it contained 12,000 items, 5,000 of which were manuscripts (Arif, 1986, p. 170). After the Nakba of 1948, the collection of the library began to circulate and scatter until only 5,980 books remained, according to the 1973 census. Of these, 4,412 were in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, and 1,568 were in English and French (Palestinian Encyclopedia, 2016, Section II, p. 305). Even today the Library of Khalidiyah contains several rare manuscripts, including works from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, CE.

The Honorary Book House

The Honorary Book House, which contains the Al-Fakhry Library, was established by Judge Fakhraddin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Fadlullah, in the year 730 AH / 1267 CE. It is located in the courtyard of the Haram al-Šharif in Jerusalem, adjacent to the Moroccan Mosque. At its height, the size of its collection reached about ten thousand volumes. The library came under the jurisdiction of Abu al-Saud family, who distributed the holdings among members of the family, leading to the loss of a large portion of the collection (Tals, 2016, p. 238).

Abdullah Mukhlas Library

Abdullah Mukhlas Library, known as the Treasury of Abdullah Bekul Mukhlas, contains 3,000 volumes, of which 120 are manuscripts. This library is located in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, where Mukhlas was a scholar of history and archeology. After living in Acre for a long time, he was appointed Director General of the Endowments in Jerusalem and his library was transferred from Acre to Jerusalem. In 1948, the library was transferred to Qirban. Monastery by the occupation forces (Awdat, 1992, p. 627).

The Al-Qutaina Library

The Al-Qutaina Library, or the Hanbali Library, belonged to the only Hanbali family whose descent is attributed to Mughir al-Din al-Hanbali, author of *The History of Jerusalem and Hebron* (c. 1495 CE). At one time, the number of its holdings was 4,000 volumes, including precious manuscripts in mathematics, astronomy, and astrology. The library was located in the Khan al-Zayt market and was then transferred to a house in al-Qutaina in Bab al-Amoud. There it remained until the early 20th century. After 1948 its holdings were distributed when Israel occupied Palestine (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 293).

The Library of Sheikh Hussam Jarallah

The library of Sheikh Hussam Jarallah, which included nearly 2,000 books and manuscripts in the Islamic and Arabic sciences, including

a manuscript of the Qur'an bound with the skin of a gazelle. All of the books and manuscripts in the library were stolen in 1948 by the Israeli occupation forces.

Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini Library

Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini Library was located in the house of the noted writer and teacher Ishaq Mousa al-Husseini (1904-1990), west of Jerusalem. The number of its holdings reached about 4,000 books and manuscripts, but it was burned during the events of 1948. After that date Ishaq al-Husseini re-established a new library in Cairo whose holdings reached around 5,000 volumes. The Jordan University acquired 1,500 of these books and transferred around 2,000 volumes to Jerusalem's Center of Islamic Studies. The remaining 1,500 books were left in Cairo (Palestinian Library, 2016, Section II, C3, p. 288).

The Fahmi Al-Ansari Library

The Fahmi Al-Ansari library, founded in 1956, was collected by the historian Fahmi Al-Ansari during his trips to many countries (Saleh, 2010, p. 314). As of 2010, Al-Ansari Library contained about 204 rare manuscripts, the most important of which are *Mufteen Occasions* and the *Ben Jibril bin Abdullah bin Bakhshioa*—one of the rarest manuscripts in the world, and *The Three Epistles*, written sometime in the tenth or 11th centuries CE, by the Ikhwan Assafa (Brethren of Purity).⁴

The Library of Marwan al-Asali

The library of Marwan al-Asali was composed of 4,500 volumes, in addition to about 500 manuscripts collected by Dr. Ishaq Musa al-Husseini. The collection, covering various subjects, was purchased by Hebron University. Currently, it is housed in the Faculty of Arts for Girls in Jerusalem.

Al-Budeiri Library

Al-Budeiri Library originated in the library of Sheikh Muhammad bin Badir al-Qudsi, one of the great scholars of Jerusalem who was descended from the ancient family of al-Budeiri. The library of Sheikh Muhammad bin Badir al-Qudsi was distributed among members of the family after his death in 1805. One section became the private collection of Muhammad al-Budeiri. This library is located in the corner of the corner opposite the Al-Manqiya School in Bab

⁴ The Ikhwan Assafa, or "Brethren of Purity" were authors of one of the most complete Medieval encyclopedias of sciences. The encyclopedia is a collection of epistles (Baffioni, 2016).

Al-Nazer and is known as Dar Al-Budeiri. The library contains about a thousand manuscripts on Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic religion, history, and science and was photocopied by the Documentation and Manuscripts Center at the University of Jordan (Asali, 1983, p. 291).

The Library of Sheikh Mahmoud Al-Lahham

This library is located in the Silwan neighborhood and has a total of 4,000 books and volumes.

The Hasan al-Turgoman Library

Founded by Hassan al-Turjuman, this library contains about 3,000 volumes, including 900 ancient manuscripts (Palestinian Library, 2016, vol. 3, p. 306).

The Arif Al-Aref Library

The Arif Al-Aref Library was founded by the Palestinian journalist, author, historian, and politician Arif Al-Aref (1891-1973). After his death the library's holdings were transferred to the Arab Institute in Abu Dis in 1979. The library contained 1,141 books in Arabic and 541 in other languages (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 293).

The Is'af Nashashibi Library

The Is'af Nashashibi library contains many precious books and manuscripts. Most of its holdings were stolen in 1948, leaving only what the Nashashibi ambulance gave to the Arab Academy in Damascus. These materials included manuscripts, which were the most important part of the collection, including *Kitab al-uns al-jalil bi-tarikh al-Quds wa-al-Khalil*, a history of Jerusalem and Hebron by Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad Ulaymī (1456-ca. 1521).

The Library of Ibn Qazi Al-Sult

The library of Ibn Qazi Al-Sult, Sheikh Yahya Sharaf al-Din bin Muhammad, is located in front of al-Aqsa Mosque. This library contains many famous books on religion, Christianity, and the Holy Land. This library is of a religious nature.

The Franciscan Library

The Franciscan Library, located in the Christian Quarter in Old Jerusalem was created with the establishment of the Latin Monastery in 1561. This library began with the books that monks brought with them when they joined the monastery. The library has a collection of about 42,000 books in various languages. It contains a collection of rare manuscripts and documents relating to the Holy Land, and many scholars consider it to be among the most important libraries



Figure 8. A recent photo of the Franciscan Library in Jerusalem. Photo by Anan Hamaad, 2019.



Figure 9. Manuscript Hall, Franciscan Library in Jerusalem. Photo by Anan Hamaad, 2019.



Figure 10. The entrance of Jerusalem's Franciscan Library. Photo by Anan Hamaad, 2019.

containing historical documents in the Holy Land. It includes a group of firmans (decrees) issued by the rulers of the Mamluks and the Ottomans, regulating the relationship between the rulers and the monks. The firmans are divided into two groups: the first group is related to the monks and their relationship with the Mamluk authority from the time of Babyars al-Bandakari until the Qansuh Ghuri era. The second group is Turkish, and includes the Ottoman era (Asalī, 1983, p. 59).

Deir Al-Rum

The Orthodox Patriarchate Library—Deir Al-Rum—is in the Christian Quarter near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It was founded in 451 CE. The library is a collection of other libraries, such as the library of the Monastery of St. Saba, the Library of the Monastery of the Crucifixion, and the Holy Sepulcher Collection. These libraries were consolidated in 1865. The Orthodox Patriarchate Library is considered one of the wealthiest libraries in terms of the value of its manuscript collections, which number approximately 2,400 in several

languages. The Greek collection consists of 1,800 manuscripts dating between the fifth and eighteenth centuries, CE. The most important of these are historic documents dating back to the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and following rulers. No one is permitted to access these manuscripts except by special permission of the Patriarch or his aides (Palestinian Library, 2016, Section II, sentence 3, p. 307).

Monastery of St. Jacob

The Library of the Armenian Monastery (Monastery of St. Jacob) was built in 1165 CE. The monastery contains some of the most ancient Armenian documents in the world, including some which date back to the first Christian centuries. In 1929 it contained more than sixty thousand volumes and about 3,700 documents and manuscripts. The library's holdings include a number of documents of kings and Ottoman rulers, which summarize Armenian rights to holy places and religious property and a number of decrees issued by the Muslim rulers of the Armenian community (Asali, 1983, p. 65).

Monastery of St. Marks

The Monastery of St. Marks is located in the Al-Sharaf neighborhood between the Armenian and Jewish neighborhoods. The library of this monastery is one of the oldest libraries in the city of Jerusalem. It contains many manuscripts and documents and was compiled and indexed in 1925 by Bishop Syriac Gabriel Antoine, who pointed out that the oldest Islamic documents date back to 825 AH / 1421 CE and the most recent was published in 1306 AH / 1888 CE. St. Mark's is a library of Arabic and Turkish language materials. Count Philippe de Tarrazi said that this monastery contained about 362 manuscripts on parchment (Tarrazi, 1947, p. 478).

Library of the Latin Patriarchate

The Library of the Latin Patriarchate was established in 1884 to serve the priests inside the monastery only. It is located inside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem near the New Gate. It contains approximately 43,000 volumes (al-Hout, p. 63).

There are many other libraries that belong to churches and monasteries, which are also important libraries in the city of Jerusalem, including, but not limited to, the library of St. Ann and the Library of the Roman Catholic Patriarchate, the Library of St. and the Library of the Dominican Monastery.

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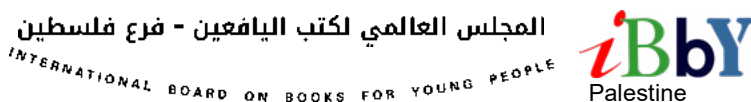
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The International Board on Books for Young People In Palestine

By Mary Fasheh



IBBY stands for The International Board on Books for Young People. It is a non-profit organization that was founded in Zurich, Switzerland in 1953 by Jella Lepman. Lepman believed that books build bridges of understanding and peace between people. She also believed that after going through wars children need not only food, medicine, clothes, and shelter, but also books. With 75 National Sections in the world, IBBY is an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together. IBBY's mission revolves around six key goals:

1. To promote international understanding through children's books.
2. To give children everywhere the opportunity to have access to books with high literary and artistic standards.
3. To encourage the publication and distribution of quality children's books, especially in developing countries.

Progressive Librarian would like to thank IBBY Palestine for permission to republish the children's stories in the main body of the article, the "Testimony of Al-Ataa' Librarian" in Appendix 2, and the images in the article and Appendix 4.

Mary Fasheh was born in Jerusalem, Palestine. In 1948 she moved as a refugee with her family to Ramallah, where she still lives. She has an MLIS from the University of North Carolina. Retired as a librarian, she serves as vice president of IBBY Palestine.

Keywords: Children's libraries, community development, cultural development, Gaza, international organizations, Israel, Israeli occupation; Palestine, Palestinian libraries, youth libraries.

4. To provide support and training for those involved with children and children's literature.
5. To stimulate research and scholarly works in the field of children's literature.
6. To protect and uphold the rights of the child according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Establishment of the National Section of IBBY in Palestine (PBBY)

Being a member of IASL (International Association of School Librarianship), which has a connection with IBBY, I came across IBBY's Journal *Bookbird* while taking a summer course on children's literature at the College of Librarianship in Wales. I became interested in the journal and in joining IBBY as a member. In December 1995, I wrote a letter to the Secretariat of IBBY asking to join the organization. I was informed that individual membership is only available to people in countries that have a national section of IBBY. I wrote to the Secretariat again requesting the establishment of a National Section in Palestine, like that of other IBBY national sections around the world. In February 1996 their answer was: IBBY's membership policy accepts only independent nations as national sections, and since Palestine is not yet constituted as a state, the application to join IBBY has been rejected. Instead, it was recommended that I join the national section of Israel.

To this I replied that the National Section of Israel represents Israeli citizens, not Palestinians. After a long struggle of more than ten years and with the support of General Director of Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ms. Jehan Helou, Palestinian membership of individuals was accepted and was announced at the International Book Fair for Children in Bologna. However, Palestine still did not get the approval to establish a National Section. The struggle continued, with support from the national sections of Ireland, Sweden, Iran, and especially the British IBBY Section, which prepared the following motion defending the rights of Palestinian organizations and individuals to form a national section:

We draw the attention of the General Assembly to the exclusion from IBBY of the Occupied Territories. The Occupied Territories, known by its inhabitants as Palestine, is a country. There are persons and organizations within it who seek to form a national section that is comparable with the aims of IBBY. It is not the case that the Occupied Territories form part of the country of Israel. Therefore, it cannot be said that Palestinians and their organizations in the Occupied Territories are already represented by the Israeli national section. They have observer status at the United Nations. The current position in which Palestinians can only join IBBY as individuals is a barrier to

them furthering IBBY's fundamental aims within their country. In order that IBBY fulfils its aims in relation to this part of the world, we propose that the General Assembly accept the right of Palestinians to form their own national section. (IBBY UK, 2002).

As the Executive Committee could not reach a decision, the matter was put to the General Assembly where the motion passed by majority vote. During the Children's International Bologna Book Fair in April 2003, Palestine was officially declared the 65th IBBY National Section, with full membership of IBBY like the other national sections in the world.

IBBY/Palestine (PBBY) is an independent, nonpolitical, non-denominational organization that aims to encourage the development of children's literature. Its primary objective is to promote awareness of the importance of children's literature and the necessity of cultural exchange among people regarding children's literature. PBBY pursues these goals by encouraging the development of children's literature in Palestine; supporting the provision, publishing, and distribution of quality books for children; encouraging reading habits; promoting creative writing; encouraging research in children's literature; and promoting cultural exchange through translation and participation in international cultural activities. In the beginning, PBBY was hosted by Tamer Institute for Community Education. Later, PBBY chose another hosting organization, the Ma'an Development Center, also located in Ramallah.

Activities of PBBY in the Gaza Strip

The "IBBY Fund for Children in Crisis" uses books, reading, and storytelling to help children whose lives are disrupted by natural disasters, war, or civil strife. Human history has endured the horror of wars, resulting in human loss and suffering. The sophisticated weaponry of modern warfare has produced a huge surge in the loss of civilian lives, with children as the main victims of these destructive wars. As a result, millions of children have died, or have been seriously injured or permanently disabled.

Palestinian children are a stunning example of the unjustifiable suffering of children. They are the victims of the tragic dispossession of the Palestinian people in 1948 and 70 years of ruthless occupation by Israel. Palestinians suffer from killings, house demolitions, detention, confiscation of land, uprooting of trees, closures and checkpoints, shortage of power and gas, etc., and the United Nations has not used its mandate to put an end to it.

Children in Gaza are growing up in one of the harshest settings in the world. Gaza is the most densely populated area on earth. Recent statistics show that there are approximately 7,500 persons per square

kilometer in Gaza (Al-Hasayna, 2018). The majority of its population consists of refugees uprooted from their homeland in 1948. During the long years of occupation, Gaza has suffered most from the Israeli atrocities. Gaza is a real prison—its people cannot travel to the West Bank and have great difficulties travelling to the outside world via Egypt. It is controlled by air, land, and water.

The project of “Children in Crisis” in Gaza started in 2008 to address the horrific situation of Palestinian children. PBBY chose two of the most affected and marginalized areas in the Gaza Strip to establish libraries. It selected the community-based centers of the al-Ataa’ Charitable Society in Beit Hanoun and the Society for Development of Rural Women in al-Shawka Area - Rafah to be partners, since they have grassroots support for the children and communities to sustain and promote libraries. Al-Ataa’ library is situated in the northern community of Beit Hanoun near the Israeli border, while al-Shawka library is in the south in the town of Rafah, close to the border crossing with Egypt.

PBBY selected and purchased quality books for the two libraries; provided necessary furniture suitable for library activities (tables, chairs, shelves, and stationery); chose a suitable coordinator, in addition to two librarians/facilitators, who could classify books and implement creative activities with the children; and provided training in library skills for the librarians/facilitators. PBBY also proposed that the two libraries offer bibliotherapy activities for the traumatized children of Gaza through storytelling, drama, creative writing and illustrating, and it offered to help the libraries create an appealing place for the children to develop their reading habit and to learn to read critically. This work began in January 2008, although it took a long time before the books reached Gaza.

The two libraries open in the morning and in the afternoon for children 8-18 years, their parents, and the local community. An average of 50-60 persons, children and adults, attend the library activities daily. Most of the activities are repeated monthly. They include story writing and telling, creative writing, production of stories and plays, educational competitions, discussion of books, wall magazines, reading of poetry, role playing, face painting, cultural contests, drawing, projection of cartoon films, games, etc. The children of Gaza found a safe refuge, as long as there was no war raging around them. The libraries became a place of security for the children, who used to spend their time on the streets, making them easy targets for Israeli soldiers. Furthermore, the libraries give moral support, and promote independence and creativity among children.

It is worth mentioning that the behavior of children has improved tremendously since their participation in the library activities. Their

behavior has become less violent and their reading skills have improved. One success story concerned a boy named Mohammad, whose energy was turned from violence into activities and games. Additionally, integration of the two sexes has become easier and more acceptable.

Both libraries participate annually in the Reading Campaign sponsored by Tamer Institute for Community Education. Also, the two libraries send monthly or bimonthly reports of their activities to the Administrative Committee of PBBY in Ramallah. It is unfortunate that the West Bank personnel cannot travel to Gaza to check, to encourage, and to assist the people there.

Destruction of the Libraries in Gaza

Al-Shawka Library

Gaza has been attacked many times. In 2007 al-Shawka was invaded by a special Israeli troupe of 350 soldiers with their tanks and dogs. They erected check points and started arresting any passerby, regardless of age. They broke into institutions and local societies, devastating them by breaking computers and tearing members' personal identity cards. A new war hit al-Shawka in 2008 and eight children, members of the library, were killed. Then, the following January two active members of the library, Mousa Barbakh and his cousin Yousef Barbakh, 15 and 13 years old, were killed by Israeli rockets, and one child lost his leg because of a bullet (IBBY Palestine, 2010). The library building was damaged again in 2012. Finally, during the 51-day war in 2014, the Israeli occupiers caused further damage to the library when they used it as a barrack. They destroyed the computer, the hard disc, and bookshelves, and they tore books. After each of these invasions, PBBY replaced the damaged books and shelves. [For another description of the damage suffered by al-Shawka library, see Appendix 1 at the end of this article.]

Al-Ataa' Library

Al-Ataa' library had 5,996 books, provided by PBBY, Tamer Institute for Community Education and the United Nations Relief, and Work Agency for the Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). Unfortunately, in 2008 Israeli occupiers destroyed a large section of the al-Atta' building, and two sisters Lama and Haya, members of the library, were killed by Israeli rockets (IBBY Palestine, 2010). The physical destruction was even worse in 2014. At dawn on Sunday July 18, 2014, the Israeli Occupation forces targeted the al-Ataa' Charitable Society, resulting in the partial destruction of the building and the destruction of the PBBY library. Then at dawn ten days later, just before the humanitarian truce ended, the Israeli Occupation forces targeted the Society

again. A direct rocket from an F-16 destroyed the whole building, leveling it to the ground. With this, Beit Hanoun lost an essential institution that had served many parts of the Palestinian community: children, women, young people and those with special needs. Since 2015 the al-Sikka library has been operating as its temporary replacement until the rebuilding of al-Atta' is finished. [For other accounts of the destruction in Beit Hanoun, see Appendices 2 and 3.]

Ten years have passed since the IBBY libraries were set up in Gaza. PBBY continues to provide books for the libraries and small, token salaries for the two facilitators. After the war in 2014, PBBY provided the children of the two libraries with winter clothes and book bags through a fund from the United Palestinian Appeal. For many children, the PBBY libraries are a sanctuary and place of hope. These children continue to need our support and attention, and most importantly, the assurance that they have not been forgotten. Fortunately, IBBY continues to support Gaza libraries. At its biennial congress in 2014 it issued a heartwarming appeal for funds to reconstruct the Gaza libraries destroyed by the war that year (IBBY, 2014). And in April 2017 IBBY issued yet another appeal (IBBY, 2017). Since then, a large sum has been donated by the family of the internationally prominent children's writer Katherine Paterson. Despite the continuing attacks on Gaza, PBBY persists in keeping the two libraries open for the children of Gaza.

PBBY Projects in Gaza

Workshops

PBBY has arranged three kinds of workshops in the Gaza Strip. The first was a training workshop in library skills, targeting public librarians, schoolteachers/librarians, and librarians from community-based children's libraries. The training was aimed at giving librarians the skills to organize and fill the library with creative activities, promoting reading and critical thinking. The main subjects of training were: making dolls/puppets and using them in storytelling, book classification based on the Dewey Decimal Classification system, analysis of text to help the child understand the story better, story selection to help the librarian choose appropriate books for different age groups, expressive art, drama in the library, and bibliotherapy/treatment through books.

A second series of training workshops have focused on creative writing and drawing. Several workshops have been conducted on mentoring children in these areas. The children have been eager to write about their situation, the war, the aggression, their martyred

relatives, and their wishes and hopes for a peaceful future. Two samples of their stories and hopes have been translated into English:

“A Beautiful Dream,” by Mariam Al-Hassy, 12 years old

The war on Gaza continued for 22 days, while we dreamt that it would soon end. This horrible war left a great deal of devastation and grief. It took away mothers and fathers, and it made a lot of families homeless. Even the schools weren't spared the violence of occupation—my own school was hit with missiles from fighter jets.

I always dream that I have a small house in my beloved country, Palestine. There I can have peace and security. From there I carry my books and head to school without being afraid or sad, just like the other children of the world who have safe lives.

I really hope the rest of the world hears my wish, and that I will see the days when my wish comes true. (Al-Hassy, M., 2009).

**“Don't I Have the Right to Live Happy,”
by Amal Al-Hassy, 10 years old**

I am a Palestinian girl and I have been through so much. I was so afraid when the war started. I couldn't sleep, I would keep thinking and worrying and asking the same question over and over again: “What's going to happen to me and my family?” I have the right to live in peace without fear. I have the right to live happy. I wish I could live like the children in the rest of the world, to have parks and playgrounds, where we can have fun, instead of playing in the streets, where it has become scary. A lot of my friends were killed in the streets while they played.

I was happy when the occupation army pulled back because that meant my family and I are safe now. But I was so sad to see the houses, schools, and universities completely destroyed. What is it that we have done to deserve this? What are we supposed to do now?

I don't want to be scared anymore. I want to be happy and to build a future. I want to make my dreams come true and be a doctor who takes care of people. I am an innocent Palestinian girl. I don't carry a gun; I only carry a book and pencil so I can learn. (Al-Hassy, A., 2009).

Finally, one of the workshops has focused on working with children with special needs. There are large numbers of children with special needs in Gaza. Many of them were wounded and disabled by the Israeli attacks on Gaza. In 2009 and 2012, IBBY Palestine, in cooperation with the Red Crescent Society in Gaza, arranged two workshops to train deaf children, for PBBY believes in the necessity of empowering children with special needs and helping them to integrate in society. The children were divided into two groups. One group was trained in drama and doll/puppet making and the other was trained in creative writing and drawing. The children proved to have great talent. Two samples of stories written by children with hearing impairments about their life and aspirations and have been translated into English:

“I Like to Be,” by Abdallah Khalil Kallab, 14 years old

I wish for myself and others to live in love and dignity. I wish that the world was modest and did not differentiate between rich and poor, big and small, disabled and healthy. I was born with a hearing impairment. I felt that people around do not want to play or befriend me because I do not hear and speak and this made me sad. However, my family loves me and never neglected me. They sent me to school for children with hearing impairment like me. There we studied like other children. I started to read, write and understand what was said. I did not feel shy about myself because I did not participate in the different aspects of life. I started to love life and knew what I wanted. Then I felt the beauty of life and friends and everything that surrounds me. (Kallab, n.d.).

“A Stormy Day,” by Huda Mahmoud al-Farra. 12 years old

I was standing near the window watching the kids playing football in front of our house. Suddenly, the sunlight disappeared, and the sky was filled with dark clouds. The kids stopped playing and started looking at the clouds that filled the sky. The rain started falling accompanied by strong wind, blowing from all directions. The kids went home, and the ball was left alone in the street swinging right and left nonstop. I closed the window and went to sit near the fire ignited by my father, and I was thinking about the ball that was left alone in the street. The weather outside was very cold and the wind was strong and scary. As I fell fast asleep, I heard a knock on our door. Our neighbor Abu Ass’ad was screaming and asking for help because the wind blew the weak roof off his house and the water filled his house. My father got up and helped our neighbor and his family by inviting them to sleep in our house and to eat supper. In the morning the rain and the wind had stopped. We helped our neighbor to fix the roof of their house and then I saw the kids playing again with the ball.

My wishes: I like to play and enjoy my friends. I do not like to fight nor see the kids fighting at the school. I wish to be a teacher at the Red Crescent Society.

Gardens of Hope

The book *Gardens of Hope*, written by Palestinian children and youth in Gaza and West Bank, came to life in 2009 as a result of a fantastic cooperation with the newly established United Arab Emirates/IBBY and Kalimat Publishing House in Sharjah, UAE. The illustrations were drawn by children from the Emirates. The promotion advertisement for the book said, “Children of Palestine write about pain and



Figure 1. Cover of *Gardens of Hope*

the children of Emirates color hope.” The book, which is in Arabic and English, was distributed freely at the Sharjah and Beirut Book Fairs, and in Palestine (West Bank and Gaza Strip). The beautiful book cover was illustrated and donated by the Tunisian artist Ra’ouf al-Qarrai.

Educational, Cultural, and Entertaining Trips

IBBY Palestine has arranged educational, cultural, and entertaining trips for the children of al-Shawka/Rafah and Sikka/Beit Hanoun libraries to relieve them from their psychological stress caused by the siege, lack of electricity, and the bad economic situation. During one of the trips, the children visited al-Bayara Garden Park, which belongs to Nawa Center, where they were entertained by group games, clowns, and storytelling at the puppet theater. They also visited the museum at the Municipality of Deir al-Balah. Finally, they danced, sang Palestinian songs, and performed a wedding event, with bride and groom, and ended the trip at the Amusement Center. It was an enjoyable event, made possible through a donation provided by the family of Marianne De Doncker, late wife of IBBY’s President Wally De Doncker, who loved children and whose happiness came from seeing children learning, playing and enjoying themselves.

PBBY Activities in the West Bank–Ramallah

PBBY tries to hold at least one meeting per month, which normally includes a discussion of various matters related to children’s literature, a get-together with a local or foreign writer, a presentation or discussion of a book, and a discussion of a draft story of a Palestinian writer. PBBY tries, when possible, to implement activities that promote intercultural exchange and international solidarity. Among the local writers, PBBY invited the following Palestinians to speak about their books: Mahmoud Shukair, Sonia Nimer, Ahlam Bsharat, Mohammad Zakaria, Sharif Kanaana, Khalil Nakhleh, Nadi al-Deek, Rose Shomali, and Salman Natour. Foreign and international writers who have spoken include Elsa Marston (U.S.), Beverly Naidoo (South Africa), Ulf Stark (Sweden), Anne Carter (Canada), Luciana Savaget (Brazil), and Anthony Robinson and Annemarie Young (U.S.). The meeting with Beverly Naidoo, was especially popular among the children and youth in Palestine after her two famous books *Journey to Jo’burg* and *Chain of Fire*, translated into Arabic, came into their hands. Palestinian children loved the books and connected with South African children’s suffering and struggle.

All these activities have taken place in Ramallah because PBBY’s personnel live in Ramallah. It is difficult, however, for people who live in other cities to come to Ramallah to attend events due to a fear of facing unexpected checkpoints on the roads.

Workshops in Ramallah

In 2003, 2007, and 2009 PBBY also arranged workshops for adults, including teachers, writers and others interested in children's literature. One of these was a workshop on children's literature conducted by Swedish expert Mrs. Ulla Lundqvist. Others included a workshop on books written by the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren, and an intensive five-day workshop conducted by an expert from France.

"Librarians and Archivists for Palestine (LAP)– One Book Many Communities" Project

A group of librarians and archivists from the USA and Europe came to Palestine in 2013 to meet with fellow librarians in Palestine. They visited various kinds of libraries: academic, public, children's, and specialized libraries. One of their projects, known by the title "One Book Many Communities" is a yearly event where a Palestinian book is chosen by the group (LAP); and then many communities, in various countries, choose to participate through reading and discussing that book. Each community arranges an event for the occasion and reports on it to LAP. In 2015, the first chosen book was *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa; in 2016, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* by Suad Amiry; in 2017, *Returning to Haifa* by Ghassan Kanafani; and in 2018, *Code Name: Butterfly* by Ahlam Bsharat. PBBY has participated in these events in cooperation with the Children and Youth Section of Ramallah Public Library, and Tamer Institute for Community Education.

Honoring Palestinian writers

IBBY Palestine organized a special meeting in December 2014, in cooperation with Tamer Institute for Community Education, to honor Palestinian writers, whose books entered IBBY's Honor Lists for 2012 and 2014 and to celebrate children's literature in Palestine. The event included speeches, exhibition of books and children's writings, and handing Honor List Certificates to the distinguished winners for their excellence.

PBBY's Activities in Jerusalem–Al-Saraya Center for Community Services

Israel has occupied the old city of Jerusalem since 1967 and is trying desperately to make it Jewish. The Israeli Ministry of Education interferes with the Palestinian school curriculum and enforces its laws on it. Because Jerusalem is under siege, people from the West Bank cannot enter Jerusalem unless they are over 50 years old or have an Israeli permit, which is difficult to get.

Al-Saraya Center for Community Services¹ was registered in 1990 as a nonprofit organization. The Center is located in the Islamic Quarter in the Old City, in an area called Aqabat al-Saraya which is a few meters away from the Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Center devotes its services to ease the impact of the suffering inflicted on its people and children since 1967.



Figure 2. Workshop on creative writing in Jerusalem

At a request from al-Saraya Center, PBBY agreed to help the people and children living there by giving them training courses in 2017-2018 in creative writing, drawing, and how to enjoy reading books. PBBY arranged with two persons who have Jerusalem identity cards to train the children in drawing and in creative writing. The course in creative writing was implemented by Maya Abu al-Hayyat for two groups: first, for the training of the coordinators of the center, and second, for the children. Most of the children were happy to write stories reflecting their reality. Their stories were spontaneous and reflected their aspiration to have their voice reach the wider world. The second stage involved sending the Jerusalem stories to PBBY libraries in Gaza where the children interacted with the text and made beautiful illustrations for them. Unfortunately, the course in drawing was not held, due to the various difficulties in Jerusalem. PBBY hopes to continue such work in Jerusalem when the situation permits and when funds become available.

Conclusion

Finally, IBBY/Palestine would like to extend its warmest thanks and appreciation for all those who sent us letters and messages of solidarity and concerns during the difficult situations in Gaza. Also, we want to acknowledge, with thanks, all the following for their financial and moral support during these 15 years, for without their help, the Palestine Section would not have been able to establish and maintain the libraries in Gaza and promote the pleasure of reading for the Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: IBBY's Children in Crisis Fund, IBBY's Appeal Funds in 2014 and 2017, USA/IBBY National Section, United Palestine Appeal (UPA), UAE/Sharjah Fund, Katherine Paterson Family Foundation

¹ For more information about the Al-Saraya Center for Community Services, see the organization's website: <http://alsaraya-center.org/index.php>.

Fund, Family of Marianne de Doncker Fund, the Royalties of the book *If I Were a Bird* written by Fatima Sharafeddin, Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ma'an Development Center, Qattan Foundation, Kalimat Publishing House, Al-Nasher Publishing House, and Anne Carter.

Institutions, societies, and individuals who believe in helping children to develop skills of reading and writing can donate money to Ma'an Development Center in Ramallah, Palestine which, thankfully, takes care of PBBY's financial account.²

² To donate to IBBY Palestine, please visit the "Contact us" page of the Ma'an Development Center: <https://www.maan-ctr.org/en/article/51/Contact-Us>.

Article by a Gaza Librarian

Al-Shawka Library/Rafah

It was a beautiful dream in everyone's mind: a library for children, adolescents, and the residents of the marginalized and cut-off al-Shawka neighborhood that, from time to time, is exposed to Zionist invasions. With no place to shelter them, they played most of their games on the roads, which were also their shelter and source of income (agriculture).

2007: Unfortunately, two local children faced their death while playing on these roads where traces of explosives can be found. After a long wait and effort, the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) lent a helping hand to the people of al-Shawka and established a small library that housed a small but beautiful collection of books and a few shelves, and that had a great impact on the children. But this joyful occasion didn't last; that same year, the occupation carried out a large sweep of the neighborhood. The library, which was but a small room in a building, was not spared the arrogance of the occupation, which broke the shelves, tore the books, smashed the computer, and confiscated its hard drive. The dream was lost, along with all hope because the people didn't have the means to re-establish the library.

But hope returned with vigor, stronger and larger than before, when the Board extended a helping hand to the people and children of the region and re-established the library. The children returned to engage with their peers united by library activities.

2008: A new war struck the region, killing nearly eight children who used the library.

The occupation used the library as its fortress, which led to the library's destruction again and again. IBBY funded the renovation of the library and provided a new set of shelves and books.

2012: During this year, the library building was damaged during a new war on the Strip. Again, the Board expanded the library and provided additional books. Its generous funding continues indefinitely.

2014: A new war strikes the roofs of homes and the hearts of children. War returns to terrorize everyone and kill joy. In this fifty-one-day war, the occupation used the library and its playground as a fortress

and military barracks. Israeli warplanes bombed a group of houses and places in the neighborhood, erasing any sense of safety from the hearts of children and parents. But IBBY accompanied us throughout the duration, moment by moment, and gave much aid that, through the rebuilding of the library's small playground, helped to paint a smile on the children's faces.

2015 to present: IBBY continues to fund al-Shawka library and its children.

Testimony of al-Ataa' Librarian: Is It My Fault That I Am a Palestinian?

Days of Horror:
Testimony of the Librarian Abla Hamad

by Abla Ismail Hamad (Hamad, 2014)³

On July 21, 2014 on the 23rd Day of Ramadan at 8:00 a.m. my older sister, who came to live in my parent's home after the shells destroyed her house, called to tell me to prepare my things to move to Jabalia because the situation in Beit Hanoun is getting worse day by day. Most of the residents of the area are escaping from the heavy shelling on their homes.

I was hesitant but the situation and the sound of shells is getting closer which forced me to agree. I prepared a few clothes for my child. My husband got the important official documents. We got in the car and were surprised that my brothers and father refused to leave saying that should there be an emergency it would be easier for them to leave without women and children.

We got to an apartment in Jabalia that belongs to our relatives. On arrival, we found out that many families have arrived there before us escaping from death and destruction. All of us sat in a small room until the afternoon telling each other what happened to us. Everyone was also contacting people who remained in Beit Hanoun to inquire about their safety. The occupation forces continued targeting every place that had people still there. Meanwhile, my older brother called asking if there was room for him and his family. Although there was no space, we said yes. In half an hour they arrived. They began telling us about the difficult situation. The occupation forces were brutal with their tanks, planes, missiles and rockets targeting every stone, tree and human beings. They miraculously escaped death.

It was impossible for all the displaced, and relatives to stay together in the same small place. There was no furniture, nor bedding ... Therefore, we decided that some of us should leave including my family,

³ Please note: the translation of "Testimony of al-Ataa' Librarian" published here differs in some respects from the translation of Hamad, 2014 on the IBBY Palestine website.

my sister, her husband and four children. We left, walking to a vacant place belonging to a friend of my brother-in-law in the Gaza area. We walked a long distance before we found a car. We arrived at the place one hour before *Iftar* [the call to prayer for breaking the fast at sunset]. We found the place without anything in it, and in addition, we were fasting. But these things were not a problem. The problem was that the occupation forces shelled a building close to us, and my child was wounded in his forehead. My husband carried him to al-Shifa' Hospital while my brother-in-law went to buy water and bread for *Iftar*.

Since there was no other place to live in, we had to buy the basics of furniture so we could live in dignity despite the difficult financial situation. We spent many difficult days hearing explosions and sad news. Sometimes, we heard about a martyred person whom we knew and loved; other times, about the destruction of homes of relatives and friends; and sometimes about the bombing of mosques.

But the most difficult moment was when I heard that the occupation forces targeted a place dear to my heart near my home, al-Ataa' Society and the library where I worked, which had embraced me and many groups and children. I lost hope that people would find safety. On one day of Ramadan there was a humanitarian truce between the two sides. My husband and other relatives went to fetch some clothes for my child and other necessary items from our homes. They found out that Beit Hanoun had become a completely destroyed area with dead bodies under the rubble of their homes, and dozens of martyrs. The situation was so tragic that many people broke their fast from the severity of the disaster and shock. When the people returned safely, we could see in their eyes the magnitude of the tragedy. Men cried for their trees, stones, homes, infrastructure, animals, and birds that were not saved. After a difficult period of displacement, my second shock came when I heard reports of the total destruction of my home by a vicious F-16 Zionist aircraft that smashed the walls and furniture but could not erase the will of life.

As soon as we heard that the last truce was in effect, we gathered all our things and set out at night to Beit Hanoun. I saw the destruction of hundreds of houses in my small city. I saw in the rubble of my house the extent of Zionist hatred of the Palestinian presence. The occupation prevented us from living in our houses and deprived our young children from playing with their toys and sleeping in their own beds. I spent those days in grief, challenged, but regaining strength and doing acts of charity. Has the Gaza Strip ever before spent a month like this month of Ramadan or a feast day like this? No.

I am proud to be a Palestinian and I love Palestine.

Article by a Gaza Librarian

Al-Sikka Library/Beit Hanoun

Al-Ataa' Charitable Organization is concerned with the existence of a children's library because the library is a chief pillar for building refined minds. The organization's library occupied the first floor of its building (approximately 40 meters square, or 430 square feet) in Zytoon street in Beit Hanoun. In 2008, it contained 5,996 books, from children's stories, adolescent literature, as well as general books and reference materials. These books were provided by IBBY, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and Tamer Institute for Community Education. The library served all categories of the community and offered numerous programs and activities aimed at developing the capabilities of its users, and supporting their educational, cultural, psychological and social character.

2008: Israeli forces demolish and flatten a large part of the building.

2014: The Israeli occupation forces completely shell the building.

2015: IBBY re-equips the library and furnishes it with a collection of books for children and adolescents.

Now, the library contains 1,220 books. IBBY continues to follow the work of the Library and its activities and to provide it with the books it needs.

A collection of drawings by Gaza children depicting Israeli aggression on Gaza 2008-9

(IBBY Palestine, n.d.)



Figure 1: Gaza Abandoned - A man abandons the war ridden Gaza, carrying a sack on his back, marked with the UN logo and an olive branch, possibly representing peace or the United Nations itself.



Figure 2: We Won't Kneel Even If Only One of Us Is Left - the phrase is written on the ground under a child shielding bullets from two Israeli soldiers.



Figure 3: Gaza Bleeds - The word Gaza is written with blood dripping from it.



Figure 4: Gaza in the Belly of the Snake - Gaza is surrounded by a snake representing the occupation.



Figure 5: Cities Under Israeli Watch - The eggs have city names (Jerusalem, Jaffa, Dar el-Rafah, etc.), watched by a bird representing Israel.



Figure 6: May God Answer with Victory - The phrase "May God Answer" written next to a man praying towards a mosque, representing a soldier, with the sign of victory raised over city ruins.



Figure 7: Gaza on Fire
– The word Gaza is consumed with fire.



Figure 8: Before and After War – The right half of the drawing is a scene of happy/peaceful life, with “before war” written above a smiling youth. The left, in contrast, represents current life under occupation and the phrase “after war” is written in the ruins below the youth.

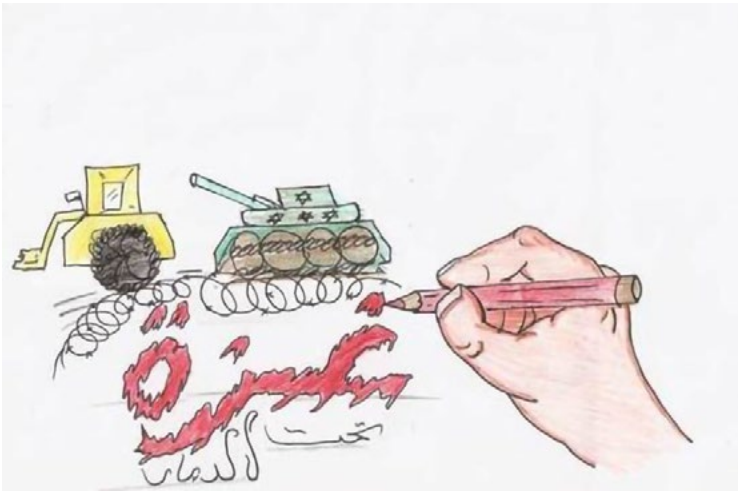


Figure 9: Gaza Under Demolition - The phrase written under army tanks.

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Libraries in Gaza: Between Despair and Hope

The Edward Said Public Library, Gaza's Only English Language Library

Presentation for the American Library Association
conference, Philadelphia, January 25, 2020

By Mosab Abu Toha

An Invitation to Join Me in Gaza: A Welcome to All Librarians

اهلا ومرحبا بكم في كلمتي عن مكتبة ادوارد سعيد العامة وواقع المكتبات العامة في غزة هنا في مؤتمر رابطة المكتبات الأمريكية النصف شتوي في فيلاديلفيا

That, as you probably know, was Arabic. And this is what I said to you: "Hello and welcome to my speech about the Edward Said Library and Public Libraries in Gaza—here at the midwinter conference of the American Library Association in Philadelphia."

Let me see how much you understand when I say it in Arabic again:

اهلا ومرحبا بكم في كلمتي عن مكتبة ادوارد سعيد العامة وواقع المكتبات العامة في غزة هنا في مؤتمر رابطة المكتبات الأمريكية النصف شتوي في فيلاديلفيا.

Mosab Abu Toha is a Palestinian bilingual poet, essayist, and short story writer from Gaza. He taught English at the UNRWA schools in Gaza 2016-2019, and is the founder of the Edward Said Public Library, Gaza's first English-language library (now two branches). In 2019-2020, Mosab became a Scholars-at-Risk fellow and a visiting poet at Harvard University, hosted by the Department of Comparative Literature.

Keywords: Censorship, cultural heritage, destruction, Edward Said Public Library, English collections, Israeli occupation, library education, library services, Palestinian libraries.

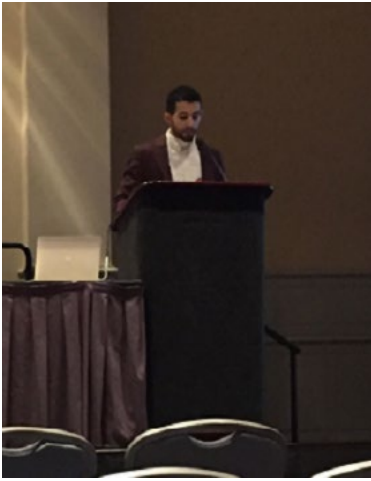


Figure 1. Mosab Abu Toha at ALA Midwinter Meeting, 2020. Photo by Mark Hudson

That wasn't so difficult, was it? I appreciate your invitation. And now I would like to take you on a little journey to the Middle East, where I came from only a few months ago.

Allow me a one-minute overview of the Gaza Strip, a coastal enclave in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, sitting right next to Egypt, with two million people living in crowded conditions on an area of only 140 square miles. For comparison, I found that Gaza is almost the same size as the entire greater Philadelphia area, which is about 143 square miles.

I must be open with you about life in Gaza, even though many of the facts may make some of you feel uncomfortable. Unfortunately, the Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank experience the deadly consequences of the occupation many times—without ever knowing what will come next. In 2014, during the third wave of bombing attacks on Gaza in less than ten years by the Israeli forces, more than 2,200 people were killed and more than eleven thousand were injured, according to the United Nations. Thousands of children were traumatized. As a father of two children with a third one on its way in April, I can tell you how terrible those scenarios are for little kids and their parents. Now, visualize the university where *you*



Figure 2. Mosab's home library, August 2014. Photo by Mosab Abu Toha.

studied. One day, a neighboring country bombs your alma mater. As a student, what would you do?

“Rising from the Ashes of Books”: The Edward Said Library

What you *imagined* about the destruction of your university, many of us *experienced* in the summer of 2014. My family and I did not get killed like many others because we had left our house a few hours before the bombing—unaware of what was to come. Our neighbor’s house got hit with an F-16 bomb, which severely damaged our house, too. Afterwards, I raced inside and found my personal books scattered on the floor, with shrapnel decorating torn books and my favorite old carpet. The Israeli forces had targeted important educational institutions of ours, including several schools of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (also known as UNRWA). One night during the raids, on July 30, 2014, in an UNRWA school in the Jabaliya camp, the Abu Hussein Elementary School, my family and I were sleeping in classroom “C.” At dawn, the Israeli Army bombed classroom “A” with mortar shells. 15 people were killed and 90 were wounded. Because of the summer heat and the overcrowded classrooms, some of the families had been sleeping in the school playground. A dozen of those men, women, and children, who thought they would be safe in the school, all died that morning. A terrifying day with many funerals.

Books Trying to Survive

My alma mater, the Islamic University of Gaza, was bombarded a month later, on August 2, 2014. In the few hours of silence after the bombings, I rushed toward my university. The building, bombed and in ruins, was not safe to enter, but nevertheless, I risked it and carefully



Figure 3. Mosab Abu Toha in the English Department at the Islamic University of Gaza, August 2014. Photo by Adham Al-Ashqar.

walked through the rubble. One of the first few things I saw shook me deeply—books, smoldering like birds with broken wings that had been firebombed, trying to survive under heavy cement blocks. I had never even imagined that books could be harmed so ruthlessly. As I stepped closer to the English Department, I found a copy of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, partly torn and covered with dust. I cleaned it. I embraced it. I'm not ashamed to say that I cried about my lifeline to American literature that had survived. Later, I discovered it was the same book one of my instructors had used while lecturing.

Turning the Destruction of our University into Something Positive

When I returned home, I opened Facebook and posted my photo with that book and another one of my badly damaged book collection. To my delight, old friends and strangers from around the world responded. I felt like crying every single time when people, some of whom I had never met, offered their support. Within a short period of time after the bombing, donated books from around the English-speaking world piled up in my room. The idea occurred to me to create a public English-language library that everyone in Gaza could use.

Everything we in Gaza had experienced—not only being bombed frequently and regularly cut off from electricity, but deliberately deprived of culture through a shortage of libraries, library books, and access to vital informational resources abroad—made me a man of action. I no longer saw myself as just a Palestinian student of British and American literature, but a librarian-in-the-making, determined to create a new library, an *English* language library—something that did not exist in Gaza. I knew I had to push ahead and turn the destruction of our university into something positive. I knew that with the help of friends from abroad and my friends in Gaza, I could build Gaza's only English-language library. And the book parcels kept coming in—each one opening new worlds.

Gaza's First English-language Library: The Edward Said Library

As a result, I created a Facebook page, "Library and Bookshop for Gaza." Readers responded to the campaign by donating more books and sharing my plea on their Facebook pages. When the books I collected exceeded 600, I invited my Facebook friends to donate money so that I could rent a place for the books and buy bookshelves, desks, and chairs.

To express the respect and gratitude that we Palestinians have for Edward W. Said and his worldwide bridge-building, I named the library in honor of this great Palestinian American writer and academic—an important symbol of freedom and intellectual life in Palestine.

He stood for his oppressed people and against the occupiers, whether the Israeli government and their occupation or, later, the actions and inactions of the Palestinian Authority. Said could have lived a comfortable life, away from politics and debates. Instead, he spent his life advocating for Palestinian equality by teaching, writing many articles and books, and reaching out to anyone who was willing to listen and learn—one of the goals we have for our Edward Said Library.

I felt honored when Mariam Said, Edward Said's widow, expressed her gratitude upon learning about our efforts to establish the library. She donated money and a few of Edward's books to us—all signed "Gift from the Said Family." In late 2018, because the library lacked a legal status, she connected me with the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA), which now functions as the U.S. sponsor and partner of the Edward Said library.

Articles about the Edward Said Library around the World Leading to More Book Donations

On February 10, 2017, *Al Jazeera*, the first English-language news channel in the Middle East, wrote a story about me and the library, which gave us a worldwide audience and their support (Gadzo, 2017). So did *ArabLit Quarterly* ("Wanted: Library books for Palestine," 2017) and *StepFeed* (Nabbout, 2017), two publications geared predominantly toward Arabs in the English-speaking world. Many other news outlets followed suit and wrote about the evolving Edward Said Library, including *Cultural Weekly* (Chen, 2017) and *The Nation* (Pollitt, 2017) in the U.S. We even had articles about our Library written in Arabic, German, and Italian.

Shortly thereafter, I launched an official fundraising campaign. Within a relatively short time, donors from all over the world sent the money we urgently needed to establish the library and make it fully functional. A big thank you to everyone, especially fellow librarians, who supported us and the many of you who still show your solidarity by sending us more books for the people of all ages in Gaza.

Censorship and the Important Support of Noam Chomsky for the Edward Said Library

Before I started the public library initiative, I met Professor Noam Chomsky, one of the world's most important intellectuals and a great role model of mine. He presented at "The First International Conference on Literature and Applied Linguistics" at the Islamic University of Gaza in 2012, while I was studying as an undergraduate there. I spoke with him for a minute and asked for his email address. After the 2014 war, I wrote to him and asked him for four of his books and

if he could sign them for me. He did that generously. When I started working on the public library, he donated more books and urgently needed money to build and strengthen our Edward Said Library. In April 2016, he sent a big parcel with some of his books. However, the Israeli authorities had decided that all mail to Gaza should be stopped. They claimed that the military groups in Gaza were getting materials that could be used for military ends.

I didn't think that the draconian Israeli ban would apply to books for children, linguists, and anyone interested in British and American literature, but I was wrong. Chomsky's books were held up by the Israelis from July 2016 until January 2017. A lot of book boxes, from various donors, never make it to us in Gaza. This shows you one example of the difficulties of building a library in an occupied country. In addition, while under Israeli control, books are sometimes left out in the open. If they arrive, they frequently come in such poor condition that I feel sad for my little friends, those books from abroad—but at least, they have made it to Gaza, however badly damaged.

In a normal situation—something that you in the U.S. would never call “normal”—although packages *should* only take about 10 business days, they arrive in Gaza often with a 7-, 8-, or 9-week delay. Many times, the mailing company's agent in Israel or the West Bank would call to tell me that they couldn't deliver the parcel to Gaza, but that I needed to send an individual to pick up the box in the West Bank. That's like asking the head of an American library to travel through Mexico to pick up a parcel in Guatemala, because Israel is a foreign country that does not allow us to travel there, except in very rare situations.

One striking example: in December 2017, a donor from Canada sent a shipment of 50 novels via FedEx. Gaza was listed as the final destination of the parcel. After it arrived in the West Bank, I got a message from the Palestinian subcontractor of the American multinational courier delivery service, saying “You need to pay 700 dollars, and someone needs to come and pick up the books for you in the West Bank.” I was stunned—another of the many Kafkaesque moments in Palestine. Desperate, I called the donor who told me the books and their shipment cost him 1,200 Canadian dollars. I then asked the Palestinian subcontractor what would happen to the books if I were unable to pay the money or pick them up from the West Bank. He told me point blank that they would simply destroy the books. We never received our books from Canada. Last year, I called the donor. He told me that he eventually got half of his books back. I am not sure whether we witnessed a classic case of exploitation of Palestinians by Palestinians, something that grieves me, or whether our success in making world literature available to Palestinians and

giving them a chance to think outside the box might have caused the Israeli government to hold back a great deal of mail as any books that enter Gaza must come through Israel and their censors.

Realities of the Edward Said Library in Gaza

In the summer of 2017, with the assistance of my friend Shadi Salem, I first rented two tiny rooms for the library in a small apartment in Beit Lahia City in the north of the Gaza Strip. Early in 2018, the library moved to a bigger apartment in the same city, where it still operates. The library now includes a reading room, a children's room, and a lecture room. We even managed to provide a small staff room. The library offers not only a venue for reading and borrowing books, but also a reading club, an English club, and English language lessons. Our library activities run year-round, and many school students visit the library as part of their school activities. Students also use the library to look up references for their school research projects.

One of the additional problems librarians, teachers, and counselors face in Gaza is the lack of new publications which could help children and young people to develop their linguistic, intellectual, and emotional abilities. Only one library specializes in children's books and activities: the Abdel-Mohsen Alqattan Center's library. After the frequent bombings in Gaza, a number of depressed and traumatized children come to meet our Edward Said library staff to seek psychological support. In our small way, the Edward Said library cares as much as possible for the children and their own library space in it. As part of our evolving counseling and recovering program, we play games with them in the library, while others draw and play with colors.

Trying to Leave Kafka's Castle in Gaza to Make it to Harvard

One of the happiest days in my academic life occurred in 2019 when I was awarded a Harvard Scholar-at-Risk Fellowship, hosted by the Department of Comparative Literature as a visiting poet. Harvard also made me a visiting librarian-in-residence at their Houghton Library. Because the Israelis didn't allow me to attend my visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in *Jerusalem* for two months, I had to apply for a visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in *Amman, Jordan*. To make it worse, the Israelis did not allow me to go to Jordan through Israel. I therefore had to spend more money and time to travel to Jordan via Egypt.

On September 25, 2019, we opened a second branch of the Edward Said Library in Gaza City. I celebrated from afar in Amman, with my wife and two children, who had been given permission by the Israelis to travel from Gaza to Jordan. For about seven weeks, we waited for our visas in a small, rented *room* in Amman that costs

more than some *hotels* in the U.S. As a result of the long visa delays, I missed the first month and half at the beginning of my fellowship. However, I am grateful I finally made it to your country, and to everyone at Harvard who went all out to welcome me and my family.

Services Not Only for Readers but Also for Young Writers, Musicians, and Artists

Earlier last year, Viet Thanh Nguyen, a Pulitzer Prize winning writer and professor, generously donated the honorarium he was offered for his 2019 Edward Said Memorial Lecture at Columbia University to the Edward Said Library in Gaza. We are deeply grateful to him and everyone who contributed to our growth and success. Running two libraries relies on the goodwill of our friends abroad, and their sending us more books that would be of value to Palestinians, including children's books and books for high school and college students. However, as you can imagine, we also need *ongoing* financial support to pay for our running costs like electricity, rent, and staff.

However, the many, often painful daily problems in Gaza, have not made us abandon the belief in a future for *all* of us on both sides of the terrible divide. We have learned not to give up—in spite of the high rate of depression and suicides, especially among the young. Thanks to your support, we move forward in the belief that books, combined with education and moral and psychological support, can make a huge difference.

Nowadays, the two Edward Said libraries, in addition to our mission of providing books, have expanded our program. We not only work with librarians, but with young writers, musicians, and artists, providing a place for everyone to study and grow, practice their talents, and share them with those who would like to come and



Figures 4 and 5. Discussion groups in the Edward Said Public Library. Photos by Aya Dakka.

visit us. Who knows, one or two of you might even come and work with us for a semester or so.

Libraries, Education, and Cultural Institutions in Palestine

Now that I have told you about the story of the Edward Said Library, to provide some context, I would like to share a few things with you about Gaza's educational and cultural institutions in general from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics report in 2018: Among countries with the world's highest literacy rates, Palestine ranks fairly high. Only 3.3 % of its population are unable to read. Against all odds, we built many cultural centers, including cinemas, and a few public libraries and museums. However, most of them have been negatively impacted by the Israeli occupation, their siege, and the political rift within the Palestinian community.

Studying and Dancing in the Ruins of One of Our Finest Cultural Centers

Let me give you an example of one of our proudest achievements, the Al-Mishal Foundation, a leading cultural center in the Gaza Strip and the second largest theater in Gaza. The five-floor building housed a library, an Egyptian community center, offices for cultural associations, and a theater for arts and *dabke*—a traditional Palestinian style of dancing. The center also served as a home for hundreds of workshops, lectures, plays, exhibits, musical performances, and national ceremonies.

Unfortunately, as part of the campaign to demoralize Palestinians and destroy their cultural life, the Al-Mishal Foundation was decimated by Israeli warplanes on August 9, 2018. We are hardly allowed to import cement to rebuild damaged or destroyed buildings, let alone construct new buildings. However, we do more than stare at ruins. We try to stay positive and move forward. In its recent article, "Rising From the Ruins: A Theatre Persists in Gaza" on March 11, 2019, *American Theatre* magazine illustrates the spirit of Gazans with this one-sentence synopsis: "Even after their building was destroyed by Israeli airstrikes, the actors and artists of ASHTAR Theatre keep the show going"—in the ruins (Danney, 2019).

Data from the Official Report on Operating Public Libraries in the Palestinian Territory

In 2010, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey of the cultural institutions in Palestine (Palestine Central Bureau, 2010). Unfortunately, Palestinians don't have the money, nor the expertise to provide you with more recent statistics. However, I

can share with you the results from almost ten years ago. Please bear with me as your “Palestinian Library System Tour Guide” who tries to get you the main statistics in one minute. Here we go:

- There are 65 operating public libraries in the Palestinian Territories, including 52 in the West Bank and 13 in the Gaza Strip.
- Of these, 72.3% are housed in buildings of their own.
- 140 people worked in public libraries: 45% males, and 54% females.
- 93% of public libraries staff have a secondary school degree or higher education.
- Only 16% of public libraries use library classification systems.
- 69% own computers.
- Only 37% provide computers for their *visitors* to use.
- And just 29% provide internet services to their visitors.

Anyone who remembers those statistics, see me afterwards and I might have a nice gift for you. 😊 On a more serious note: the situation for libraries is dire, and that’s why the Edward Said Library provides an important service such as making available as many books in Arabic and English as it can get and also offering English language lessons, English club, reading club, and drawing activities for the kids.

Books Smuggled into a Library System in a Society That Struggles with Survival

Last April, the Gaza Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Gaza City organized the first book exhibition in the past six years. Fifteen local and regional publishing houses and societies participated in the exhibit with about 20,000 books. Most of the books in the exhibit came from local bookstores which had imported them from abroad. In the past, the books were smuggled through tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. These days, with most, if not all, tunnels destroyed, books reach Gaza but only in small quantities—either via mail or carried by tourists and Palestinians who are returning or visiting from abroad.

“Almost no one buys new books anymore”: Sad Book and Library Stories from Gaza

In an article published online, Raed Wihidi, Chief Librarian at the Diana Tamari Library in Gaza, shared some shattering statistics: before the siege on Gaza in 2007, the library had more than 20,000 subscribers. Now it attracts only a quarter of that number. Most of the visitors to public libraries are school and university students. This dramatic drop of readers shows how devastating the constant pressure is on Palestinians.

Significantly, the Dar Alshorouk Bookstore director in Gaza, Amin Ghaben, mentioned in an article that in the past two years, their branches in Ramallah, West Bank, and Amman, Jordan, requested not to be sent more books, because “almost no one buys new books anymore.” As a librarian and teacher of English, I felt like crying hearing this devastating assessment of the situation in my country.

Similarly, Abdallah Tayeh, a writer and the assistant Secretary-General for the General Union of Palestinian Writers, told me of the severe restrictions by Israel on any transportation of new books and journals published in the West Bank. They cannot be sent to Gaza nor are any new books from Gaza allowed to be sent to the West Bank. That is like telling Americans they cannot send books from New York to California, nor from North Dakota to Texas. In short, knowledge gets restricted by the occupiers, so much so that, because of the endless siege, a new book has become a luxury in Gaza.

A Palestinian Sisyphus Pushing a Literary Boulder Up a High Mountain

A few publishing houses try to support the local literary movement, but, as you can imagine, given joblessness, depression, and hopelessness, these efforts make me think of a Palestinian Sisyphus pushing a literary boulder up a high mountain. Atef Abu Saif, a Gazan novelist and writer, who now serves as the Minister of Culture in the Palestinian Authority based in the West Bank, aware of the deadening consequences of the siege since 2007 and the rift between Hamas and Fatah, presents this assessment: “A healthy cultural atmosphere requires a healthy political one. We don’t have this, unfortunately. The politician doesn’t support the intellectual. On the contrary, he tries to fight him. Gaza deserves to be the world’s cultural voice [...] it is the city of *suffering and pain*, which make poets and literary figures.” Sadly, he goes on to say, “no one [is there] to *support* these talents”—talents that were born out of our tragedy.

Current Challenges to Libraries and Librarians in Palestine: Summary and Conclusion

To summarize, the occupation and siege of Gaza pose a daily challenge for everyone, including libraries and librarians, who find themselves restricted in what they try to achieve. Frequent electricity cuts, extremely slow internet access, closure of border crossings for books, readers, and librarians, plus the political rift among Palestinians, and the daily humiliation of the population by the occupying soldier present some of the many hurdles Palestinians have to jump every day. For example, unlike librarians in Israel and the Western world, Gaza

librarians cannot travel to the West Bank or outside Gaza to attend training programs or participate in conferences. Heads of libraries and bookstores cannot travel to participate in international book fairs because of the many Israeli-imposed restrictions on every aspect of life. Like our hospitals, many of our schools and libraries rely on power generators for light, print, and computers. Because of the severe limitations on our infrastructure, communication among Gazans takes place at a snail's pace, if at all—let alone communication with the outside world. Even things that may be self-understood by Americans, like downloading data or participating in video conferences, can become an uphill battle, if not an impossible mission.

The Gaza Ministry of Culture is having a tough time to keep up with its role of supporting the cultural community and to provide funding for cultural projects. As the government in Gaza relies on donations from foreign governments and organizations and collecting taxes from often unemployed citizens who are struggling to survive, you can see the difficulty in making major cultural breakthroughs, let alone stemming the deterioration of the little we still have.

Unfortunately, the key players, namely, Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), never tolerated any of its critics. For example, in 1996 Edward Said, an independent member of the Palestine National Council and an outspoken critic of Yasser Arafat, resigned in protest of the humiliating peace process in the early 1990s. As a result of Said's criticism, Arafat, the late chairman of the PLO, banned Said's works in Gaza and the West Bank. Similarly, Israel, super-sensitive to any criticism from anyone, especially Palestinians, was also responsible for banning and confiscating 6,420 books between 1967-1995 in Gaza and the West Bank—the way the Catholic Church and many countries banned countless book titles throughout history.

Librarians in Functioning Democracies Can Do Things That We Cannot Do in Palestine

People in Western democracies can and do create environments in which books rarely get banned today—something that Palestinians can only hope for. Censorship reigns supreme in Palestine. As a result, we continue leading severely restricted lives. Before I end this talk, I would like to quote a short passage by Norwegian *library* researcher Erling Bergan. In his paper, "Libraries in the West Bank and Gaza: Obstacles and Possibilities," at the 66th International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Council and General Conference in Jerusalem, he said:

From 1967, when Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza started, and up to this day, Israeli censorship has been hard. Through the

years, many Israeli military orders banning specific book titles have been issued. The list reached at one-point Kafkaesque proportions, with titles like George Orwell's *1984*. [It] was on one of the 60 lists of prohibited books that included more than 1,600 titles. (Bergan, 2000, p. 10).

In the midst of all the hardships, I am grateful to everyone who has supported me and the Edward Said Library, including Noam Chomsky, poet and columnist Katha Pollitt, and writers that I have met here in the U.S., like academics Stephen Greenblatt and Lloyd Schwartz, poet Richard Hoffmann, and novelist Askold Melnyczuk. A big thank you to them and all of you librarians here, and all the readers from around the world, who are supporting us through their books. I'm not sure whether every one of those generous people realizes what a life-changer their emails, their books, and their donations are for us. You and these writers, librarians, and donors of important books give the Edward Said library a gleaming light in the darkened Gaza.

اعزائي أمناء المكتبات، شكرا جزيلا لسماع حديثي عن المكتبات الفلسطينية في غزة بشكل عام ومكتبة ادوارد سعيد بشكل خاص. دعمكم الجاد يساعدنا كثيرا

نيابة عن اهل غزة، اشكركم من أعماق قلبي. بامكانكم التواصل معي اذا كان لديكم أي استفسار او اذا كنتم ترغبون في المساعدة

Dear fellow librarians. Many thanks for listening to my talk about Palestinian libraries in general and the Edward Said Library in particular. Your active support means the world to us. On behalf of the people of Gaza, I would like to thank you with all my heart. Please contact me if you would like to get involved in reaching out.

شكرا لكم. شكرا لكم. شكرا لكم.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Editor's note: To contribute to The Edward Said Public Library, please visit the Middle East Children's Alliance webpage, "Support the Edward Said Public Libraries in Palestine": https://secure.everyaction.com/q_fRGaZLj06G7gZQdP72pw2.

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Interview with Mosab Abu Toha

Founder of the Edward Said Public Library

January 25, 2020

How has the occupation affected libraries in Gaza?

The occupation has two sides. One is the continued wars on Gaza, the assault; the other is the siege. As you know, many libraries have been destroyed by the Israeli airstrikes. The other side of the occupation is the siege. We do not get books in Gaza unless they come through Israel. And one side of the difficulties we face is the slow arrival of books from the western world to Gaza. Normally it should take about ten days, but in Gaza it takes from six to seven or eight weeks. Another thing is that some of the websites that I use to order books, like Amazon and many other websites, do not deliver to Gaza. So one example: I ordered three books from Amazon, and they never made it to Gaza. However, I used another website called Book Depository, and they arrived. So even books ordered online do not make it.

What obstacles do you face today in acquiring books for libraries in Gaza?

Most of the books we get from the outside are sent from individuals. Until now we did not get the books from publishing houses in big

This interview with Mosab Abu Toha was conducted for Progressive Librarian by Jessa Lingel and Tom Twiss at the American Library Association's 2020 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia. The interviewers would like to express their appreciation for the assistance provided by Henrik Eger.

Mosab Abu Toha is the founder of the Edward Said Public Library, Gaza's first English language library (now two branches). He is also a columnist for Arrowsmith Press (Toha, n.d.). His poetry, essays, and short stories have been or will be published by Banipal Magazine, Solstice Literary Magazine, We Are Not Numbers Project, Middle East Eye, The Short Story Project, and Kikah Literary Magazine, among others.

Keywords: destruction, Edward Said Public Library, Gaza, interviews, Israel, Palestine, Palestinian libraries, public libraries, Israeli occupation

quantities. So people send books and parcels and packages. And sometimes the books when they come to Gaza, they arrive damaged because of the storage conditions. Some of the books get wet because of winter. Some books arrive in bad shape because of the pressure on them because maybe the Israelis put hundreds of parcels on top of each other. They do not care what is inside them.

I think I mentioned the story of my Canadian friend who sent fifteen novels from Canada to Gaza. They were supposed to go to Gaza. But this company FedEx, it seemed that they only deliver to the West Bank. So a few days after the books arrived in the West Bank or maybe Israel the company called me and said, we have got something for you. You need to pay \$700 to get the books from us, and maybe for taxes. And you need to come to the West Bank and pick them up because we do not deliver to Gaza.

I asked them “Can you please send them back to my friend in Canada so that he can send them through another mailing company?” They said, “We cannot do that. Your friend needs to pay the money for us to send them back to him.” Eventually, in December last year, I called my friend. I told him I’m in the US now, and I’m a Visiting Poet and Librarian. And then I asked him about the books. He said, “I got half of them back.” So what about the other half of the books? He didn’t get them. It seems that they stole them. Maybe they sold them to get the \$700 that they wanted. I don’t know.

Is there a ban on types of materials that can be imported?

In Gaza we only get paper and clothes. We don’t get electronic devices, laptops or replacements for the laptops or accessories, chargers, batteries. We do not get any electronics. We only get paper and clothes or toys sometimes.

What about the subject matter of books—for example, if a book is about Palestinian struggle or political books, things like that.

In fact, I haven’t noticed that the Israelis have banned any title from entering Gaza. Even if it was written by Chomsky or Norman Finkelstein, who wrote the book, *The Holocaust Industry*. I got that book from abroad—I don’t know how. Maybe they were blind. I don’t know. But many times, I notice that the book boxes that I get have been opened. I mean I do not get a box of books sealed as it was sent. No, the Israelis maybe, or maybe the Hamas government, opened it. I don’t know. Maybe they open it, they just look at the titles, and then they put them back, and then they seal them again. I noticed that many times. And sometimes I get, as I told you, some packages or parcels that are torn or spoiled by winter rain. And I sometimes get a message from the Israeli postal service that, “We are sorry for

the damage.” So they were kind enough to say that in Arabic and in Hebrew and in English.

Can you describe the extent of damage to libraries in Gaza by Israeli bombing?

In fact, I don’t have numbers. But I can mention my university, which had the English language department, etc. These departments had their own libraries, so they were all destroyed. And I mentioned the title of the book that I found in the rubble *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. So these books were a part of a library in the English department.

Was it ever announced why they would destroy the university?

Well, in fact, the Islamic University of Gaza is usually affiliated with Hamas. This is not a justification because this is an educational building. It doesn’t have weapons. The only weapons that were there were English books. This is what they tried to bomb. English language books and a university, which is the best or one of the two best universities in Gaza Strip. And I think it’s ranked in the third place in Palestine, the Islamic University of Gaza. So that was an attack on education, not Hamas. Because Hamas have their own training fields or quarters, but not the university.

I didn’t know why they bombed it at that time. But if you noticed how Israelis started to act in the last few days of the 51-day war, they started to escalate the attacks. So in the last five or four days, they started to bomb towers. Towers, where dozens of families live. So when they bomb a tower, then 100 or 200 people are homeless. So they started to escalate. It’s a challenge for Hamas, as if to say to Hamas, “If you are going to challenge us, then we will make your people homeless.

In 2002 following the Israeli incursion into the West Bank, we sent a questionnaire to some of the libraries and asked them “Why do you think that they did this to your library?” One person responded that he believed the purpose was to destroy any cultural resources that made life livable, hoping people would just leave.

Yeah, this happened in Gaza in 2018, when they decimated the Al-Mishal Cultural Center, a leading cultural center in the Gaza Strip and the second largest theater in Gaza. The five-floor building housed a library, an Egyptian community center, offices for cultural associations, and a theater for arts and *dabke*—a traditional Palestinian style of dancing. The center also served as a home for hundreds of workshops, lectures, plays, exhibits, musical performances, and national ceremonies. It was a house to hundreds of people who went there

to attend plays and acted on the stage. I watched a cultural activity where a circus team from my town put on a circus. That place was a house for hundreds of kids. Unfortunately, as part of the campaign to demoralize Palestinians and destroy their cultural life, the Al-Mishal Foundation was decimated by Israeli warplanes on August 9, 2018.

*Are you familiar with the destruction of the
Al-Ataa' Library in Beit Hanoun?*

I don't know exactly about this library and how bad it was affected by the war. But in the 2014 war, Beit Hanoun was turned into ashes by the Israeli army. So whenever the Palestinian resistance action, for example kills Israeli soldiers, the Israelis start to act stupidly. This time they started to bomb the area randomly, just as an act of anger. They started to bomb the streets, people walking. So that happened in Al-Shejaiya, if you heard about the Al-Shejaiya massacre where people were trying to leave the houses to seek refuge, and they bombed them in the street.¹ And that happened also in Beit Hanoun, when the Hamas military wing killed, I think, 10 soldiers. The Israelis started to bomb whole neighborhoods, and I think maybe this library was located in one of them. But they don't care whether it's a library and a school because they bombed a school in Beit Lahia city, North Gaza, during the 2008-09 assault on Gaza with phosphorus bombs. People were, for example like my family, who were taking refuge in an UNWRA school. UNWRA is an international organization. They bombed that school with phosphorus bombs, and that phosphorus material cannot be washed off with water. No. I think you need to cover it with sand or with cloth to extinguish the flames. I remember in 2009, when we went back to our home in Beit Lahia city, I saw that material on the ground in front of our house. And I was a kid, I was 16. I tried just to rub it, and it started to emanate smoke, and started to burn again. They used many types of internationally prohibited weapons.

In the 2008-9 war, we left our house because it was a very dangerous area. And on my way out with my little sister who was four or five years old, just 100 meters away from our house, I saw an ambulance bombed by the Israeli army. And they used something like... a nail bomb. A bomb when it explodes it gives . . . maybe thousands of nails fly in the air and if it hits your head, it will cut your neck.

During that time I saw an ambulance, and I discovered later that one of my teachers was killed during that attack. He taught me science in my fourth grade. While he was working to rescue some people who were just killed a few hours earlier than that. The Israelis bombed the ambulance he was in. And I saw some flesh on the ground after that

¹ On the Al-Shejaiya massacre, see Kouddous, 2014.

attack. So I mean when they kill anyone, they do not care whether he is a kid, an infant, a baby, a teacher like me, a librarian, a paramedic, a doctor. Yeah, they don't consider that.

Do you collaborate with other libraries in Gaza?

Well, in fact we try to use other libraries and librarians' knowledge. Until now this didn't happen yet, but we went to some public libraries and we tried to use their help with how to proceed to classify books. Also, we sought their help and asked if they could share with us the types of activities they run in their libraries. And we also can share with them what we use in our libraries. So this type of collaboration. Yeah. And also we, two years ago, we borrowed 100 children's books in Arabic from Al-Qattan Library. That was very helpful of course. So this is another kind of collaboration.

Can you collaborate with other librarians in the West Bank or Israel? Can you participate in training opportunities?

Well, for the training opportunities in the West Bank and Israel, that's next to impossible of course. But collaborating with librarians in the West Bank? Some of the librarians and activists in Israel, though, offered to help the initiative. They tried to send us books in Gaza. And this is a good sign. One time when I was raising funds for the library, a friend of mine from Jerusalem hosted me on Skype in a video conference, and they raised \$700 for the library. One of the contacts was an Israeli British translator and writer.

What is internet access like in Gaza?

It runs at a snail's pace. When I talk to my family in Gaza, Face Timing, it's really very slow. It's unreliable for a video conference or a reading club between the West Bank and Gaza. If we think of having a joint reading club between members of the Edward Said Library in Gaza and maybe another library in the West Bank, it's unreliable.

We have 2G bandwidth I think. We are not allowed to have 3 or 4G. The materials come through Israel. The communication materials, the internet materials, the telephone materials, like the cords, the devices, et cetera come from Israel. And they decide which to get in and which not to get them. And those materials which would provide us with 3G speed or 4G are not allowed to get into Gaza. So this is part of the occupation.

Have you ever heard an explanation of why that's true: Why they don't allow that equipment in Gaza?

I didn't look into that, but it seems they don't want us to have a good internet network to communicate with the world. So they are making

life for us miserable and slow. For example, when I tried to go to Jerusalem, they delayed me two months, and then when I tried to go to Jordan through Israel, they delayed me another month. Then I had to go to Egypt and then from Egypt to Amman. So they are slowing everything down for us. They don't want us to move forward.

Could you describe limitations on hours of electricity and how that affects your work?

We have electricity cuts in Gaza. My family and all of the people in Gaza get electricity for only four hours. Then we have four hours on, and then twelve hours blackout. So when I try to call them, I just look at my watch. Now it's off. I cannot call them. I will have to wait until maybe seven o'clock to call them because they will have electricity by that time.

During winter things become worse because there is more electricity used in winter, especially for heating, et cetera. We get sometimes for two hours, not four. So four hours becomes a luxury, a privilege. "Oh, we have electricity for four hours." At best we have electricity for eight hours, twelve hours cut. Eight. So eight is something.

It would be hard to refrigerate anything.

Yeah. During summer especially. So during summer we need electricity for the refrigerators, and also for the fans because it's very hot sometimes. In winter we need electricity for the fireplace, the electric fireplace. It becomes very, very cold. So that affects the library. For example, we need constant electricity access. We do not have that. Therefore, we rely on a device called UPS, an uninterruptible power supply, where we have a battery, for example, a big one like this, which is 100 Amperes. And then we have a converter (UPS device) which converts the power from that battery to electricity. So this is how it works sometimes when electricity is out.

Can you talk about ways in which the government in Gaza helps or hinders your work?

Well, I wouldn't say that they hinder my work. They are not helpful. They do not help in any substantial way. So the library has been open since 2017, but no one from the government or the civil society, whether it's official or non-official, not one of them reached out to see how they could help us in the library, even though we said we serve the society. But no one came and said, "Mosab, how did you come up with this library? How can we help you?" One member of the library staff visited their bookstore and we could take some of the Arabic books.

Did you talk with them about your library?

I invited the director of libraries and exhibits in The Gaza Ministry of Culture to the opening ceremony. And he didn't come. No, I didn't see him. And I told him in person about the library. I went to his office before I opened the library. I told him I'm Mosab, I'm doing this and that. But he didn't offer his support or his ministry or the government. He did, however, offer to give us a dozen of books that they got as donations from some organizations. But I mean nothing serious was offered, like help in budget, informational assistance, connecting us with other relevant and potential supporters.

How can librarians in the West and the international library community assist the work of libraries in Gaza?

This is a good question. Well, in fact, connecting with the libraries in the western world is, in itself, a good sign of help and support. Connecting with these international libraries. And also benefiting from their expertise, the kind of activities they run, the kinds of programs they use to store books or to help people find books in the library. But of course we have small numbers. We do not have big libraries. So one thing we need to know is where a specific book is in the stacks because we have a small library. That's something maybe we will do in the future when we have a big place and lots of resources. And also donating books. Maybe some books that you have in one library. You keep of course updating your books, so the books that you update, of course you will have old copies. Maybe they can send them to Gaza. And also donating funds to the library because it is a continued process of funding. We do not have a specific budget for the library. So every year we look for support.

It seems that maybe you get duplication of materials, or you end up getting a lot of books that you can't use. Is there a way to find out from you the books that you can actually use, or the books that you would like to get?

When I started the project, I did have a wishlist on a spreadsheet form. So there are, I think about 400 titles that we need. Other than that, we need children's books, philosophical books, psychological books. Maybe sometimes textbooks, especially if they are on English language learning, textbooks to teach English, maybe [for an?] English language center, et cetera. Also drawing books for the kids, drawing, painting. History, history books. Yes. These are the kinds of things.

But if we have duplicated copies, then now we have two libraries. On September 25, 2019, we opened a second branch of the Edward Said Library in Gaza City. And in the future we are hopeful that we will have more libraries because this is what we are aspiring to do. So

in Gaza we have five governorates. So now we have one in the north of Gaza, and the new one is in Gaza City. We still need one in Rafah, another in the middle of Gaza, and another and in the South of Gaza. So we still need to have not only two libraries in Gaza, but five. And who knows? Maybe that chain will continue to be in the West Bank also. So this would be a big project. Even though I started it from the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and now it's two libraries. Who knows what will evolve out of this?

That's exciting!

Yeah. I mean working with MECA [the Middle East Children's Alliance] is very helpful because they are making things easy for us. So if anyone is willing to donate, they send it to MECA. And MECA has partners in Gaza who have bank accounts, and we work through them. So this made things easy for us. So the sky's the limit for us now.

Is there anything that you are taking back with you to Gaza that will help you and your libraries?

The many connections that I have made, whether it's at Harvard or here at ALA, would empower my chances of getting more support of course. The connections in themselves are something positive to carry back to Gaza. So I'm very blessed to have come here today to meet all of these people, and they have written their names on the spreadsheet, on the mailing list sheet. Going back to Gaza, of course, I would continue reaching out to them and keeping them updated about everything. If I weren't here today, of course, I wouldn't have made these connections with people. So this is a good thing.

Thank you so much for your time.

Editor's note: To contribute to The Edward Said Public Library, please visit the Middle East Children's Alliance webpage, "Support the Edward Said Public Libraries in Palestine":

https://secure.everyaction.com/q_fRGaZLjo6G79ZQdP72pw2.

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Private Libraries in Nablus Have a Bright Past and an Uncertain Future

By Lara Kanaan

In Nablus, there are a few steps that separate two places, brought together by geography and segregated by cultural values. The first place is el-Mansheya Park on Shuwaitra Street, in the western part of Nablus. The second is a store, which I encountered by chance, that sells men's clothing and antiques, located on the sidewalk, opposite of the municipal library.

The park has a rich history, starting from its establishment during the Ottoman era, continuing into the early twentieth century when it hosted the conferences of the Palestinian national movement, after which in 1960 it became the site of the first public library in Palestine, and ending at the present time when I met with its director, Professor Dhirar Touqan. In his office, behind his back, are clues of King Hussain's visit to its grand opening, during the administration of Ahmed Assrouri, then mayor of Nablus. The news clip, placed in a golden frame, demonstrates the importance of this event.

Only a few steps from the office lies a scrap shop full of used items. I entered it accidentally to find it selling all types of science books spread on the ground, on old shelves, and in open bags showing dust-filled volumes selling at a low price based on the size of the book

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This article was translated from the Arabic by Ethan Pullman, Senior Humanities Librarian and Lecturer of Arabic Studies, Carnegie Mellon University.

Lara Kanaan is a journalist from Nablus.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, destruction, Nablus, Palestine, Palestinian libraries, preservation, special collections, West Bank.

and its history, regardless of its scientific value, or even the sentimental value held by its owner, to whom the establishment of the Municipal Library, located across the street, is attributed.

These books, with all the sorrow and sadness surrounding them, belonged to the library of Dr. Ahmed Assrouri, who had a great interest in preserving culture and science in Nablus, as well as in developing its water and electricity networks. The loss of the Assrouri library and the scattering of Dr. Assrouri's books prompted this author to investigate this sore topic.

Samer Khanfar, the owner of the scrap shop, cannot assess the sentimental value of Assrouri's books. For him, Assrouri was a respected man who owned a private library that contained many books on many scientific, literary, and historical subjects. Despite the fact that Khanfar was convinced that the collection contained old manuscripts worth a great deal of money and whose publication date surpassed a hundred years, he sold many of them to people looking for old books from the occupied territories of Palestine and



Figure 1. King Hussain with Professor Touqan at the library



Figure 2. The Nablus Public Library, Palestine's first public library

who had an interest in acquiring them for many reasons. Khanfar also sold part of the collection to the people of the city who were looking to get educated at a low price.

Khanfar purchased the entirety of Assrouri's library of more than 600 books for only 2,000 shekels (less than 600 dollars), hoping it contained ancient and precious books. It included treasures: There was the complete set of the British encyclopaedia, all volumes of the famous Sanhuri law books, including commentaries,¹ and the novels of Naguib Mahfouz and Ihsan Abdel Quddous², along with international novels such as *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Zorba*. Moreover, we found autographed gift books, a book on the laws of the land in Palestine during the British Mandate, a famous book of songs in music and literature, in addition to books on history, geography, jurisprudence, and many medical books in foreign languages. We also found a rare report on the achievements of the Municipality of Nablus while Assrouri was mayor. All these books were scattered here and there awaiting their buyers like the many scraps that filled Khanfar's small shop. The library's devaluation breaks the heart.

Talking with the merchant Khanfar prompted me to search for other private libraries that may have been neglected and sold, leading me to Dawood Makkawi, who owns a library not far from Khanfar's shop. Makkawi told me of a classmate of his, an owner of a wood burning oven shop for Arabic bread, who witnessed the senseless destruction of books left in the inheritance of a man from a famous Nablus family who served as a member of its local municipal government. The books reached a baker who used them to fire his oven. Makkawi adds, "I found the books on the floor, with magazines and old important periodicals, donated by their owners to the baker to be used for fire. I took pity on the books and chose many of them to add to my personal home collection, due to their importance and their informational, scientific, and historical value."

Makkawi also told us about another library that belonged to an old Nablus scholar from Al-Yasmina neighborhood, Sheikh Ahmad Alhamash, who owned a rare collection of religious books in ancient Arabic and Turkish languages, written in Arabic letters. He told us how people neglected these books and stole many of the manuscripts, and how moths destroyed the rest and ruined knowledge that would

¹ Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri (1895-1971 CE) was an eminent Egyptian legal scholar who greatly influenced the drafting of legal codes in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Kuwait. His multi-volume commentary on civil law, completed a year before his death, is still considered authoritative in many parts of the Arab world.

² Ihsan Abdel Quddous (1919 -1990 CE) was a well-known Egyptian writer and editor. Many of his novels were adapted into film.

certainly have been important to the people and their city. The pigeon who was living in Alhamash's abandoned house participated in the crime, emptying its filth on what remained. The same happened to the library of one of the founders of a trade union. He was a member of the Palestinian Communist Party who sold his inherited home, including a valuable library that was left wasting in cardboard boxes and that was not discovered until now.

Makkawi added that a son of one of the esteemed families in the city tragically ended his family's retention of the library that he inherited from the scientists and intellectuals of the family. After one of the universities refused to accept this library as a condition of his employment, he decided to sell it to the Hebrew University for tens of thousands of dollars. The library contained many rare manuscript documents of correspondence between members of his family and the Ottoman State.

A similar shocking ending also came to the library of Sheikh Assafarini, one of the most important Hanbali scholars³ in the city of Nablus during the 18th century CE (twelfth AH⁴). Sheikh Youssef Alouzbuki, the secretary-general of manuscripts at the al-Aqsa mosque, told me that the library was filled with rare manuscripts of Hanbali scholars and sold to the Ashatti family in Damascus. But part of the Ashatti library, including the Assafarini library, disappeared for a hundred years, to be later discovered in the Princeton University catalog in the Avraham Yahuda section, a collection of Arabic and Islamic manuscripts. The collection settled in the late 1960s at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in accordance with a Jewish will.

The above-mentioned stories have prompted many graduate students and researchers to visit the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to access documents and sources that might enrich their research. One example cited by Makkawi was a researcher who was studying the 1936 strike,⁵ and who obtained from the University a complete set of data issued by the revolutionary factions. In many ways, the Hebrew University, which is aware of the importance of Palestinian books and libraries, has relied on staff who specialized in collecting books published in the West Bank, and at times has relied on Palestinians.

³ The Hanbali school is one of the four traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence. It is named for its founder, the Iraqi jurist and theologian Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855 CE).

⁴ "AH" is an abbreviation for "Anno Hegirae"—or the Year of the Hegira. According to the Western dating system, that was in 622 CE.

⁵ This is a reference to the general strike throughout Palestine against British rule and Zionist settlement. It began in Nablus in April 1936 CE and continued until October of that year.

Some library owners, fearing the loss of their books, were driven to include a specific paragraph in their wills to bequeath them to someone in the family. One such case was the historian Ihsan Innimr (1905-1985 CE) who wrote about 50 books, of which 34 were published in his lifetime. The most important of these was his reference book on Nablus, *History of Jabal Nablus and Bilqaa*. At the end of his life, Innimr asked that the rest of his books be published, that not a single book leave his personal library, which contained more than a thousand books, and that the library should become the private property of his only daughter Khadija. I met Khadija at her house in the historic Qasr Innimr (Tiger Palace), where she showed me the contents of the library, which she maintains and cares for, but which she prevents researchers from using.

The heirs of many libraries also sought to preserve their relatives' libraries by donating them to public libraries—including, for example, the Nablus Public Library and the Annajah University Library, which stored the collections in a dedicated area. Visitors to the Nablus Public Library will notice in the archives section on the second floor the donated private collections, such as the libraries of Kadri Toukan,⁶ the historian Ibrahim al-Tani, Dr. Mahmoud Attallah,⁷ and Dr. Shaukat Zeid Al-Kilani (1920-2002),



Figure 3. Some of Assrouri's books were purchased by Khanfar, the owner of a scrap shop.

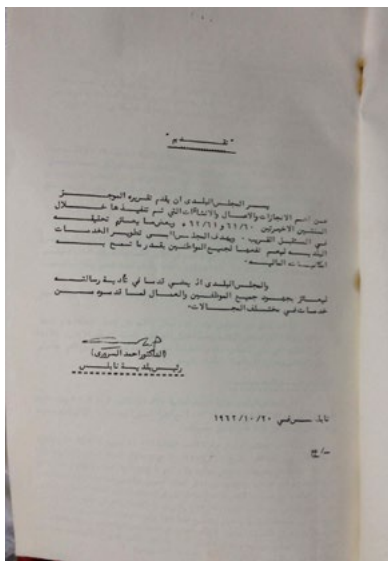


Figure 4. Rare report of the Nablus Municipality

⁶ Kadri Toukan (1910-1971 CE) born in Nablus, was a high school principal, member of the Jordanian Parliament, and in the 1960s was appointed foreign minister of Jordan.

⁷ Dr. Mahmoud Attallah (1953-2002 CE) was the chief historian of An-Najah

the first member of the Board of Trustees of Annajah University and its president for two years.

It is also worth mentioning here that some Palestinian families have given their personal libraries to the University of Jordan. One example has been the Zatir family, which donated the library of Adel Zu'aiter, the Palestinian historian, translator, and author from Nablus.⁸ According to Adel Zu'aiter's daughter Dr. Nayla Zu'aiter, a lecturer at the National University, part of his library was given to the University of Jordan and part to the Nablus Municipal Library after its establishment.

Zuhair Aldebai, the head of the cultural centers in the municipality of Nablus discusses the end of the generation that cared for libraries and books. He says, "One assumes that an entity, regardless of what governs it, be it the municipality of Nablus or the Ministry of Culture, should record the number of private libraries (at home) so that, at a minimum, there's a document of their existence. Unfortunately, to-date, this has not been done."

Journals of travelers who have visited Nablus contain praise of its scientists, historians, and scholars. Many of them enhanced their knowledge and benefited from the city's libraries and its valued manuscripts. What is most frightening these days is the growing indifference of the library heirs; for them, books are monetized inheritance, and a burden, as they say. Nablus is losing its cultural and scientific history, wisdom, and knowledge.

National University in Nablus.

⁸ Adel Zu'aiter (1897-1957 CE) is best known for his translation of numerous works from French into Arabic.

**MELA Statement on Collection
Development, Access, and
Equity in the Time of COVID-19**
In response to the SALALM Resolution:
MELA Statement on Collection
Development, Access, and Equity
in the Time of COVID-19

This statement has been endorsed by the Board of Directors for the Middle East Studies Association (MESA).

<https://mesana.org/advocacy/letters-from-the-board/2020/06/23/statement-on-collection-development-access-and-equity-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced significant operational and financial challenges for libraries and other institutions committed to preservation and access for documentary heritage.

As library specialists engaged in the work of collection development and collection access in support of the study and appreciation of the communities, cultures, and languages of the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa, and their diasporas, we in the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) share the concerns around equity, representation, and access raised by our colleagues in the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) in their Task Force Resolution issued 10 June 2020.

SALALM Resolution: Collection Development in the Time of COVID-19

<https://salalm.org/salalm-resolution-collection-development-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

Keywords: Access, collection development, COVID-19, equity, funding, libraries, Middle East

As is the case in Latin America and the Caribbean and elsewhere across the Global South, the majority of publications from the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa and the diasporas are print-only, and are not available in electronic formats. Therefore, collecting policies which prefer electronic acquisitions at the expense of print risk excluding from their growing collections a significant portion of the cultural and scholarly production of these regions. Such policies threaten the diversity of representation in library collections by further marginalizing already marginalized voices.

Furthermore, such policies jeopardize the work of regional vendors. The strength and excellence of our collections rely on the expertise of vendors who have been working in the region for decades. Many of these vendors are small businesses. Failing to continue acquiring from these vendors puts them at risk of folding. Losing these vendors will considerably weaken our libraries' ability to meet the needs of our users.

Therefore, MELA urges libraries to preserve funding allocations for acquiring material from the region (particularly directly from regional vendors) and for expertly processing this material for better access and discovery.

We endorse the SALALM Resolution and offer the following addenda for consideration:

Whereas funding for expert library specialists responsible for selecting and processing collections might be under threat;

Whereas libraries have significant print collections which are not easily accessible to off-campus and international users;

Whereas the impending budget cuts are expected to reduce travel funding;

- We urge libraries to protect funding to maintain the expert staffing necessary to conduct rich collection development and the processing required to ensure that collections are accessible;
- We urge libraries to expand collaborative efforts toward digital and enhanced physical access to collection materials through partnerships and consortia focused on cooperative collection development, cooperative cataloguing, and digitization. To this end, we applaud CRL's proposed initiative of focused community conversations about collections, budgets, and collaboration. Furthermore, we urge libraries to maintain their commitment to existing collaborative initiatives such as CRL's Middle East Materials Project (MEMP), Arabic Collections Online (ACO) and the Library of Congress's Cooperative Acquisitions Program, to name a few. Doing so will ensure diversity and access to collections from a region often underserved and misunderstood.

- Further, while travel in the midst of a pandemic presents a serious risk, we urge libraries to preserve funding for international trips intended for collection development and networking. Such trips are necessary for acquiring books, journals, videos, sound recordings and ephemeral materials, and for the development of strategic partnerships furthering collection access through potential digitization projects.

We also encourage collaboration and further discussion with other organizations working with international collections at a national and international level. MELA is calling on the Middle Eastern Studies Association, the American Oriental Society, Middle East Medivalists, and other scholarly associations and organizations whose members are working in and on the Middle East, North Africa, and the diasporas to advocate for the need for strong national collections of materials from the region.

In these uncertain times, strong national area studies collections allow researchers to continue their scholarly and creative work. Moreover, strong national collections in terms of coverage and number of available copies enable better access to materials from the Middle East (Southwest Asia), North Africa, and the diasporas. This access can contribute to increasing equity in the field of Middle Eastern studies and well beyond. We are particularly concerned that research materials and resources will be concentrated in a handful of wealthy, often private, institutions. Commitment to area studies in general and to Middle East studies librarianship in particular is also instrumental for maintaining diverse and inclusive collections that reflect and support the wide ranging scholarly and creative interests of our users.

Resolution in Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights

2018-2019 ALA CD#49
2019 ALA Annual Conference

Editor's note: This resolution was approved by SRRT Action Council, and then by the American Libraries Association (ALA) Membership meeting at the 2019 ALA annual conference. Subsequently, ALA Council referred this resolution to a resolution review task force.

Whereas, the American Library Association (ALA) “opposes any use of governmental prerogatives that lead to the intimidation of individuals or groups and discourages them from exercising the right of free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (ALA Policy B.2.4 Governmental Intimidation); and

Whereas, ALA “opposes any legislation or codification of documents . . . that undermine academic or intellectual freedom, chill free speech, and/or otherwise interfere with the academic community’s well-established norms and values of scholarship and educational excellence” (ALA Policy B.2.5 Support of Academic Freedom); and

Whereas, S.1, the Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019, which the U.S. Senate passed on February 5, 2019, and its companion bill H.R.336 in the House include the Combating BDS Act, which the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has explained, “would condone state laws penalizing businesses and individuals who participate in boycott, divestment, or sanctions (‘BDS’) activities and other politically motivated boycotts against Israel and Israeli controlled territories”; and

Whereas, the ACLU has determined that the intent of the

Keywords: Academic freedom; activism, BDS; Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions; free speech, Palestine

Combating BDS Act is “contrary to the spirit and letter of the First Amendment guarantee of freedoms of speech and association;” and the National Coalition Against Censorship has similarly opposed the act on First Amendment grounds; and

Whereas, the Supreme Court has ruled that boycotts for political and social change are protected speech under the First Amendment; and

Whereas, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a non-violent movement on behalf of Palestinian rights, modeled after the struggle against apartheid in South Africa; and

Whereas, federal courts have blocked on First Amendment grounds implementation in three states of the sort of anti-BDS legislation condoned by the Combating BDS Act; and

Whereas, S.852, the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019 currently before Congress provides a definition of anti-Semitism to be used for the enforcement of Federal antidiscrimination laws concerning education programs or activities; and

Whereas, according to the ACLU, the “overbroad definition of anti-Semitism” in the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act “risks incorrectly equating constitutionally protected criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, making it likely that free speech will be chilled on campuses”; and

Whereas, the ACLU, the Alliance for Academic Freedom, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Defending Rights & Dissent, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and Kenneth Stern, a primary author of the definition of anti-Semitism employed in the bill, have all opposed previous versions of the bill; now therefore be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association, on behalf of its members

1. opposes the Combating of BDS Act of 2019 contained in S.1 and H.R. 336;
2. opposes S.852, the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019; and
3. opposes any federal, state, or local legislation that would restrict the First Amendment rights of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights, including activists and supporters of the BDS movement.

Mover: Thomas Twiss

Secunder: Myrna Morales

Communications of the SRRT Action Council and ALA Resolution Review Task Force

Editor's note: The "Resolution in Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights" approved by the ALA Membership meeting was referred by ALA Council to a resolution review task force. Although the revised resolution subsequently issued by the task force was endorsed by SRRT Action Council, none of the other groups represented on the task force recommended approval. Consequently, discussion in Council reverted to the original resolution passed by the ALA Membership meeting. It was defeated overwhelmingly at the 2020 ALA Midwinter meeting. (For a fuller discussion of these developments, see the "IRTF Report" in the April 2020 SRRT Newsletter <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/irtf/2020midwinter>.)

The following document contains the SRRT Action Council response to the report of the task force, the report of the task force, the resolution as revised by the task force, and one amendment to the revised resolution proposed by SRRT.

SUBJECT: Response to the Report of the Resolution Review Task Force
FROM: SRRT Action Council
TO: ALA Council, Committee on Legislation, Intellectual Freedom Committee, International Relations Committee
DATE: January 17, 2020

The Need for Advocacy

Free expression and intellectual freedom are currently under attack in the United States. A major aspect of this attack is a massive wave of

Keywords: Academic freedom; advocacy; BDS; Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions; American Library Association; free speech; legislation; Palestinian rights.

state and federal legislation, and now an executive order, specifically designed to punish advocates for Palestinian rights and to chill discussion of the issue of Palestinian rights on college campuses. In this context the American Library Association is clearly obligated to live up to its promise to promote and defend free speech and intellectual freedom by joining with other civil liberties organizations and taking an unambiguous position opposing this legislation, and specifically the Combating BDS Act of 2019, contained in S.1 and H.R.336, and the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019, S.852 and H.R. 4009.

Background

As one of the represented groups on the task force created to review the “Resolution in Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights,” SRRT Action Council has received the report of the task force. [Appendix A]. We have voted to endorse the resolution as revised by the task force and now titled “Resolution Opposing the Free Speech and Intellectual Freedom Restrictions in the Combating BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, and Related Legislation” [Appendix B], as well as one amendment to the resolution [Appendix C]. Also, we have voted to approve this statement, which explains our views on the importance of the issue and ALA’s responsibility to address it, and which responds to various concerns that have been raised about this resolution.

The civil libertarian journalist Conor Friedersdorf has written that “laws intended to constrain pro-Palestinian activists are among the significant threats to the First Amendment.”¹ Even more pointedly, the noted journalist and constitutional attorney Glenn Greenwald has observed without exaggeration that the “*single greatest threat to free speech in the West—and in the U.S.—is the coordinated, growing campaign to outlaw and punish those who advocate for or participate in activism to end the Israeli occupation.*”²

One form this campaign has taken in the U.S. has been legislation designed to penalize companies and individuals who participate in boycotts—especially the boycott organized by the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement—designed to pressure Israel into recognizing Palestinian rights. To date, 27 states have passed

¹ Conor Friedersdorf, “The Constitutional Right to Boycott,” *The Atlantic*, Feb. 2, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/is-there-a-constitutional-right-to-boycott/552077/>.

² Glenn Greenwald, “In a Major Free Speech Victory, a Federal Court Strikes Down a Law that Punishes Supporters of Israel Boycott,” *The Intercept*, Jan. 32, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/01/31/kansas-bds-law-free-speech/>. Italics added.

such laws, and similar legislation is pending in an additional 14.³ Although such laws have been blocked on constitutional grounds by federal courts in Arizona, Kansas, and Texas, they would be explicitly condoned by the Combating BDS Act of 2019 contained in S.1, which the U.S. Senate passed on February 5, 2019, and its companion bill H.R.336, currently pending in the House.⁴ The ACLU, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and Defending Rights & Dissent have opposed the bill as contrary to the spirit and letter of First Amendment protections.⁵ The bill was also opposed by 23 senators, including Cory Booker, Sherrod Brown, Dianne Feinstein, Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren—all of whom voted against it, specifically for First Amendment reasons. Sen. Feinstein stated that this “Israel anti-boycott legislation would give states a free pass to restrict First Amendment protections for millions of Americans.... Despite my strong support for Israel, I oppose this legislation because it clearly violates the Constitution.”⁶

³ “Anti-Boycott Legislation Around The Country,” Palestine Legal <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>.

⁴ THIRD FEDERAL COURT BLOCKS ANTI-BDS LAW AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL,” ACLU, April 25, 2019; <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/third-federal-court-blocks-anti-bds-law-unconstitutional>; “S.1 - Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019,” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22combating+bds+act%5C%22%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2>; “H.R.336 - Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019,” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/336/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22%5C%22combating+bds+act%5C%22%22%5D%7D&r=2&s=2>.

⁵ “ACLU LETTER OPPOSING S. 1 (COMBATING BDS ACT),” ACLU, JAN. 28, 2019, [HTTPS://WWW.ACLU.ORG/LETTER/ACLU-LETTER-OPPOSING-S-1-COMBATING-BDS-ACT](https://www.aclu.org/letter/aclu-letter-opposing-s-1-combating-bds-act); “ANTI-BDS LEGISLATION IN SENATE DISREGARDS FREE SPEECH,” NCAC, JAN. 11, 2019, [HTTPS://NCAC.ORG/NEWS/BLOG/ANTI-BDS-LEGISLATION-IN-SENATE-DISREGARDS-FREE-SPEECH](https://ncac.org/news/blog/anti-bds-legislation-in-senate-disregards-free-speech); “Oppose the Combating BDS Act of 2019,” Defending Rights and Dissent, <https://rightsanddissent.salsalabs.org/OpposeS1/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&cId=80f351f6-94bc-470d-a945-6dfc3f26fb32>.

⁶ Ron Kompeas, “Why these Democratic presidential hopefuls voted no on an anti-BDS bill,” *Times of Israel*, Feb. 8, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-these-democratic-presidential-hopefuls-voted-no-on-an-anti-bds-bill/>. The article states that 22 senators voted against this bill. The actual number was 23. (See https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm?congress=116&session=1&vote=00016.); Sen. Dianne Feinstein, “Feinstein: I Won’t Support Unconstitutional Israel Anti-Boycott Legislation,” Jan. 7, 2019, <https://twitter.com/SenFeinstein/status/1082397106424418304>.

Another form this offensive has taken has been the attempt to mandate a definition of anti-Semitism to be used for the enforcement of federal antidiscrimination laws related to education programs or activities. That is the intent of the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019 (S.852 and H.R. 4009).⁷ There is no question that anti-Semitism is a real and growing problem, including on college campuses. But as the Act itself notes, the Department of Education is *already* empowered to investigate incidents of anti-Semitism as a form of discrimination.⁸ Furthermore, as PEN America has recently stated, “the approach taken in the Act is not constructive, and runs the risk of chilling free speech.”⁹ The ACLU, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and the Center for Constitutional Rights all have observed that the definition of anti-Semitism utilized by the Act is vague and/or overbroad.¹⁰ Aside from that, the Act explicitly includes as part of its definition such examples as “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination” and “applying double standards” to Israel—charges frequently made against supporters of Palestinian rights.¹¹ For this reason, members of the Alliance for Academic Freedom—including Kenneth Stern, the principal author of the definition used in the Act—wrote regarding a previous version of this bill:

We oppose the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act ... because we believe it endangers academic freedom We believe its language could encourage punishments of legitimate expressions of political opinion. We don't believe that Congress should be in the business of setting

⁷ “S.582 – Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019,” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/852/text>; <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/852/text>; “H.R.4009 – Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019,” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4009/text>

⁸ See “S.582 – Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019,” Sec. 2, Findings, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/852/text>,

⁹ PEN America, *Chasm in the Classroom: Campus Free Speech in a Divided America*, 2019, p.75, <https://pen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019-PEN-Chasm-in-the-Classroom-04.25.pdf>.

¹⁰ “Anti-Semitism Awareness Act continues to threaten free speech on campus,” Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, April 12, 2019, <https://www.thefire.org/anti-semitism-awareness-act-continues-to-threaten-free-speech-on-campus/>; “CCR Joins Rights Organizations in Opposing Anti-Semitism Awareness Act,” Center for Constitutional Rights, Sept. 19, 201, <https://ccrjustice.org/ccr-joins-rights-organizations-opposing-anti-semitism-awareness-act>.

¹¹ “S.582 – Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019,” <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/852/text>; “Romanian Chairmanship 2016,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, May 26, 2016, https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf.

forth official definitions of anti-Semitism. And we do not think any definition of anti-Semitism... has any legitimate application by Congress to contentious political speech on campus.¹²

For the same reason, Kenneth Stern told the House Judiciary Committee this bill “should not be considered in any form.”¹³

New Executive Order

Even without the passage of the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, this past summer the Department of Education initiated an investigation of the Middle East studies program shared by Duke University and the University of North Carolina, because of a complaint that noted it had organized a conference that included BDS members as panelists.¹⁴ More recently, after our task force had finished its work, President Trump issued Executive Order 13899, “Combating Anti-Semitism,” which requires that when considering cases of discrimination for programs and activities receiving federal funding, all executive departments and agencies must consider the definition of anti-Semitism employed in the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act. The Committee on Academic Freedom of the Middle East Studies Association clearly explained the implications of this executive order in a Dec. 12 letter to President Trump:

The deployment of such a broad, vague and flawed definition of anti-Semitism by government agencies threatens the constitutionally protected right to free speech and may have a chilling effect on teaching about, and public discussion of, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on college and university campuses, thereby undermining the academic freedom so vital to the mission of our institutions of higher education.... We believe that all political speech, including criticism of any government or ideology and advocacy for any group's rights is, and must remain, constitutionally protected We therefore call on you to revoke this executive order immediately.¹⁵

¹² <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/06/12/criticism-anti-semitism-awareness-act-opinion>

¹³ Kenneth S. Stern, “Will Campus Criticism of Israel Violate Federal Law?,” Opinion, *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/opinion/will-campus-criticism-of-israel-violate-federal-law.html>.

¹⁴ Erica L. Green, “U.S. Orders Duke and U.N.C. to Recast Tone in Mideast Studies,” *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/opinion/will-campus-criticism-of-israel-violate-federal-law.html>.

¹⁵ Dina Rizk Khoury and Laurie Brand, “Letter Criticizing President Trump's Order on Combatting Anti-Semitism,” Dec. 12, 2019, Committee on Academic Freedom, Middle East Studies Association, <https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/2019/12/12/letter-criticizing-president-trumps-executive-order-on-combating-anti-semitism>.

Agreeing with this view, SRRT Action Council proposes amending the resolution to oppose any executive order that would restrict First Amendment rights. [Appendix C]

ALA Policies

These restrictive bills have been strongly opposed by virtually every significant civil liberties organization in the U.S.—except one: the American Library Association. That is a surprising absence. One of ALA's most fundamental documents, "The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," contains both a mandate and a pledge regarding our support for free speech:

The American Library Association is unswerving in its commitment to human rights, but cherishes a particular commitment to privacy and *free expression*; the two *are inseparably linked and inextricably entwined with the professional practice of librarianship*....

Courageous people, in difficult and dangerous circumstances throughout human history, have demonstrated that freedom lives in the human heart and cries out for justice We draw inspiration from their example. They challenge us to *remain steadfast in our most basic professional responsibility to promote and defend the rights of privacy and free expression*....

The American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to intimidation of individuals that prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. *We urge libraries and librarians everywhere to resist such abuse of governmental power, and to support those against whom such governmental power has been employed*....

The American Library Association will not abrogate these principles. We believe that censorship corrupts the cause of justice, and contributes to the demise of freedom.¹⁶

Our policy on Academic Freedom further states that ALA "*opposes any legislation or codification of documents . . . that undermine academic or intellectual freedom, chill free speech, and/or otherwise interfere with the academic community's well-established norms and values of scholarship and educational excellence.*"¹⁷

¹⁶ "The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," American Library Association, Adopted January 16, 1991, by the ALA Council; and amended on July 1, 2014. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/universalright>. Italics added.

¹⁷ ALA Policy B.2.5 Support of Academic Freedom, American Library Association, <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/section2/53intellfreedom>. Italics added.

“Political Capital”

The indicated response to repressive legislation is clear. However, some members of the task force have argued that implementing our principles is not politically expedient. They have complained that the resolution opposes legislation that has bipartisan support and have suggested that it would involve an unwise expenditure of our “political capital.” They have argued that ALA has limited public policy and advocacy resources, so it should not spend resources on issues outside of our legislative priorities. They have warned that, when required to take a position on an “outside of the library issue,” our Public Policy and Advocacy staff are likely to alienate legislators they will later need to achieve actual legislative priorities. This, they claim, simply isn’t strategic. And they have insisted that, although past resolutions might have gone out of the field of library specific issues, that is no reason to continue. Rather, other important civil liberties groups, such as the ACLU, can carry the non-library issues.

But there are no qualifications in ALA’s pledge not to abrogate our principles. Our Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights doesn’t say “ALA supports free speech and intellectual freedom when it’s politically expedient,” or “*except* when repressive legislation has bipartisan support.” In fact, it is even *more* important for us to oppose repressive legislation when it *has* bipartisan support. Is it true that free expression is a “non-library issue”? How can that be the case when free expression is “*inseparably linked and inextricably entwined with the professional practice of librarianship*”? And how can that be the case when defending the right to free expression is “our most basic professional responsibility”?

We insist that there is no better use of our “political capital” than defending our core values. And we would argue that when those values are under attack—as they increasingly are today—putting your head in the sand is not a “strategy.” Then, it is even more important strategically to implement the provision in ALA’s current Strategic Plan that identifies advocacy for intellectual freedom as a “key action area.”¹⁸ Also, it is even more important for ALA to join with other civil liberties organizations in resisting those attacks—and not to leave that task to the ACLU.

The entire approach some of our friends on the task force have proposed is a radical departure from all of ALA’s traditional practice. In the past we have always recognized the importance of defending

¹⁸ “American Library Association Strategic Directions,” American Library Association, June 28, 2015, (2017 Update), http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org/aboutala/files/content/governance/StrategicPlan/Strategic%20Directions%202017_Update.pdf.

our core values, even when “library issues” in the narrowest sense were not involved. For example, in relatively recent years we have opposed disinformation and media manipulation, supported the Dream Act, opposed use of torture, supported whistleblowers, supported the reunification of migrant children with their families, opposed voter suppression, and opposed a census question on citizenship. For some of our colleagues on the task force, this has all been a distraction that there is no reason to continue. For SRRT, these resolutions embody some of the most vital traditions of our profession.

Although we cannot guarantee there will be no costs to defending free speech, we believe that some of our friends on the task force exaggerate the potential costs of this resolution. While there have been unrelenting efforts to restrict the free speech rights of the movement for Palestinian rights, these have not all been successful. As noted, three federal courts have blocked this sort of legislation on First Amendment grounds. The Israel Anti-Boycott Act, which would have criminalized participation in boycotts of companies doing business in Israel and its settlements if they were called for by international governmental organizations, failed to pass in the last Congress and has not yet been reintroduced. Also, although S.1, containing the Combating BDS Act of 2019, passed in the Senate in 2019, 23 senators voted against it. So even in Congress, resistance to this repressive legislation is real.

Beyond that, in identifying the potential costs (and benefits) of this resolution we need to take public opinion into consideration. The evidence there is clear: a majority of the American public opposes this sort of restrictive legislation. In a poll conducted September 3-20, 2019 for the Brookings Institution 72% of respondents expressed the view that “We should OPPOSE laws that penalize people who boycott Israel because these laws infringe on the Constitutional right to free speech and peaceful protest.”¹⁹ This general picture was confirmed by a poll conducted for the think tank Data for Progress September 13-16, 2019. It found that “Overall, voters oppose anti-BDS laws, 36 percent to 28 percent.”²⁰

¹⁹ “The U.S. and the Middle East: What Americans Think,” the Brookings Institution, Oct. 22, 2019, pp. 9-10, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/fp_20191022_us_middleeast_poll_transcript.pdf; “American Attitudes toward the Middle East: a Public Opinion Poll by Shibley Telhami,” Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, p. 54, <https://criticalissues.umd.edu/sites/criticalissues.umd.edu/files/UMCIP%20Middle%20East%20PowerPoint.pdf>

²⁰ Emma Saltzberg, Senior Fellow, Data for Progress, “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (polling),” p. 9, <http://filesforprogress.org/memos/BDS-and-anti-boycott-laws.pdf>. Both polls also found a high degree of support

Of course, the political and financial capital of ALA is only enhanced by its reputation as a strong defender of free speech and intellectual freedom. That is at least partly why our advocacy work in these areas is highlighted on ALA's web pages. And that is why the most recent Annual Fund mailing sent out by ALA's Development Office in November 2019 specifically emphasized the Office for Intellectual Freedom's "direct support to library workers and others who are facing threats to intellectual freedom and privacy."²¹ But how long will ALA be able to benefit from its reputation if we abandon our actual support for free speech and intellectual freedom?

Legislative Concerns

It has been asserted that we cannot name specific bills in our resolution, since that would put the meaning of the resolution at risk if those bills were changed as they move through the legislative process. To the best of our knowledge, this has never been an issue for previous resolutions or positions taken by ALA or other civil liberties organizations. ALA has frequently supported or opposed specific bills, or aspects of specific bills.²² So it is unclear why the issue is being raised

for BDS among Democrats. The Brookings Institution poll found that 48% of Democrats who had heard of BDS supported it, while 15% opposed it. ("American Attitudes toward the Middle East," p. 43.) The Data for Progress poll found that 44% of respondents who voted Democrat in the 2018 election support BDS, while 15% opposed it. (Emma Saltzberg, p. 5.)

²¹ Wanda Brown and Mary Ghikas, "Libraries Transform," letter, Nov. 20, 2019.

²² For ALA *opposition* to specific bills, etc., see for example: "RESOLUTION ON THE USA PATRIOT ACT AND RELATED MEASURES THAT INFRINGE ON THE RIGHTS OF LIBRARY USERS," <https://www.ala.org/ala/washoff/WOissues/civilliberties/theusapatriotact/alaresolution.htm>; "ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ALA COUNCIL AT THE 2012 ALA MIDWINTER MEETING," "ADOPTED, ALA CD#20.1, Revised, Resolution Opposing the Research Works Act, as amended to read" and "ADOPTED, ALA CD#20.2, Resolution Opposing the Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act of 2011 (PIPA)," http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_actions/2012mw_annual_actions/actions_mw2012.pdf; "ALA urges Senate to reject bill to make Register of Copyrights a presidential appointee," <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2017/04/ala-urges-senate-reject-bill-make-register-copyrights-presidential-appointee>, "American Library Association urges library advocates to oppose cybersecurity bill CISPA," <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2012/04/american-library-association-urges-library-advocates-oppose-cybersecurity>; "Keep Copyright Office in Library of Congress," <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/keep-copyright-office-in-library-of-congress/>; "ALA WASHINGTON OFFICE REPORT TO COUNCIL" January 16, 2019, "Library copyright

for this particular resolution. Nevertheless, this concern is addressed in the resolved clauses of the revised resolution by the inclusion of the words: "... as introduced, and any other current or future versions of these bills that would continue to infringe on the free speech rights of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights, including supporters of the BDS movement." Removal of reference to any specific bills would render this resolution innocuous. There is no Congressional supporter of the restrictive bills named in the resolution who sees a contradiction between these bills and free speech or intellectual freedom. So we need to make clear that we see a contradiction. If we do not have the courage to name the bills we oppose, no one will take us seriously—and there is no reason why they should.

It has been argued by some that in the legislative world the impact of opposition resolutions is "burnt bridges," and that most commonly, the harm outweighs the good. Again, this is the first time we have heard of such a consideration. In fact, ALA has repeatedly opposed specific legislation in its resolutions and other statements.²³ And on the face of it, this generalization hardly makes sense. Opposition to any bill involves support for its opponents; while support for any bill involves opposition to its opponents.

Some of our colleagues on the task force have argued it is an antitrust law violation to support a commercial boycott, and ALA agents who do this are legitimately susceptible to lawsuits and damages. Further, they have argued it is a violation of our 501(c)3 tax status to take a position on a political boycott. So whether BDS is engaged in commercial or political boycotting, they say, is somewhat debatable, but neither is appropriate for ALA. For these reasons, they

office" and "CASE Act," http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2019_ms_council_docs/ALA%20CD%2030%20Washington%20Office%20Report.pdf; For ALA *support* for specific bills, see for example: "Resolution in Support of Requesting Congress to Reintroduce and Vote on the Dream Act," http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/council/council_documents/2011mw_council_docus/cd39%20_dream_act.pdf; "RESOLUTION ON CURBING GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE AND RESTORING CIVIL LIBERTIES," http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/cd_20_20_4%20COL%20Report.pdf; "Supporting the USA FREEDOM Act of 2015: ALA's perspective," <https://www.districtdispatch.org/2015/05/supporting-the-usa-freedom-act-of-2015-alas-perspective/>; "American Library Association Statement of Support for "Digital Learning Equity Act of 2015," <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2015/06/american-library-association-statement-support-digital-learning-equity-act>; "Save the Internet Bill Introduced," <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/bicameral-save-the-internet-bill-introduced/>.

²³ See links to ALA opposition to specific bills in previous end note.

have insisted, no reference to boycotting or the BDS group should end up in the final version of this resolution.

But neither the original resolution nor the revised resolution takes a position on the BDS boycott. In fact, the revised resolution explicitly states that “ALA does not currently take a position on the political views of BDS or anti-BDS supporters.” And there is no prohibition on 501(c)3 organizations taking positions in support of the right of organizations or individuals to support a boycott. In fact, most civil liberties organizations that oppose anti-BDS legislation, such as the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and the National Coalition Against Censorship, are 501(c)3 organizations. Jules Lobel, one of the leading constitutional and civil rights attorneys and scholars in the U.S. has advised us, “there is ABSOLUTELY nothing that prevents the ALA from taking a position on legislation that a majority of the organization believes denies Americans freedom of speech.”²⁴ So this entire argument is simply irrelevant. We should also note that ALA legal counsel has advised the task force that BDS “is a political boycott and not illegal.” It would be deeply troubling if the governing body of a leading civil liberties organization embraced the view that it was bound by nonexistent restrictive legislation. Regarding the deletion of any reference to BDS from the resolution, much of the current legislation directed against supporters of Palestinian rights is aimed specifically at the BDS movement; it is primarily that movement’s right to boycott that is being restricted. So it is crucial that the resolution clearly identify BDS as a central target of this legislation. Deleting any reference to BDS would obscure the resolution’s entire purpose.

Finally, there seemed to be concern from some on the task force that the resolution was to be sent to “all members of Congress.” It was proposed instead that it be sent only to certain targeted members. But sending our resolutions and statements to all members of Congress is not unusual; ALA has done that repeatedly in the past.²⁵ So why

²⁴ Jules Lobel, email message to Tom Twiss, Dec. 30, 2019.

²⁵ “SRRT Resolutions 2005: Resolution on the Connection Between the Iraq War and Libraries,” <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt-resolutions-2005-resolution-connection-between-iraq-war-and-libraries>; “Resolution on the Protection of Privacy Rights,” <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt-resolutions-2002-resolution-protection-privacy-rights>; “ALA Pushes for Maximum FY16 Library Funding,” Report on Washington Office Activities, Oct. 13, 2015; http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/governance/officers/eb_documents/2015_2016ebdocuments/ebd12_1_washington_office_rpt_fa15.pdf; “ALA Calls for ‘Public Option’ in Health Care Reform,” http://www.ala.org/news/news/pressreleases2009/august2009/pubop_wo; “SRRT Resolutions 2004: Resolution Against the Use of Racist Training Materials by the U.S. Military,” <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt-resolutions-2004-resolution-against-use->

not do that with this resolution? It is important that all members of Congress—both those who will oppose and those who will welcome this resolution—understand our view on this issue. Limiting distribution would only limit its impact. There also seemed to be concern that the final resolved clause calls for the distribution of the entire resolution, rather than just the resolved clauses. In fact, the SRRT representatives on the task force introduced this provision because we were persuaded by arguments of the resolution's critics that some people might not understand why a library organization was taking a position on this issue. The entire resolution indicates clearly how our position is based directly on our principles.

Conclusion

Current legislation targeting supporters of Palestinian rights in the United States represents a serious challenge to free speech. Unless it is stopped, we can expect even more restrictive legislation against supporters of Palestinian rights—and then perhaps against other groups such as Black Lives Matter, Antifa, supporters of undocumented workers, or a new antiwar movement. Our “Universal Right to Free Expression” correctly describes the dynamic involved: “Any action [such as censorship] that denies the inalienable human rights of individuals only damages the will to resist oppression, strengthens the hand of the oppressor, and undermines the cause of justice.”²⁶ Objections to this resolution based on political expediency are short-sighted and a betrayal of our traditions. Objections based on technical concerns invented for this resolution will probably be abandoned if it is defeated as we return to business as usual. Or worse, they will be codified and will become a further constraint on ALA's capacity to act. During this current assault on the core values of librarianship, ALA is obligated to fulfill its mandate and pledge, to live up to its reputation that has inspired public support, and to implement its current strategic plan by advocating for free expression with a clear, unambiguous, and widely distributed resolution condemning this restrictive legislation.

racist-training-materials-us-military; “SRRT Resolutions 2002: Resolution Against Secret Tribunals,” <http://www.ala.org/rt/srrt-resolutions-2002-resolution-against-secret-tribunals>.

²⁶ “The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,” <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/universalright>.

SUBJECT: **BDS resolution**
FROM: Resolution review task force
TO: Committee on Legislation (COL), Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), International Relations Committee (IRC)
DATE: December 20, 2019

A report/forwarding letter to the Committee on Legislation (COL), Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), International Relations Committee (IRC)

Resolution Opposing the Free Speech and Intellectual Freedom Restrictions in the Combating BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, and Related Legislation

Former title: Resolution in Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) resolution was approved by a vote of 63-62 at the ALA membership meeting on Saturday, June 22. The resolution was brought before Council on Sunday, June 23.

Council voted to refer the resolution to the Committee on Legislation (COL), Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), and International Relations Committee (IRC). Council wanted the committees to review the resolution and report back to the ALA Council at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting. The chairs of each committee formed a task force that also included representatives from the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT). The task force report was to be completed by Midwinter 2020.

Emily Drabinski (IRC), co-leader
Eldon Ray James (IFC), co-leader
Robert Barr (COL)
Tara Brady (SRRT)
Sue Considine (IRC)
Sara Dallas (COL)
Jim DelRosso (IFC)
Tom Twiss (SRRT)
Andrew Wertheimer (member of ALA Council)

In a series of three virtual meetings beginning on Oct. 10, the task force discussed both the resolution and the task set by Council. Most

of task force members did not want to change the wording of the resolution in a way that nullified the intent of the membership that voted for the resolution but wanted to change any wording that made the resolution's purpose less clear. The first act of the task force changed the title of resolution to reflect that purpose: opposing the free speech and intellectual freedom restrictions in the Combating BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, and related legislation.

Some members of the task force wanted to change the substance of the resolution but ultimately that minority position did not gain enough support.

This report does not discuss all of the task force's revisions. This report highlights only what the co-leaders considered the most important of the revisions and the most significant points of contention.

While supporting both free speech and intellectual freedom, COL representatives opposed including specifically named legislation in the resolution. One COL representative stated in an early comment "...ALA has limited public policy and advocacy resources. COL has significant concerns with spending resources on issues that are outside of our legislative priorities. It is far more effective to take specific lobbying actions on issues that are directly and unambiguously tied to libraries with legislators. Our PPA staff tells us that they are unable to achieve successful outcomes when they are required to take a position on an outside-of-the-library issue over which they have little influence and little perceived expertise. Further, they are likely to alienate legislators who they will later need to achieve actual legislative priorities. Simply put: this isn't strategic."

Other task force members stated that the resolution would require minimal resources to implement. A SRRT representative stated that "...defending our core values is not an 'outside-of-the library issue,' and that ALA has a long tradition of taking positions in defense of our core values. There should be no higher legislative priority." The SRRT representative also noted that ALA policy says that "we oppose restrictions of free expression and the undermining of intellectual freedom;" it does not say we defend free speech and intellectual freedom only when that does not alienate certain legislators. COL representatives countered that while past resolutions may have gone out of the field of library specific issues that is no reason to continue. "We have a very divided Congress and we must be able to work with both sides of the aisle," he said.

COL also expressed concern that naming specific bills in the resolution would put the meaning of the resolution at risk if those bills were changed as they move through the legislative process. Indeed, as the task force completed its work, President Trump signed an executive order meant in part to address BDS actions on college

campuses. The policy picture around the status of BDS activism in the United States is rapidly changing. A SRRT representative noted that ALA has frequently supported or opposed specific bills. The possibility that the text of the bills named might change was addressed by revising the wording of the resolved clauses to include the wording "...as introduced, and any other current or future versions of these bills that would continue to infringe on the free speech rights of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights, including activists and supporters of the BDS movement." It would also be possible to insert a clause opposing President Trump's recent executive order.

COL representatives countered that the federal policy environment has changed dramatically. More issues are on the table and ALA needs to focus on the issues for which ALA is the only advocate. Other important civil liberties groups, such as the ACLU can carry the non-library issues, said a COL representative. In response, SRRT representatives observed that it would be shortsighted and a betrayal of ALA's traditions to abandon the defense of our core values when they are under attack. In the present policy environment all supporters of civil liberties need to speak up.

The mover of the resolution, one of the SRRT representatives, insisted that the resolution lost its meaning without the names of the specific legislation opposed. Others on the committee agreed and ultimately the wording of resolution contains specific legislation titles. COL continued to disagree with the inclusion of specific legislative titles.

The task force also discussed a perception of some ALA members that the resolution expressed anti-Semitism. The movers disagreed, stating that was neither their intent nor their perception. The essence of their point of view is that supporting the right to constitutionally protected criticism of Israel is not anti-Semitism. They agreed, after much discussion, to changes in the language of the title and resolution itself to minimize references that might be misconstrued and to add language that reinforced a forceful stand against both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Another point of contention centered on the nature of the BDS movement. While insisting the BDS movement is non-violent, SRRT representatives agreed to remove wording that labeled the movement "non-violent" from the resolution. SRRT representatives also agreed to add the phrase "...while ALA does not currently take a position on the political views of BDS or anti-BDS supporters, we strongly oppose efforts to stifle political expression."

The task force discussed at length positions on boycotts as speech and the nature of political and economic boycotts as defined by federal courts. We opted to reference the one decision by the Supreme

Court which clearly states that a boycott is protected speech. There remained some unresolved questions from task force members about whether the BDS movement was a political as well as economic action but those are issues unresolved in federal courts as well.

The task force also suggests that this resolution be reviewed by the ALA legal counsel to assess whether the wording of the resolution conflicts with any ALA policy. Does ALA have a policy that prohibits the association from taking a position that supports a commercial or political boycott? One COL representative stated, "It is an antitrust law violation to support a commercial boycott and ALA agents who do this are legitimately susceptible to lawsuits and damages. It is a violation of our 501(c)3 tax status to take a position on a political boycott. Whether this particular group is engaged in commercial or political boycotting is somewhat debatable, but neither is appropriate. From the perspective of the Committee on Legislation, no reference to boycotting or the BDS group should end up in the final version of this resolution." Further, COL representatives asserted that opposition resolutions should be reserved for only the most critical needs: In the legislative world, the impact of opposition resolutions is "burnt bridges." Sometimes this makes sense, for example, defunding the IMLS, but more commonly, the harm outweighs the good, COL representatives said.

COL desired to follow legal advice from ALA counsel on the antitrust and tax status limitations issues. SRRT believes that the consensus of civil liberties organizations and constitutional experts is more relevant than the advice of ALA counsel regarding the legal right to boycott.

A SRRT representative noted that ALA frequently takes positions opposing legislation, policies, executive orders, etc. The SRRT representative provided six recent examples. SRRT insisted that support for the free speech of BDS is not the same as support for BDS, and that this resolution takes no position on BDS. However, the SRRT representative also noted that BDS is a political boycott and that there is no prohibition on 501(c)3 organizations supporting political boycotts. The SRRT representative maintained that supporters of BDS are the main groups and individuals targeted by proposed legislation, so removal of reference to BDS would make the resolution ambiguous and ineffective.

As a review task force we did not take a vote endorsing or opposing the resolution believing that was beyond the task set for us by the committee chairs. Our respective organizations may take such action but we, as a task force, limited ourselves to attempting to revise the wording of the resolution to eliminate any misconceptions about its significance and intent.

While we represented different organizations and each of us held firm opinions on this resolution, each member of the working group treated other members with respect and consideration. We worked in a collegial arrangement that met the task assigned to us and each of us gained insight into the divergent opinions of others.

The task force also suggests that Council allows the mover or other SRRT representative as well as a COL representative, to speak to the resolution from the floor when it comes before Council for a final vote.

Submitted by:

Emily Drabinski (IRC) and Eldon Ray James (IFC)
co-leaders

Resolution Opposing the Free Speech and Intellectual Freedom Restrictions in the Combating BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, and Related Legislation

Whereas, the American Library Association (ALA) “opposes any use of governmental prerogatives that lead to the intimidation of individuals or groups and discourages them from exercising the right of free expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (ALA Policy B.2.4 Governmental Intimidation);

Whereas, ALA “opposes any legislation or codification of documents . . . that undermine academic or intellectual freedom, chill free speech, and/or otherwise interfere with the academic community’s well-established norms and values of scholarship and educational excellence” (ALA Policy B.2.5 Support of Academic Freedom);

Whereas, such bills as S.1, the Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019, which the U.S. Senate passed on February 5, 2019, and its companion bill H.R.336 in the House include the Combating BDS Act, which the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has explained, “would condone state laws penalizing businesses and individuals who participate in boycott, divestment, or sanctions (‘BDS’) activities and other politically motivated boycotts against Israel and Israeli controlled territories”;

Whereas, the ACLU has determined that the intent of the Combating BDS Act is “contrary to the spirit and letter of the First Amendment guarantee of freedoms of speech and association;” and the National Coalition Against Censorship has similarly opposed the act on First Amendment grounds; and while ALA does not currently take a position on the political views of BDS or anti-BDS supporters, we strongly oppose efforts to stifle political expression; and

Whereas, in *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.* (458 U.S. 886 (1982), the Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment protects political boycotts as protected speech;

Whereas, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is a movement, modeled after the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, which calls for pressure on Israel to attain Palestinian rights;

Whereas, federal courts have struck down provisions of state anti-BDS laws that required people to sign a pledge not to participate in

BDS activities as a condition of public employment or ability to enter into a contract with a public agency, the sort of anti-BDS legislation condoned by the Combating BDS Act;

Whereas, S.852 and H.R. 4009, the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act of 2019, currently before Congress, provides a definition of anti-Semitism to be used for the enforcement of Federal antidiscrimination laws concerning education programs or activities;

Whereas, as noted in the Act, the Department of Education is already empowered to investigate incidents of anti-Semitism as a form of discrimination;

Whereas, according to the ACLU, the “overbroad definition of anti-Semitism” in the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act “risks incorrectly equating constitutionally protected criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, making it likely that free speech will be chilled on campuses”; and

Whereas, the ACLU, the Alliance for Academic Freedom, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Defending Rights & Dissent, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, PEN America, and Kenneth Stern, a primary author of the definition of anti-Semitism employed in the bill, have all opposed previous versions of the bill or the current version of the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act; now therefore be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association, on behalf of its members:

1. opposes S.1 and H.R.336 as introduced, and any other current or future versions of these bills that would continue to infringe on the free speech rights of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights, including supporters of the BDS movement; and
2. opposes S.852 and H.R. 4009 as introduced, and any other current or future versions of these bills that would threaten to chill free speech on college campuses of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights, including supporters of the BDS movement; and
3. opposes any federal, state, or local legislation, or campus policy that would restrict, or that currently restricts, First Amendment rights, that include speech through boycotts, of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights or other political movements; and
4. opposes anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all other forms of racism, and remains concerned about the increase in bigotry-motivated violence; and
5. send copies of this entire resolution to all members of Congress and all civil liberty organizations named in the resolution

**Proposed amendment to Resolution
Opposing the Free Speech and Intellectual
Freedom Restrictions in the Combating
BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness
Act, and Related Legislation:**

Insert: “or any executive order” after “opposes any federal, state, or local legislation,” in resolved clause 3, so that it reads:

3. opposes any federal, state, or local legislation, or any executive order or campus policy that would restrict, or that currently restricts, First Amendment rights, that include speech through boycotts, of supporters of the movement for Palestinian rights or other political movements; and

Progressive Librarians Guild Resources on Black Lives Matter

The Progressive Librarians Guild stands in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and the global uprisings decrying the continued murders of Black people by police and white vigilantes.

Below, we highlight three categories of resources. First, selected statements issued by individuals and organizations of library and information workers. Second, resources to assist in becoming anti-racists personally, professionally, and within our communities. Third, resources focused specifically on demands to defund and demilitarize police forces and to abolish carceral practices and institutions.

Leading this offering of resources are statements from three Black colleagues reflecting the urgency of action and reflection in regard to anti-racist work:

Trevor Dawes wrote on June 4, “We can call out racist rhetoric, for example, and then in the next (or even the same) breath also say we must protect ‘free speech.’ What message does that send to the person against whom that rhetoric was directed? It says you don’t care! At least, that’s what it says to me. This is a very simple example of the type of change that can happen, but doesn’t. And it makes me angry. And it makes me sad.” <https://trevordawes.wordpress.com/2020/06/04/statements/>

Carolyn Lawrence wrote on June 5, “we all want to see action behind the words. I don’t want to feel like racism is something that is ‘trending’ but something that is handled with respect and dignity and not just pretty words.” <https://www.linkedin.com/in/carolyn-lawrence-aa1b28b5/>

Nicole Cooke wrote on June 19, “Just reading gives you the false confidence to doubt your BIPOC colleagues, instead of accepting the painful truths about their experiences. Just reading absolves you from

Keywords: Activism, Black Lives Matter, libraries, police, Progressive Librarians Guild, racism.

doing the real work, and allows you to perhaps even resent or discount the hard work BIPOC are doing to safeguard their existence.” <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/83626-reading-is-only-a-step-on-the-path-to-anti-racism.html>

LIS Statements

American Library Association statement:

<http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2020/06/alastatement-condemning-police-violence-against-bipoc-protesters-and>

Black Caucus of ALA:

<https://www.bcala.org/statement-condemning-increased-violence-andracism-towards-black-americans-and-people-of-color>

Librarians, Curators and Archivists: an affiliate of the Association for the Study of African American Life & History:

<https://asalhip.wordpress.com/2020/06/16/statements-and-resources-in-support-of-the-black-lives-matter-protests/>

Librarian organizations and libraries:

<https://www.infodocket.com/2020/06/01/statements-from-library-organizations-re-racism-and-increased-violence/>

We Here: <https://www.wehere.space/news/black-lives-matter>

Anti-Racist Resources

Anti-Racism Resources for All Ages, by Nicole Cooke (2020):

<https://padlet.com/nicolethe librarian/nbasekqoazt336co>

Anti-racist work in libraries: <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/article/racial-healing-resources-library-workers-and-scholars>

Critical Writing on Race in LIS:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CpoTYqagGg4rOnnNgY-TEuyePXDDjpEWefkBRLpn204/edit#heading=h.k93idxb3btqv>

In Pursuit of Antiracist Social Justice: Denaturalizing Whiteness in the Academic Library, by Freeda Brook et al. (2015):

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/610078>

Reading is Only a Step on the Path to Anti-Racism, by Nicole

Cooke (2020): <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/83626-reading-is-only-a-step-on-the-path-to-anti-racism.html>

School libraries and anti-racism, by Jennifer Sturge (2020):

<https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/school-libraries-and-antiracism/>

Resources on Police Defunding & Prison Abolition

PLG's contribution to the many resource lists compiled by librarians regarding racism at this historic moment focuses on the history of police violence, prison abolition, and the defunding of police. PLG encourages library and archive workers across the United States to become informed about what "defunding" and "abolition" mean to advocates of these movements. We further encourage our colleagues to take this information out into their communities. Our libraries can help communities delve more deeply into these issues than can the mainstream media.

The History of Policing

Critical Resistance Policing Timeline:

<http://criticalresistance.org/policing-timeline/>

History and Current Manifestations of Policing, Violence & Resistance (Pamphlet Series):

<https://policeviolence.wordpress.com/historical-moments/>

MPD 150: A People's Guide to Evaluating Policing:

<https://www.mpd150.com/report-old/timeline/>

Where do Police Come From?

<https://scalawagmagazine.org/2016/09/where-do-police-come-from/>

LibGuides, Reading Lists, and Syllabi

Black Lives Matter: Systemic Racism and Activism Lib Guide

(Princeton University): <https://libguides.princeton.edu/BlackLivesMatter-SystemicRacismAndActivism>

Black Lives Matter: Policing and Incarceration Lib Guide

(Princeton University): <https://libguides.princeton.edu/BlackLivesMatter-PolicingAndIncarceration>

Prison Abolition Syllabus 2.0:

<https://www.aaihs.org/prison-abolition-syllabus-2-0/>

A Reading List on Policing, Rebellion, and the Criminalization of Blackness: <https://www.radicalhistoryreview.org/abusablepast/reading-towards-abolition-a-reading-list-on-policing-rebellion-and-the-criminalization-of-blackness/>

Resources and Reports

8 to Abolition Resources: <https://www.8toabolition.com/>

The end goal of these reforms is not to create better, friendlier, or more community-oriented police or prisons. Instead, we hope to build toward a society without police or prisons, where communities are equipped to provide for their safety and well-being.

Chart: Reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps in policing:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ead8f9692e-bee25b72f17f/t/5b65cd58758d46d34254f22c/1533398363539/CR_NoCops_reform_vs_abolition_CRside.pdf

Developed by Critical Resistance.

Critical Resistance Abolish Policing Resources:

<http://criticalresistance.org/abolish-policing/>

As an abolitionist organization, Critical Resistance supports abolitionist reforms to dismantle the systems of policing and works to create viable alternatives in our communities.

Database for Police Abolition: <https://www.d4pa.org/>

The Database for Police Abolition (D4PA) is a database-in-progress aiming to track nationwide proposals to defund, disarm, and disempower police departments, and to empower alternatives to policing.

Interrupting Criminalization:

<https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/>

The project aims to interrupt and end the growing criminalization and incarceration of women and LGBTQ people of color for criminalized acts related to public order, poverty, child welfare, drug use, survival and self-defense, including criminalization and incarceration of survivors of violence.

MPD 150: <https://www.mpd150.com/resources/>

MPD150 is a participatory, horizontally-organized effort by local organizers, researchers, artists and activists. It is not the project of any organization. We stand on the shoulders of the work that many organizations have been doing for years and welcome the support of everyone who agrees with our approach. We hope that the process we are developing will help organizers in other cities to establish practical abolitionist strategies.

Union Library Workers Blog

The Years 2019-2020 in Review

By Craig M. Guild

December 2018

2nd: Toronto Library Workers begin public campaign to raise awareness about dangers of “staffless libraries”

In response to a decision by the Toronto Public Library board to experiment with staffless libraries at two TPL branches, the Toronto Public Library Workers Union launched a campaign on December 3rd to inform patrons of the danger of staffless libraries, focusing especially on issues of public safety and the requirements that patrons sign away rights to hold the city accountable if anything were to happen at the branches.

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/toronto-library-workers-begin-public-campaign-to-raise-awareness-about-dangers-of-staffless-libraries-701739052.html>

9th: A Plan to WIN! UC-AFT Ramps up bargaining campaign

Librarians in the University of California system used a break in negotiations as an opportunity to build unity and bargaining power by hosting workshops to plan local steps for winning a contract when negotiations resumed.

<https://ucaftlibrarians.org/2018/12/07/a-plan-to-win-strategic-campaign-workshops-for-librarian-bargaining/>

Craig Guild is a Librarian at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT. His research focuses on library labor and information ethics. His most recent publication, “Social Reproduction Theory in the Academic Library: Understanding the Implications of Socially Reproductive Labor as Labor,” appeared in the Fall 2019 edition of Public Services Quarterly.

Keywords: Climate strike, collective bargaining, contract negotiations, library unions, library workers, strikes.

12th: Tentative agreements reached with Boyden Library unions

The town of Boyden, MA reached an agreement with the union representing local library workers. If ratified by members, the agreement would be in effect retroactively to July 1, 2018.

http://www.thesunchronicle.com/foxboro_reporter/news/tentative-agreements-reached-with-unions/article_977781d4-817c-50bd-b2fa-fc3901cdfd9a.html

13th: New agreement for Sechelt library workers makes important gains for precarious workers

Workers for the Sechelt Public Library in Sechelt, B.C., represented by CUPE 391, celebrated the ratification of their new collective agreement. After three days of collaborative negotiations, union and library representatives were able to reach a positive agreement that addresses key issues, especially those addressing the needs of casual workers who are often in a more precarious work position without security or benefits that their regular employed colleagues have.

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/new-agreement-for-sechelt-library-workers-makes-important-gains-for-precarious-workers-702478431.html>

17th: Philadelphia: Union library workers AFSCME District Council 46

Friends of the Free Library, union library workers in AFSCME District Council 47, and library members gathered at City Hall to advocate for full funding of the Free Library of Philadelphia.

<https://southphillyreview.com/rally-at-city-hall-demands-full-funding-of-library-c19b3d7a61dc>

March

1st: Village of Lincolnshire v. IUOE Local 399

In December 2015, Lincolnshire, Illinois passed a right-to-work (RTW) ordinance. Unions have been successful so far in their fight against the ordinance, winning first in the U.S. District Court and then again after Lincolnshire appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. But on February 14, Lincolnshire filed a petition with the Supreme Court, which will decide whether it will hear the village's appeal.

<http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/21763/right-to-work-cities-municipalities-lincolnshire-unions-taft-hartley>

22nd: Minnesota Amazon workers walk off the job

On March 7th, workers at a Minnesota Amazon warehouse walked off the job for three hours during the night shift in protest of the company's expectations of quick turnaround times for workers. The walkout was

the warehouse's second job action in a three-month period.

<https://labornotes.org/2019/03/minnesota-amazon-workers-walk-job-over-speed>

April

2nd: University of California librarians win stronger protections for academic freedom

After a contract negotiation that included disagreement between University of California librarians and administration over whether academic freedom applied to librarians, librarians won a memorandum of understanding that includes strong protections for librarian academic freedom.

<https://academeblog.org/2019/04/01/university-of-california-librarians-win-stronger-protections-for-academic-freedom/>

17th: Spokane Public Schools to eliminate school librarian position district wide

Spokane Public Schools issued a notice to all school librarians that their positions were being eliminated beginning in the 2019-2020 school year. The district plans to keep the libraries open, relying on teachers and part-time clerks to effectively staff the library on top of existing duties and regardless of training or library experience.

<https://www.krem.com/article/news/spokane-public-schools-eliminates-librarian-positions/293-7ba3e599-e4f0-42f2-a59b-436988142892>

18th: Rutgers Faculty reach deal to avoid strike

A deal struck between Rutgers University and the AAUP-AFT managed to avoid the first strike in Rutgers' history. The deal is historic in establishing equal pay for equal work for female faculty on the university's Newark and Camden, NJ campuses, a guarantee, enforced by binding arbitration, of a workplace free of harassment and stalking, intellectual freedom extended to social media, \$20 million for diversity hiring, and a revision to Rutgers' policies opening the door for the university to sponsor non-tenure-track faculty for permanent residency. The new agreement will also raise pay significantly for graduate workers.

<https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2019/04/16/no-strike-rutgers-university-faculty-claims-win-contract-negotiations/3492244002/>

22nd: CCA Staff, including library and facility employees, vote to unionize

Staff at the two campuses of the California College of the Arts in San Francisco and Oakland, CA voted to join SEIU 1021. In part, the vote by 164 staff members reflected concerns that cost-of-living increases were driving workers out of the Bay Area, as well as concerns that

consolidation of the school would negatively impact staffing levels and, in turn, services to students.

<https://www.seiu1021.org/post/california-college-arts-staff-vote-overwhelmingly-join-seiu-1021>

29th: United College Workers establishes first union at Ole Miss

The UCW, affiliated with the Communication Workers of America (CWA), is the first officially chartered local to form on the Ole Miss campus. It is an inclusive union and welcomes anyone at the university who is employed at the university, regardless of classification or title. This means that everyone from student workers to full-time faculty qualify for representation by UCW, though Mississippi is a “right-to-work” state which prevents automatic enrollment upon employment.

<https://thedmonline.com/university-employees-organize-first-labor-union-in-campus-history/>

29th: Union leader calls for push back against Ford government in Ontario

Mike Bellerose, president of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4705, called for Northern Ontario’s residents to apply pressure to the provincial government of Doug Ford. The Ford government had notified Ontario Library Services-North that their budget would be slashed by 50% following the tabling of the provincial budget on April 11th. CUPE 4705, which represents employees in the Ontario Library Services-North (OLS-North) says that 5 out of 11 full-time employees were issued lay-off notices and a sixth had been re-classed from full-time to part-time status.

<https://www.cochranetimes.com/news/local-news/fight-library-cuts-union-leader-in-sudbury-urges/wcm/d261db25-0431-4439-8529-808dbedca1b0>

30th: Salary increase for women faculty at University of Toronto

The University of Toronto announced that it would be increasing the salaries of women at the university holding tenured faculty or tenure-stream positions by 1.3% as of July 1st, 2019. The announcement was made following pre-grievance mediation with the University of Toronto Faculty Association during which both the U of T and the UTFA shared the results of studies focusing on gender and salary at the university.

<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/u-t-implement-salary-increase-more-800-women-faculty-members>

*30th: New Budget means cuts to Sunday services
and staff at Richmond Hill, Ontario library*

After seeing a smaller than expected budgetary increase, the Richmond Hill Public Library Board has cut three staff positions, three new staff requests, and Sunday services from June 9th to September 1st of this year. Canadian Public Employees Union Local 905 is concerned not only about the staff lay-offs but also about the impact that cuts to staffing and hours will have on the greater Richmond Hill community. Popular Sunday programs, including an ESL cafe where English language learners can meet to practice their language skills, will no longer be provided.

<https://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/9295882-richmond-hill-library-makes-difficult-decision-to-cut-sunday-service-reduce-staff/>

May

*1st: Buncombe County Manager, Pinder, proposes
\$15/hr guarantee for county employees*

Buncombe County Manager, Avril Pinder, proposed guaranteeing that every county employee, whether part-time or full-time, would earn at least \$15/hr. The move would raise the wages of 15 county employees, the majority of whom are library staff.

<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2019/05/01/living-wage-proposal-buncombe-county-government-staff-paid-15-hourly-north-carolina-affordable/3627082002/>

*2nd: May Day strike ends in tentative contract
for non-teaching staff at CCC*

City Colleges of Chicago staff returned to work after a one-day strike, launched May 1st, when City Colleges and the Federation of College Clerical and Technical Personnel Local 1708 reached a tentative agreement in contract negotiations. On Wednesday, May 1, 450 employees walked off the job at CCC following what the union saw as a refusal by College Administration to work with the union on demands around pay, healthcare, and unfilled vacancies at the colleges. Eighty-seven percent of membership had voted to reject the colleges' last offer. The unfilled vacancies in particular meant that many underpaid staff, primarily women of color, were forced to do the work of three or four people and use unpaid furlough days to provide crucial frontline services to students while administrative offices have seen salary increases of 40%.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/5/2/18620578/city-colleges-of-chicago-staff-returns-to-work>

2nd: Educators at three Chicago charter schools go on strike

Educators at three charter schools in Chicago struck after months of negotiations resulted in no acceptable contract for the teachers. Educators at the schools point out that starting salaries at the charter schools tend to be about 40% lower than at public schools in Chicago, leading to high turnover as teachers leave to find better jobs. They also point to the fact that while charter schools get a large amount of funding, much of the money is going into administration rather than the classroom. Frustration with workloads was also a sticking point, with paraprofessionals in particular being required to take on more work with little compensation or recognition.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/5/2/18622277/teachers-at-3-chicago-charter-schools-go-on-strike>

2nd: U of C Labor Council rallies for workers' rights and grad union recognition

The newly formed University of Chicago Labor Council rallied with 200 supporters on the campus's main quad on May Day to speak out for labor rights in the greater Chicago area and to call on the University to recognize the Graduate Student Union (GSU), which graduate students voted to form almost two years ago.

<https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2019/5/2/university-chicago-labor-council-draws-crowds-may/>

2nd: Carolinas' educators march on capitals on May Day

Thousands of teachers from across the states of North and South Carolina marched on their respective capitals on May Day. The rallies numbered in the thousands as the spaces around the capital buildings were turned into seas of red, the signature color of the #RedForEd teachers' movement that has been spreading quickly over the last year. Along with calls for salary increases—both states' teachers make less than the national average—and a \$15/hr. minimum for all school employees, the educators also brought up the need for more librarians and nurses in schools and an expansion of Medicaid to benefit their students and their families.

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2019/05/teacher_protest_north_south_carolina.html

7th: AFSCME filing unfair labor practices charges against University of California

AFSCME announced three separate filings of unfair labor practices against the University of California. AFSCME Local 3299 is demanding that UC end its practice of replacing employees with outsourcing companies. The unfair labor practice filings specifically allege that the UC system has signed contracts with private companies, bypassing

negotiations with workers and their union as required by law.

<https://afscme3299.org/2019/05/02/uc-faces-unfair-labor-practice-charges-over-plans-to-outsource-more-jobs/>

7th: Chicago Charter School's back in session after tentative deals reached

Teachers at Latino Youth High School agreed to go back to work after winning a promise of more mental health support for students and curricula that reflect the culture and background of their students, according to the Sun-Times. Instituto Health Sciences Career Academy and Insituto Justice Leadership Academy teachers saw the expansion of union recognition to clerical staff, a decrease in class sizes, sanctuary language to protect immigrant students, protections for English Language Learners and special education students, as well as better wages and improved staffing ratios for social workers, nurses, counselors, and psychologists.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/5/7/18621444/teachers-at-last-2-charter-schools-reach-agreement-ending-strike>

8th: Libraries and Museums join in commemoration of 100th anniversary of Winnipeg General Strike

A number of libraries and museums housed exhibits and hosted events for Winnipeg's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the city's general strike, which lasted from May 15th to June 25th, 1919.

<https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/how-to-explore-the-history-of-the-1919-winnipeg-general-strike-1.4413892>

13th: Primary and secondary teachers plan to strike together in New Zealand's largest education strike

Educators in both New Zealand's NE Education Institute (NZEI) and the Post-Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) voted to strike May 29th. Despite the offer of pay increases over the next three years, teachers were unhappy with the government's budget plan, which left schools unable to meet the needs of students.

<https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/news/education/primary-and-secondary-school-teachers-combine-for-mega-strike/>

13th: Argentina's University Faculty call for 48-hour strike for better wages

University Teachers in Argentina who are part of the National Federation of University Teachers, Researchers and Creators (Historic Conadu) voted for a 48-hour strike May 16-17. The strike coincided with mobilizations of other unions and student organizations. The central demands of the Federation were significant salary increases and support for university

education and research, as well as answers from the government that have not been forthcoming at the negotiation table.

<https://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=41825&SEO=argentine-university-teachers-call-to-strike-for-better-wage>

13th: Teacher sickouts arrive in Oregon

The wave of teacher work stoppages reached Oregon as teachers across the state called out sick to protest the under-funding of public schools. A website set up to organize the day of action speaks to the issue of growing class sizes, the lack of school librarians, and outsized ratios of students to nurses. The action resulted in 600 schools closing for the day across 25 districts, including Portland Public Schools, as teachers rallied at six sites across the state.

<https://splinternews.com/oregon-teachers-stage-mass-walkout-as-teacher-revolt-co-1834632483>

20th: New Haven Unified School District teachers strike after no deal reached with district

After months of negotiations, teachers at New Haven Unified School District in the Bay Area went on strike. The strike was called after the school district and teachers' union failed to reach an agreement around teacher salaries and pay scales. The union argued that current salaries are not enough for teachers trying to live in the increasingly expensive Bay Area around San Francisco. The union and teachers also feel that current budget cuts and offers by the school district represent a change in the district's attitude towards valuing educators as professionals who deserve a livable salary.

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2019/05/20/teachers-strike-work-stoppage-begins-in-union-city-south-hayward/>

20th: UC workers strike across system

Workers in the University of California system represented by AFSCME Local 3299 struck for one day, in its fifth labor stoppage in a 12-month period, over unfair labor practices and the outsourcing of jobs. The 7,440 workers represented by AFSCME were also joined by members of the University Professional and Technical Employees (UPTE), which represents healthcare and research support professionals and technical units.

<https://www.sfexaminer.com/the-city/uc-workers-go-out-on-one-day-strike/>

20th: Malawi's National Library services staff on indefinite strike

Staff at the National Library Service (NLS) of Malawi went on indefinite strike over the failure of management to provide promised

salary increases and the demand that the National Librarian, Grey Nyali, be removed from office due to abuse of power. Library workers, represented by the Communication Workers Union of Malawi (COWUMA) say that they were promised multiple pay increases that have never been fulfilled while NLS management has established various funds to pay themselves gratuities at the end of their contracts. Allegations against Nyali further claim that he has transferred NLS properties into his own private possession and has wasted funds on fruitless tours of the country rather than on much needed library supplies like operational vehicles, infrastructure, and books.

<https://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-library-staff-on-indefinite-strike-people-denied-electoral-information/>

21st: *Pembroke, MA Public Library to host “Workers’ Struggle” exhibit through June*

Pembroke’s Public Library housed a “Workers’ Struggle” poster exhibit throughout the month of June. The posters come from workers’ struggles in multiple countries, reflecting both the variety and commonality of these struggles. The display was part of a collection of more than 8,600 posters owned by retired union leader and activist Stephen Lewis.

<https://pembroke.wickedlocal.com/news/20190521/pembroke-public-library-to-feature-workers-struggles-poster-exhibit>

24th: *New Funding Structure Forces Oakland School Librarians to Look Elsewhere*

Changes to the funding structure for school libraries has led to cuts in hours and relocations for librarians and library staff in Oakland, CA schools. The schools’ libraries were already struggling with many schools operating libraries without library staff or closing libraries all together. Some librarians in the district have had to look elsewhere for jobs that can provide more security and consistency.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/otisrtaylorjr/article/Oakland-school-library-workers-forced-out-after-13857609.php?psid=60n94>

29th: *Security and reception staff on strike at Louvre*

The Musée du Louvre’s security and reception staff struck over untenable conditions due to the rise in visitors to the museum over the past decade. The Sud Culture Solidaires Union, which represents the workers, points to the overcrowding that has resulted from the growth of attendance by 20% while the space in the museum has remained constant and staffing levels have actually shrunk.

<https://www.npr.org/2019/05/28/727592823/the-louvre-is-suffocating-museum-closed-as-workers-strike-citing-overcrowding>

June

3rd: CUPE strike school sends a message in preparation for negotiations

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in Labrador and Newfoundland opened a historic strike school in preparation for upcoming negotiations with the provincial government. CUPE members are hoping to avoid a strike but have no plans to go into negotiations unprepared or to offer concessions following a recent union convention where leadership says it received a mandate from the membership. The strike school, attended by 75 members, represented the beginning of the mobilization of membership in the run up to next year's negotiations.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/cupe-strike-school-1.5157724>

3rd: U of C Graduate students to picket June 3-5

The Graduate Student Union (GSU) at the University of Chicago planned to participate in an industrial action in the 10th week of the Spring quarter. The authorization came as administration at U of C continued to refuse to recognize GSU after its 2017 NCLRB-certified election, failing to even name GSU in campus-wide emails about the impending action.

<https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2019/5/31/graduate-students-holding-labor-action-tenth-week/>

3rd: WV Senate Republicans strengthen anti-strike language in education bill

Republicans in West Virginia's state Senate moved to amend an education bill to include tougher anti-strike language. Both the state Senate's Democratic minority and the state's teachers view the move as retaliation by the GOP for teacher strikes across the state this past February and last year. The new language, if it were to become law, would make striking a fireable offense and give county boards the ability to withhold pay from striking teachers. Crucially, the law would also prohibit county superintendents from cancelling school prior to a strike in anticipation of teacher absences, a tactic that allowed teacher unions to avoid having to officially declare illegal strikes in the past two years.

<https://unionlibraryworkers.blogspot.com/2019/06/>

10th: Oregon Senate passes pro-public employees union bill

The Oregon Senate passed a bill that would make it easier for public employee unions to organize in a post-Janus climate. The bill mandates

employers give reasonable time off for union business, makes it easier for employees to opt-into their union, give unions the ability to determine proper employee conduct at union meetings, and mandates the sharing of employee contact information between the employer and the union.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2019/06/pro-public-employee-union-bill-sails-through-the-oregon-senate.html>

10th: Sudan general strike looks to force transfer of power from military

June 9th marked the first day of a national general strike in Sudan following a June 3rd crackdown by the nation's ruling military that has left 100 dead according to protestors. The strike, organized in part by the Sudanese Professionals Association—an umbrella group of Sudanese Unions—ground the country to a standstill Sunday and shops and business remained closed Monday, though more traffic could be seen on the streets.

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/africa/2019/06/09/sudans-protesters-launch-general-strike-after-crackdown.html>

10th: Ottawa's provincial government moves to cap contract faculty wages

Ottawa's government moved to cap the wages of contract faculty at public colleges and universities. The legislation would remove unions' ability to negotiate the wages of some of the lowest paid members of university and college faculties. Unions pushed back against the legislation and were planning to challenge it in court should it pass.

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/contract-faculty-at-colleges-and-universities-will-be-hit-hard-by-governments-proposed-wage-caps-say-unions-say>

10th: New Haven Teachers return to work after 14-day strike

In Union City and south Hayward, CA, New Haven Unified School District teachers voted 302-200 to end their strike and accept the district's latest offer. Though they returned, teachers still felt betrayed by the school district and that they are being made to pay to fix other people's mistakes. The union has made clear that this first strike in the district's history is only the beginning of their organizing for their membership.

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2019/06/09/new-haven-school-district-teachers-ratify-new-contract-ending-strike/>

17th: Edmonton Public Library backtracks on proposed cuts to student worker wages

The Edmonton Public Library in Edmonton, AB seemed to be using language in its contract with Civic Service Union 52 as an excuse to

cut the wages of students who work as pages at the library by \$2.30 to \$2.50. The library backtracked its position following outcry from CSU 52 and the community. While pages will continue to be paid at their current rate, the union is now looking to keep a closer eye on decisions by the EPL moving forward.

<https://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/alberta-diary/2019/06/hiding-behind-ucp-youth-minimum-wage-cut-edmonton-public>

17th: Student Teachers at Kasungu Teachers' College on indefinite strike over sanitation, diet, unpaid allowances

Student teachers at Kasungu Teachers College in Kasungu, Malawi announced they were going on an indefinite strike. Students said that sanitation conditions at the college became unacceptable and that the diet they are offered is very poor. They also said that the allowance they are due for their practical teaching has gone unpaid. Student leaders at the 360-student school vowed they will remain on strike until all demands are met.

<https://www.nyasatimes.com/teacher-students-strike-over-poor-hygiene-allowances/>

17th: Swiss women strike for equality

Women across Switzerland went on strike under the banner “Wages. Time. Respect.” Along with the demand for equal pay for equal work, women demanded an end to discrimination and sexual harassment. They also want changes to societal and legal pressures that force women to make hard choices in order to keep their family afloat.

<https://www.kcur.org/post/wages-time-respect-swiss-women-go-strike#stream/0>

17th: Brazil general strike called over proposed changes to pension laws

Brazil's unions called the first general strike under far-right President Jair Bolsonaro and the second general strike in two years. The one-day strike paralyzed major cities and saw thousands demonstrate across the country. The United Workers Central labor federation called the strike in response to the introduction of a pension law that would increase minimum retirement ages and increase worker contributions to pension plans.

<https://www.cp24.com/world/thousands-take-to-streets-in-brazil-during-general-strike-1.4467886>

18th: York University refuses to negotiate with student employees, CUPE requests conciliation

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1356-2 has requested conciliation after they say York University in Toronto has refused

to negotiate with student employees who work part-time in student parking, closed circuit television (CCTV), and GoSafe (a walk home program at York) until they withdraw proposals the university claims are “unreasonable.” It was unclear to CUPE which proposals they put forward were considered “unreasonable,” however, and the union said the university had not provided any clarification on the topic.

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/ignoring-own-recent-history-york-university-refuses-to-bargain-seriously-with-student-employees-cupe-1356-2-forced-to-request-conciliation-821501001.html>

26th: South Australia teachers vote to strike

Teachers in South Australia walked off the job in their second strike in under a year, following a half-day strike the previous November. The strike vote was born out of growing frustration among teachers regarding the allocation of classroom resources as well as by pay increases they viewed as too low.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-25/public-school-teachers-vote-to-go-on-strike-in-sa/11246306>

28th: Librarians protest CIA’s recruiting at ALA’s conference

A group of librarians demanded the American Library Association abide by its values as they staged a protest of the Central Intelligence Agency’s recruitment at the ALA’s annual conference. The protesters laid out their motivation in a statement they handed out at the action. The resolution was defeated in the Membership Meeting at the conference.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/06/24/citing-cias-dark-history-librarians-protest-agencys-recruiting-their-conference>

July

1st: Guggenheim workers vote to unionize

The 140 employees working as engineers, maintenance workers, art handlers, cabinetmakers, fabricators, and other full-time, part-time, and temporary employees at the Guggenheim Museum voted to unionize. Workers joined International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/28/arts/design/guggenheim-union-vote.html>

1st: Chilean teachers strike drags into second month

Roughly 80% of Chilean public school teachers remained out of the classroom since their strike began in June. The demands of the teachers include the payment of a bonus, a salary adjustment that had been promised four decades ago, the annulment of a measure that makes history and physical education optional for the last two years of school,

as well as steps to address sanitation and a lack of supplies in schools.
<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/americas/2019/06/27/chilean-teachers-mark-nearly-a-month-since-they-began-strike.html>

3rd: In Spain CGT demands more staff for Rafalafena Library. In Brazil librarians join general strike

In Spain, the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) union called a protest to demand more staff for the Rafalafena Public Library in Castelló and prevent it from closing in the afternoon. The Union denounced that the library only has 50% of the staff approved for its proper functioning.

In Brazil on June 14, Librarians joined the general strike against pension reform. In Rio de Janeiro, the Librarians' Union (Sindib-RJ) made a call through social networks to participate in the act. According to Luciana Manta, president of the organization, the strike was motivated by the Pension Reform, which—according to her—withdrawn workers' rights. In São Paulo, the local union (SinBiesp) also called on librarians to participate in the activities.

<https://unionlibraryworkers.blogspot.com/2019/07/in-spain-cgt-demands-more-staff-for.html>

8th: NEA adds new membership category for non-educators

The National Education Association voted by 68.9% of votes cast to add a new category of membership for 'public education allies.' Non-educator members would not have voting or nomination rights, nor would they be able to run for or hold office in the union. The status would, however, make it possible for these members to donate to the NEA's Political Action Committee. The union also believes the move will open lines of communication between educators and the community.

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2019/07/national_education_association_membership.html

9th: Amazon workers plan Prime Day strike

Safe working conditions and job security were demanded by Amazon warehouse workers who planned to strike for six hours on Amazon's Prime Day (July 15th) in Shakopee, MN. The walkout took place across two shifts and engineers from Amazon Employees for Climate Justice planned to join the demonstration. The workers are demanding that part-time positions be converted to full time and that quotas be permanently reduced to create a safer working environment.

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/8/20686138/amazon-prime-day-strike-minnesota-factory-workers>

9th: Teachers at South Gloucestershire school go on strike

Teachers in Thornbury, UK went on strike over cuts to staffing and

increasing workloads. The National Education Union (NEU) is drawing attention to how the increasing load being put on teachers at the South Gloucestershire school is negatively impacting students and their learning environment as teachers have less and less time to meet their needs.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-48919045>

16th: German Amazon workers strike Prime Day over pay

German labor union Verdi said that over 2,000 workers at seven Amazon sites in Germany struck over the company's Prime Day 'holiday.' The workers, walking out under the motto "No more discount on our incomes," serve the second largest Amazon market after the United States. Since 2013, Amazon has seen strikes by its German workforce over pay and working conditions. Verdi is also calling on Amazon to recognize the collective wage agreements in the retail and mail order sectors.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/amazon-workers-germany-strike-over-221621280.html>

16th: TISS suspends activities on Hyderabad campus following students protests

Students on the Hyderabad campus of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Hyderabad, India received the news that all academic activity was being suspended at the school and they were to vacate the campus. The move came after a week of student protests in which students physically blocked entrance to school buildings and protest-changes to housing and meal fees.

<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/tiss-hyderabad-declares-indefinite-closure-amid-student-protests-105490>

18th: Federal judge rules in favor of employee claiming retaliation from Emporia State University

A federal judge ruled that Emporia State University in Emporia, KS retaliated against a former employee who had complained about being a target of a racial slur. Judge Crabtree ruled that Hale had been improperly punished for engaging in activities protected under federal anti-discrimination law.

<https://www.leavenworthtimes.com/news/20190717/federal-judge-says-emporia-state-university-retaliated-when-employee-complained-of-racial-slur>

22nd: Puerto Rico protests grow into general strike against governor

The U.S. territory of Puerto Rico saw a massive general strike as calls of "Ricky Resign" was the island's response to embattled Governor Ricardo Rosselló's attempt to hold on to power. Puerto Ricans had

been calling for the governor's resignation following a July 13th leak of text messages between the governor and 11 members of his inner circle that contained homophobic and sexist slurs aimed at political rivals and jokes about dead bodies following the destruction of hurricane Maria. Rosselló's administration has been surrounded by controversy and corruption charges since Maria.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/22/puerto-rico-protesters-block-highway-governor-ricardo-rossello>

29th: Bengaluru library workers protest over pay and benefits

Library workers in Bengaluru, India began protesting July 20th over the government's unwillingness to meet to discuss compensation and the level of work asked of the employees. The government claimed that they are only housekeeping employees who work two hours. However, the workers pointed out that, while they are often hired as housekeepers, they often work long hours carrying out central functions of the library, including receiving, tagging, and tracking down items.

(CW Suicide) <https://www.deccanherald.com/metrolife/metrolife-cityscape/why-are-bengalurus-library-workers-protesting-750280.html>

30th: Protest against layoffs in the Argentine National Library

A march was held against the dismissals at the Mariano Moreno National Library of the Argentine Republic. The protest, called by the Association of State Workers (ATE), was held to demand that the Director of the Library, Elsa Barber, reinstate the fired employees. The dozen workers laid off since January 2019 join the long list of almost 300 employees dismissed since the change of government and library management in 2016. The union also denounced problems in the library building that put at risk important parts of the cultural heritage of Argentina.

<https://unionlibraryworkers.blogspot.com/2019/07/pagina12-protest-against-layoffs-in.html>

30th: Norwalk school district employees file time theft lawsuit

Two employees of the Norwalk (CT) School District filed a lawsuit against the district, claiming that hourly employees have had their timecards intentionally altered to strip them of time worked. District employees represented by the Norwalk Federation of Educational Personnel such as library media assistants, secretaries, and paraprofessionals are paid hourly and must turn in timecards. The lawsuit notes that each school employs an administrative secretary who oversees timecards. These secretaries were allegedly instructed to alter timecards to ensure that full-time employees rarely exceed 37.5 hours a week and part-time employees never have more than 29.

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Lawsuit-Norwalk-schools-has-altered-employees-14192765.php>

August

1st: Bradford's (UK) libraries and museums staff could strike over cuts

Unite, Britain and Ireland's largest union, announced that it will hold a consultative ballot of its approximately 50 library and museum members in Bradford to see if they wish to proceed to a full-scale industrial action ballot in defense of the library and museum service.

<https://unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2019/july/bradford-s-libraries-and-museums-face-swinging-cuts-warns-unite/>

1st: UCU calls for 30-minute general strike for climate

The University and College Union (UCU), which represents academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians, and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, and adult education and training organizations across the UK, tabled a motion at the upcoming Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Brighton for a 30-minute general strike on September 20th in solidarity with the Student Climate Strike. If a walkout were to occur it could be unlawful, as it would not meet the strict requirements of British law to be a protected industrial action. Whether or not employees and the general public are receptive to the action may ultimately influence how and if it manifests.

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/general-strike-20-september-greta-thunberg-climate-emergency-walk-out/>

5th: Weekend protests turn into Monday general strike in Hong Kong

Workers across Hong Kong heeded the call of protesters and stayed home from work Monday, grinding much of the semi-autonomous island to a halt. The protests are a continuation of an increasingly volatile political situation in Hong Kong following the introduction of a bill allowing for extradition back to mainland China of fugitives who fled to Hong Kong. While the strike was not the first General Strike called during the weeks of protests, it appears to be the first purely worker-driven action.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hong-kong-protesters-hold-multiple-rallies-paralyzing-city-neighborhoods-ahead-of-a-planned-general-strike/2019/08/04/2dfe20ac-b60b-11e9-acc8-1d847bacca73_story.html?utm_term=.293a88605ecf

5th: Cal State Dominguez Hills library takes over Holt Labor Library collection

The Holt Labor Library collection, originally started by early Apple employee Rod Holt, was added, along with \$200,000 to pay for the school to have someone catalog the expansive archive, to the CSDH library as the school's largest single donation. The library hoped to begin making materials available to students and researchers within six months but expects that it may take up to three years to fully understand the entirety of the collection.

<https://www.dailynews.com/2019/08/02/cal-state-dominguez-hills-gets-its-hands-on-a-huge-repository-of-obscure-and-radical-political-texts/>

6th: Victorian AEU votes to support climate strike

The Victorian branch of the Australian Education Union voted to support the student-led global climate strike on September 20th. The unanimously passed motion called on leadership to advocate for students' rights to participate in the strike safely. The motion further called on members to show solidarity by requesting a leave of absence to attend demonstrations, posting a selfie to social media, or passing a solidarity resolution in the local sub-branch of the AEU.

<https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/victorian-teachers-union-votes-support-climate-strike>

6th: German Labor Union encourages 2 million members to join climate strike

In a tweet, Verdi, Germany's second largest labor union, called on its 2 million service sector employees to take part in global climate strike actions wherever possible. While not a formal call to strike, the call is a significant move by a labor organization the size of Verdi.

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/08/06/youth-and-workers-uniting-behind-crisis-german-labor-union-urges-2-million-members>

6th: UPTE reaches tentative contract, UC-AFT get snubbed

A tentative agreement reached between the University of California system and University Professional and Technical Employees-Communications Workers of America 9119 was announced after two years of negotiations. As the UC was finalizing negotiations with the UPTE, however, tensions flared in negotiations between the UC and the University Council for the American Federation of Teachers Local 1990, the union representing faculty and librarians. UC-AFT negotiators claim that amid discussions of instructional support, office spaces, and supplies, the UC negotiators began engaging in name calling and left the meeting abruptly. UC-AFT plans to continue to advocate for salary increases, especially as many faculty members are

struggling, but the university's refusal to consider changes on matters as small as letterhead does not leave many hopeful. The current UC-AFT contract is set to expire in January.

<http://dailybruin.com/2019/08/05/uc-successfully-negotiates-new-deal-with-one-labor-union-frustrates-another/>

6th: WPEA fighting for raises for library workers

Employees of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library in Washington state, represented by Washington Public Employees Union (WPEA), are fighting for wage increases following a study showing that they were paid up to 29% less than library workers in similar districts. The market study that found these results had been established following a contract agreed to by WPEA and FVRL in 2018 that tied employee salaries to the findings of the report. Employees are now being told the money is not there, and what money does exist is earmarked for capital improvements over salaries.

http://www.thereflector.com/news/article_429a5426-b7ba-11e9-895f-339a26b82321.html

7th: Lucy Kissik named winner of inaugural W&A Working-Class Writer's Prize

Writers & Artists, a part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., announced at the end of July that Lucy Kissik was named the winner of the inaugural Writers & Artists Working-Class Writers' Prize for her debut novel *Plutoshine*. The prize, launched in March, called for writers of a working-class background who did not currently have a literary agent or publishing contract.

<https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/2019/07/lucy-kissick-to-win-the-w-a-working-class-writers-prize>

13th: Forestville teachers strike after negotiations fall short

Forestville, CA, a town with a 120-year-old school district with one school campus and 263 students, saw its first ever teachers' strike and the first strike in Sonoma County since 1980. The district's 16 teachers braved the heat to hit the picket lines, and town residents continued to stop by the picket line all day to drop off water and other support.

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2019/08/12/forestville-teachers-union-on-strike-two-days-before-school-year-starts/>

13th: Ontario Union leaders back job action plan

Union leaders of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) representing 55,000 non-teacher Ontario education workers such as library workers, custodians, secretaries, and early childhood educators among others endorsed a job action plan, the first step in a

process that could result in a strike as the union's contract comes to an end August 31st.

<https://lfpress.com/news/local-news/school-union-leaders-back-job-action-plan>

15th: Cuyahoga Falls Library and workforce at impasse in negotiations

Negotiations between the Cuyahoga Falls Library in Cuyahoga Falls, OH and 27 employees represented by Professionals Guild of Ohio Local 3 ended without an agreement in mid-July with no set date for when each side would return to the table. The 17 part-time and 10 full-time employees have been without a contract since the last one expired at the end of 2018.

<https://www.beaconjournal.com/news/20190719/cuyahoga-falls-library-workers-at-odds-over-new-union-contract>

15th: Victory! Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh staff say "Yes" to the union!

In a 173-106 vote, the 321 employees of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh voted to form a union August 14th. The library staff will be represented by United Steelworkers (USW) in future negotiations with the library system.

<https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2019/08/14/Carnegie-Library-staff-members-vote-to-unionize/stories/201908140121>

26th: University of Western Ontario Librarians and archivists vote to back strike if necessary

Librarians and archivists at the University of Western Ontario voted by 97% to back a strike if deemed necessary by leadership. The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association, of which the librarians' and archivists' union is a part, hopes to avoid a work stoppage and, according to both the university and union, is continuing to negotiate in good faith. Union leadership told the Gazette that the vote was simply to strengthen the union's negotiating position and hope to avoid disrupting library and archive services to students and faculty.

https://westerngazette.ca/news/librarians-support-strike-if-deemed-necessary/article_f014a258-c51d-11e9-acda-cbbc7f469b82.html

26th: University workers in Oregon could strike in September

Around 5,000 classified workers, a category that includes library technicians and IT professionals, in Oregon's public university system planned to walk off the job in September if the system and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 503 failed to reach an agreement this month. University workers said their pay is stagnating

while administrative pay is rising. Many of the lower paid members of SEIU Local 503 are on food stamps for families of four, and even higher paid members have seen their purchasing power decreasing over the years in a state with a high cost of living.

<https://www.koin.com/news/civic-affairs/oregon-university-workers-could-start-school-year-on-strike/>

28th: Kennewick (Wash.) teachers out on strike, district cancel's classes

Teachers were picketing outside of schools in Kennewick, WA on Tuesday, August 27 while the school district made the late Monday call to cancel classes. These developments followed the failure of the district and union to reach an agreement in negotiations.

<https://keprtv.com/news/local/teacher-strike-begins-after-educators-and-district-leaders-fail-to-agree-on-contract-terms>

September

10th: Amazon, Microsoft workers plan to join Global Climate Strike

Almost a thousand workers, mostly at Amazon's Seattle headquarters, planned to walk off the job Sept. 20th to join the Global Climate Strike. Many of the employees, members of Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, will be using paid time off to join the global demonstrations. Members of Microsoft Workers 4 Good have also said via their Twitter feed that they plan to join demonstrations.

<https://www.cnet.com/news/hundreds-of-amazon-employees-plan-to-join-climate-change-strike/>

20th: Panamanian librarians demand salary increase

The Panamanian Association of Librarians (Apabib) presented a proposed minimum salary increase estimated at \$1,200 before the citizen participation room of the National Assembly (AN). With this initiative the association seeks to replace the current salary of \$700. There are currently about 254 professionals working in public, school, municipal, and academic libraries, and the National Library.

<https://unionlibraryworkers.blogspot.com/2019/09/panamanian-librarians-demand-salary.html>

20th: Florida A&M support staff win in negotiations and continue to grow

Members at Florida A&M University claimed a long-sought victory at the bargaining table after members voted unanimously on Tuesday, September 17 to accept the new contract. The struggle has produced further results as Tuesday also saw 15 support personnel join AFSCME.

https://www.afscme.org/now/famu-workers-win-at-bargaining-table-continue-to-build-power?link_id=1&can_id=c4211047e0c87fa94f9e0f649d6118ae&source=email-florida-famu-workers-win-favorable-contract&email_referrer=email_623456&email_subject=florida-famu-workers-win-favorable-contract

24th: OSU employees authorize strike action

A whopping 95% of 5,000 Oregon State University employees represented by Service Employees International Union local 503 voted to authorize a strike. A strike date was set for Monday, September 30th when library, counseling, health services, clerical, and technical support staff would take to the picket lines. Negotiations reached an impasse when management refused to budge on a core demand of SEIU 503: that workers receive a compensation package on par with other state workers.

<https://truthout.org/articles/oregon-state-university-employees-vote-to-authorize-a-strike-amid-heated-moment/>

24th: College of DuPage faculty authorize strike

Faculty at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, IL voted to authorize a strike after negotiations went into mediation. Faculty are upset that the school is not moving to fix a three-year-old pay freeze that has led to an arbitrary promotion process that, faculty say, is not grounded in current research, while also piling on additional duties without compensation.

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2019/09/17/college-of-dupage-strike-vote/>

24th: Six years of negotiations end with 10-year contract for Mount Vernon Public Library workers

A six-year negotiation between the Mount Vernon Public Library in Mount Vernon, NY and its workers represented by Civil Services Employee Association (CSEA) ended with a 10-year contract retroactive to 2014.

<https://patch.com/new-york/mountvernonny/library-workers-union-sign-10-year-contract-agreement>

24th: Tenured librarians, teaching faculty face lay-offs at St. Cloud State University

St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, MN announced that it intends to lay off (retrench) four faculty librarians (out of a total of twelve still working in the library after years of positions lost through attrition), along with three faculty from the Philosophy Department and one from Theatre. The four librarians the administration is proposing to lay off are all tenured and have worked at SCSU for more than 11

years. The only two permanent, full-time library employees who are people of color are among those targeted for retrenchment.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/library-babel-fish/retrenched>

25th: Google contractors vote to unionize

In Pittsburgh, PA, 80 Google contractors working for HCL America voted to join USW under the name Pittsburgh Association of Tech Professionals (PATP). HCL America had launched a campaign discouraging its employees from voting to unionize. Workers on both sides of the vote were concerned with the fact that they made less and had fewer benefits than full-time Google workers.

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/8xwmnv/google-contractors-officially-vote-to-unionize

25th: McGill Faculty of Law votes to strike for climate Sept. 27

In Montreal, Quebec, McGill Law students voted 93% in favor of striking September 27 in solidarity with the global student strike for climate. The vote, held by the Law Students Association, saw a general assembly attended by 63.6% of members. McGill Law has said it will accommodate students wishing to participate. It was the decision by McGill not to facilitate participation in the September 18 global student strike that prompted the vote by law students.

<http://www.mcgilltribune.com/news/mcgill-faculty-of-law-votes-to-strike-for-climate-change-march-09252019/>

25th: Mass Senate overrides Gov's veto, allows unions to collect reimbursement from non-union members

A bipartisan vote in the Massachusetts Senate saw the overturning of Governor Charlie Baker's veto of a bill that would allow public sector unions to collect reimbursement from non-union workers for cases in which they represent the worker in grievances and arbitration.

<https://www.prwatch.org/news/2019/09/13495/massachusetts-law-could-blunt-effect-januss-attack-unions>

30th: Western University (ON) librarians, archivists, and supporters rally for fair contract

Members of the Western University community rallied in solidarity with the school's librarians and archivists, represented by the Western University of Ontario Faculty Association, who have yet to reach an agreement with school administration after a summer of negotiations. In early September, the WUOFA filed a no-board report to the Ministry of Labor which will allow them to strike as early as mid-October. Disagreements between WUOFA and Western University were primarily workload related, with a 20% decline in library employees since 2010.

https://westerngazette.ca/news/librarians-and-archivists-call-on-campus-to-get-loud/article_305974b6-e07f-11e9-b6bb-eff95fc782a0.html

October

2nd: Santa Clara County workers strike, first time in four decades

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 521, which represents employees in libraries, parks, and law enforcement as well as hospital custodial staff, social workers, mental health providers, and clerical workers in Santa Clara County, CA called for its first strike in four decades. The unions contract ended in June, but a skyrocketing cost of living in the Bay Area combined with staffing shortages in mental health and key positions were sticking issues in negotiations.

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/10/01/union-representing-12000-santa-clara-county-workers-to-strike-wednesday/>

2nd: Chicago Public Schools staff deliver strike notices

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73, which represents 7,500 staff employees of Chicago Public Schools, issued strike notices. Members voted in July to authorize a strike by 97%, citing what they are calling poverty wages as a motivator for the walk out. SEIU Local 73 could be on strike as early as October 17th, potentially joined by SEIU members of the city's Park District which last week voted by 94% to strike. Earlier this week the Chicago Teachers Union also voted by 94% to authorize a strike, putting the CTU on pace to be on strike by the end of the month.

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2019/10/01/strike-notices-chicago-public-schools-park-district-seiu-local-73/>

8th: Two Ontario unions avoid strike with last minute agreements

A late-night agreement between the government and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) prevented a strike by 55,000 education workers and Western University. Also, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA-LA) announced an agreement that stopped librarians and archivists from walking out. Both contracts still needed to be ratified by union members, but the agreements will make it possible to continue services to students at all levels without interruption.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-education-workers-latest-1.5310641>

9th: NLRB moves to strip grad students of union rights

Towards the end of September, the National Labor Relations Board

proposed a rule change that would upend the 2016 decision that gave graduate students at private universities the right to unionize. Such a move would dramatically upend years of victories and organizing by graduate students across the United States, often in the face of constant turnover and open hostility from administrations.

<http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2019/10/07/new-rule-proposed-to-prevent-graduate-student-unions-at-private-colleges/>

18th: Chicago teachers union on strike, need for school librarians among issues

For the second time in seven years, 25,000 members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU Local 1) went on strike. The CTU has been at the forefront of a recent mobilization of teachers across the country after the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) won union elections and launched a successful strike around social justice demands in 2012. In 2019, the teachers' union is still fighting for the school that Chicago students deserve. This occurs as class size takes center stage, along with a demand for more librarians, nurses, and student counselors. Some schools must currently share these resources, leaving important student services and access to school materials out of reach much of the time.

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2019/10/17/chicago-teachers-head-to-picket-line-for-day-1-of-strike/>

21st: Cape Breton University approve strike with 91%

After a month of stalled negotiations between Cape Breton University (CBU) in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and the CBU Faculty Association (CBUFA), CBUFA membership voted by 91% to authorize a strike. Sticking points in negotiations revolve around teaching supports and wages. While CBUFA was willing to make concessions in the last contract in the face of declining enrollment, faculty had hoped that a turnaround with enrollment, combined with increased duties carried out by members, would lead to a more amenable negotiation; that has not played out in practice. Along with teaching faculty, CBUFA represents librarians, archivists, lab instructors, nursing practice educators, writing center advisors, and research chairs.

<https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/provincial/cbu-faculty-vote-in-favour-of-strike-365497/>

21st: UO graduate students authorize strike

University of Oregon graduate students authorized a strike if negotiations with administration were still at a standstill after 11 months of bargaining. Demands centered around fair wages and the maintenance of Graduate Students' healthcare. After both sides offered

their last best offers, they went into a 30-day cooling-off period. Negotiations would be able to restart November 3rd, at which point the graduate students would be able to strike.

<https://www.registerguard.com/news/20191018/uo-graduate-employees-authorize-strike-after-11-months-of-contract-negotiations>

21st: UO support, administrative staff provide strike mandate to negotiators

University of Ottawa support and administrative staff, represented by Support Staff University of Ottawa (SSUO), voted 84% in favor of a strike mandate for their bargaining unit. SSUO's 1,200 members include library staff, co-op specialists, financial aid advisors and other support and administrative staff. A main concern at the bargaining table for SSUO members is the filling of vacant positions. More than 80 positions at the university remain unfilled, stretching vital services thin.

<https://thefulcrum.ca/news/support-administrative-staff-vote-in-favour-of-strike-mandate/>

22nd: AFSCME Council 93 and MIT Librarians organizing union drive

More than 100 librarians at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are organizing with AFSCME Council 93 to form a union in the university's libraries.

<https://www.abettermit.com/>

28th: Harvard Graduate Student workers authorize strike

Harvard Graduate Student Union-United Automobile Workers (HGSU-UAW) voted by 90.4% in favor of a strike authorization. The vote comes as graduate students are entering their second year of negotiations with Harvard for their first contract.

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/10/26/>

[harvard-grad-union-authorizes-strike/](https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/10/26/harvard-grad-union-authorizes-strike/)

28th: Dedham, MA teachers go on strike

Public school teachers in Dedham, MA went on strike after nearly two years of negotiations have failed to provide a new contract for teachers in the school district. Striking workers included the district's teachers, nurses, and counselors. A near majority of the union's 270 members voted to authorize the strike, despite the fact that public school strikes are deemed illegal in Massachusetts. Negotiations have reportedly stalled over health insurance, compensation, and language to safeguard staff from sexual harassment.

<https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2019/10/24/dedham-public-schools-teachers-going-on-strike-after-nearly-2-years-of-negotiations>

29th: Library workers among county employees disciplined for skipping “hurricane duty”

In 2017, Palm Beach County (FL) made the decision to stop contracting emergency relief efforts with the Red Cross and, instead, to require untrained and unprepared county employees to take up emergency response duties, including operating shelter services. Following this past September’s near miss of Hurricane Dorian on the Florida Coast, 28 county employees, including 14 library employees, have been suspended for a week without pay after they refused to show up for duties they were never properly trained to carry out and that many felt put both them and the public in harm’s way. Emergency response is not within the job description of any of the employees who have been disciplined, and many say the most training they got was a one-hour video. Some tried to have assignments changed but had these requests denied.

<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20191028/skipping-hurricane-dorian-duty-costs-palm-beach-county-employees-weeks-quos-pay>

29th: Toronto public library workers’ union lends voice to oppose transphobia in library

The Toronto Public Library Workers Union (TPLWU/CUPE Local 4948) joined the growing chorus of opposition to a scheduled event by a prominent anti-trans speaker at the Toronto Public Library. CUPE 4948 made clear they view the event as a direct contradiction to the library’s stated values, as well as an indication that trans and non-binary employees and patrons are not able to view the library as a safe and welcoming space.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/hundreds-protest-controversial-writer-outside-toronto-library-1.4661036>

November

4th: Chicago schools back in session as strike ends: no movement on school librarians

Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) members returned to work Friday after a 15-day strike by both unions, the longest in Chicago Public Schools since 1987. Language in the contract mandates the hiring of new nurses and social workers, guaranteeing that every school will have at least one of each by 2023. However, the demand for more school librarians was dropped during negotiations, despite a decline from 454 to 104 between 2013 and 2019, leaving just slightly more than one librarian per six schools in the district.

<https://abc7chicago.com/education/chicago-teachers-students-return-to-class-friday-as-15-day-strike-ends-/5663774/>

4th: Ontario elementary school teachers and workers authorize strike

Public school elementary teachers and staff in Ontario have voted by a whopping 98% to authorize a strike. Wages seemed to be a sticking point, with provincial legislation known as Bill 124 hanging over negotiations. Bill 124 was introduced by Premier Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative government over the summer and would place caps on public employee raises, a move, the union argues, that would undermine the very basis of negotiations.

<https://www.cp24.com/news/ontario-elementary-teachers-union-votes-in-favour-of-strike-mandate-1.4665625>

12th: Telegraph & Argus: Protest at Wibsey Library against museum and library cuts

Bradford (UK) Council is planning to cut £1.05 million from its museums and libraries budget in the coming year. Details of the cuts have yet to be revealed, but may include reduced opening hours and a greater dependence on volunteers. Around 50 staff took part in three days of strike action with more work stoppages planned to defend the paid positions.

<https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/18018683.protest-held-wibsey-library-union-accuses-council-wielding-pickaxe/>

12th: Western University librarians and archivists vote to ratify contract

Librarians and archivists in London, Ontario represented by the University of Western Faculty Association voted by 89% to ratify a new contract. The new contract will see increases to wages and benefits while also promising a Librarian and Archivist forum to give librarians and archivists a greater say in the university's governance.

<https://london.ctvnews.ca/western-s-librarians-and-archivists-vote-in-favour-new-deal-1.4670659>

12th: Little Rock teachers to strike Thursday

Little Rock, AR teachers will strike for one day on Thursday following a decision by the state Board of Education not to recognize the union. The strike was only the second time that teachers have walked out of Little Rock classrooms. But with growing frustration over the lack of recognition and state control over the local education system, the Little Rock Educators Association felt compelled to act.

https://www.herald-dispatch.com/ap/ap_region/little-rock-teachers-to-go-on-strike-over-district-s/article_949a5e69-4588-5948-93dc-60659d4333eb.html

20th: CUPE 5521 ratifies contract

Canadian Union of Professional Employees (CUPE) Local 5521 ratified its contract with Prairie South School Division in the west-central part of Saskatchewan by 71%. CUPE 5521 represents library associates and library technicians, along with other school support staff, in the school district.

<https://discovermoosejaw.com/local/cupe-local-5512-votes-to-ratify-new-collective-agreement>

20th: UNBC faculty on strike

Faculty at the University of Northern British Columbia were on strike beginning November 8th. The administration was willing to meet the faculty union on issues of pay. (UNBC has among the lowest-paid faculty in Canada.) However, the exchange offered was the removal of a tenure appeal process.

<https://www.therockymountaingoat.com/2019/11/unbc-strike-wages-not-the-hold-up-for-academics/>

20th: Saanich school staff strike over

Support staff at Saanich, BC public schools agreed to a contract that provided for pay parity with neighboring districts, the establishment of a retention and recruitment committee, and assurances on-job evaluation payments. The agreement marks the end of a three-week strike, during which Saanich teachers refused to cross their coworkers' picket line, resulting in school closures across the district.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6181560/saanich-school-strike-deal-ratified/>

20th: University students march on Alberta legislature to protest education cuts

Students from MacEwan University and the University of Alberta marched on the Alberta Provincial legislature to protest budget cuts that would result in multi-million-dollar shortfalls at both schools.

<https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/university-students-marching-to-legislature-protesting-post-secondary-cuts-1.4690907>

20th: Students protest screening process that segregates schools sharing the same building

Students at New York City's iSchool and Chelsea Career and Technical Education High School skipped their first period Monday, November 18 to protest an iSchool selection process that has resulted in what students see as segregation in their schools and a lack of opportunity for students attending Chelsea.

<https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2019/11/18/students-strike-over-school-segregation>

20th: Croatian teachers move to nationwide strike

Croatian teachers changed strategies as they moved from a series of rolling strikes to a full nationwide strike that included street protests. Calling it a “struggle for dignity and status,” teachers are frustrated with their pay that lags far behind other Croatian public sector workers.

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2019/11/19/world/europe/ap-eu-croatia-teachers-strike.html>

20th: University students protest for education funding, end to university corruption, more

For weeks, Bogota’s university students protested in the streets against corruption in the university system and for more funding for public higher education. Organized by the student collective called National Union of Students for Higher Education (UNEES), the protests have spread in recent weeks to public and private universities across Colombia and have come to demand far more sweeping reforms beyond education, especially in light of tactics by police that students have called excessive and unnecessary.

<https://thecitypaperbogota.com/bogota/as-colombia-faces-a-nationwide-strike-nov-21-why-are-students-protesting/23208>

26th: Librarians among university staff on strike across UK

Over 40,000 librarians, lecturers, technicians, and other staff have gone on strike, picketing 60 universities across the United Kingdom. The strike continued for 8 days but work to rule will remain in place indefinitely and a second strike could carry into the new year if demands are not met. In the three weeks since the strike was announced, 3,500 more workers petitioned to join the University and College Union (UCU), and the UCU has begun talks at other institutions about joining the actions should they continue into the new year. At the heart of the strike is what UCU members and supporters see as the inflation of administrative salaries and benefits and “real estate deals” bringing private companies to campus while staff are forced to turn to food banks, face homelessness, and see their pensions gutted. Equal pay for women and staff from marginalized backgrounds has also been raised by strikers as an important issue.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/nov/25/university-strike-staff-walk-out-uk-pay-pensions>

December

2nd: Extinction Rebellion: On Hunger Strike in the Library

The week before Thanksgiving, four Columbia University students slept, met, and fasted beneath the gaze of a portrait of Athena hanging

in the main staircase of Butler Library.

These four students, members of Extinction Rebellion (XR), camped out for five days on hunger strike to demand that the university take meaningful action on the climate emergency. At the same time, over 400 other XR rebels around the world conducted similar hunger strikes to foreshadow the mass starvation that will accompany the widespread crop failures and desertification caused by anthropogenic climate change—these changes and the suffering they come with have already begun.

The Columbia hunger strikers' demands, still unmet, stem from the XR movement's foundational demands.

Columbia University presents itself as a leader in the fight to stave off the worst consequences of the climate emergency (read: the extinction of humanity.) When the hunger strikers met with representatives of the university administration, senior faculty touted the university's publications on climate law, research into technologies like battery storage and carbon capture, plans to retrofit campus buildings, and even the possibility of establishing a school of climate change based on the recommendations of the 24-member Climate Change Task Force. Extinction Rebellion Columbia University celebrates these intellectual efforts. However, they also know that—given the dire consensus of the scientific community and the students' dwindling possibilities of a livable future—these efforts are simply not good enough.

<https://extinctionrebellion.us>

3rd: UNBC strike ends without deal

Pickets came down Friday evening as faculty and students prepared to return to classes Monday at the University of Northern British Columbia. The union representing faculty decided to suspend their strike action, according to the *Terrace Standard*, but not without filing a complaint of bad faith bargaining with the provincial Labor Relations Board. The filing came shortly after the province appointed a mediator to bring an end to the strike. Though faculty said they would be willing to continue negotiations, the mediator called for adjournment. The adjournment combined with the coming end of the semester led faculty to pull down their pickets while they awaited the LRB's decision regarding the bad faith complaint.

<https://www.terracestandard.com/news/unbc-faculty-suspends-strike-classes-resume/>

3rd: Graduate Student strike at Harvard begins

At midnight on Tuesday, December 2nd, graduate student workers began their strike after a year of negotiations with Harvard University, the school's student newspaper *The Harvard Crimson* reports.

Negotiations remain stuck around issues of healthcare and compensation as well as grievance procedures to address sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The strike, announced last month, was timed to make the university feel the full weight of graduate students' withdrawal of labor as TAs will not be teaching, holding office hours, or grading right at the end of the semester and lab assistants will not be carrying out paid research not related to their academic program. The strike has been declared by the union as indefinite; with no current bargaining sessions scheduled, it is possible the strike could drag on into finals.

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/12/3/grad-union-strikes/>

4th: London's Marx Memorial Library seeking support for flood damage

The Marx Memorial Library in London sought donations to restore the library after damage which occurred on September 24th due to flooding in the library. Donations would restore the roof and drainage system to prevent future flooding, enhance the storage and protection of archives, and fund the redevelopment of the library's facilities to expand capacity and improve access to the collection. The Library was founded in 1933, the 50th anniversary of Karl Marx's death, at a meeting of the British Labour Party, Communist Party, Labour Research Department, and Martin Lawrence Publishers Ltd. as the most appropriate memorial to the life and works of Marx; especially as fascism seemed on the rise across Europe.

<https://www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/support>

4th: Colombian students, unions launch third national strike

Workers and students marched together as a general strike shut down Colombia for the third time since November 21st, *Reuters* reports. The strike is in response to a government which, protesters say, is not taking the concerns of the people of Colombia seriously. This is evidenced, they contend, by the fact that the government is pushing through a tax overhaul opposed by strikers while simultaneously meeting with representatives from the committee organizing the demonstrations. Along with opposition to the tax overhaul, workers are calling for greater protections for human rights activists, support for demobilized rebels following the country's historic peace deal, dissolving the riot police, and rejections of a raise in pension age and a cut in the minimum wage.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-strike/colombian-unions-student-groups-to-hold-third-national-strike-idUSKBN1Y8oIM>

6th: Concordia University Library employees vote in favor of strike mandate

Montreal, QC—Members of the Concordia University Library Employees Union (CSN)(CULEU), represented by the Fédération des employés et employés de services publics (FEESP-CSN), voted November 29th in favor of a strike mandate after 18 months of negotiations. CULEU's President has stated that Concordia's "insistence on severely restricting advancement possibilities for new employees" has been a sticking point since the beginning of the year. This has compounded frustrations as the university is refusing to even discuss another topic until this issue is settled.

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-concordia-university-library-employees-vote-for-a-strike-mandate-889640396.html>

6th: France hit by general strike led by public sector workers

Some of the biggest demonstrations to hit France in recent years took to the streets Thursday as labor unions across the country, led by teachers and transit workers, dug in for the second day of mass strikes, *The Guardian* reports. The nationwide strike is in response to the coming rollout of significant changes to the country's pension system put forward by President Emmanuel Macron. Many marchers are also pointing out that the proposed pension cuts are only the latest in the current government's attempts to roll back France's public services. The strikes are seen by many, in conjunction with the anti-government yellow vest protests of earlier this year, as a sign that France is in the midst of a social crisis as many people are struggling to make ends meet while the centrist government led by Macron is looking to scale back the historically robust social safety net.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/06/france-faces-second-day-travel-chaos-strikes-continue>

9th: Ontario teachers one-day strike could be sign of things to come

Secondary school teachers across Ontario struck for one day, *Global News* reports. Though teachers were back in school and classes resumed Thursday, it was far from a sign that negotiations would carry on smoothly. Prior to the strike, negotiations had been stalled for four days around issues of class size, mandatory e-learning, and teacher compensation. With 40,000 teachers and 15,000 support staff across the province on strike on Wednesday, the union considers the action a warning to the province's leadership, illustrating the unity and support for the action among education professionals and a signal that failure to negotiate with the teachers could lead to a full-blown strike down the line.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6253555/ontario-high-school-teachers-one-day-strike/>

10th: UC Santa Cruz grad students withhold grades in wildcat strike

Saying they can no longer afford the cost of housing in Santa Cruz, an unknown number of graduate student workers declared an unauthorized wildcat strike. According to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, teaching assistants are withholding final grades and research assistants are refusing additional work until demands are met. It was unclear how many graduate students participated in the strike, or how it will impact the end of the semester for undergraduate students. The strike did not come out of nowhere for the administration, as the Graduate Student union had filed a complaint with the administration on November 7th highlighting the housing plight of many grad student workers who are confronted with homelessness, sleeping in cars and garages, and doubling up in rooms to save on rent. Striking students say they are prepared to accept the consequences of a strike that violates their contract, as the needs on the ground have simply become too much to bear.

<https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2019/12/09/ucsc-grad-students-strike-saying-they-will-withhold-grades-until-given-a-raise-to-afford-housing/>

13th: McNally Jackson Bookstores and Goods for the Study stationary stores unionize

The Retail, Wholesale, and Department Stores Union (RWDSU) announced welcoming 90 new members as employees at McNally Jackson/Goods for the Study stores voted to unionize across 5 stores in New York City. Employees now represented by RWDSU carry out the work of sales, events, stocking, and information services within the book and stationary stores. Following unionization, the workers head to the bargaining table to establish a contract. At issue for workers at these stores are: respect, an end to harassment in the workplace, fair compensation, workplace structure, and an end to favoritism.

https://www.rwdsu.info/workers_at_mcnally_jackson_bookstores_and_goods_for_the_study_stationary_stores_vote_to_rwdsu

13th: December Library Worklife out

The ALA-APA published the December edition of the *Library Worklife* newsletter.

<http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/past-issues/volume-16-no-12-december-2019/>

16th: Verdi calls for Amazon strike before Christmas

Germany's second largest union, Verdi, called for members at Amazon logistics centers in Germany to strike in the days leading up to Christmas, key shopping days, in order to demand better pay and

conditions for workers at the centers, *Reuters* reports. Since 2013, Verdi members have struck Amazon multiple times, trying to force the retail giant to recognize collective bargaining agreements that apply to other retail employees in Germany. The country is Amazon's second largest market after the United States.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-germany-strike/german-union-calls-for-pre-christmas-amazon-strike-idUSKBN1YJoG6>

17th: Workers of the National Library of France join the protests against the provisional reform

Workers believe that reforms promoted by Macron are increasingly degrading working conditions and quality of life. The labor unions of the National Library of France agreed to participate in the demonstrations on December 17 and 18. The government maintains the unfair point pension system for a large part of the population, especially the younger generations.

<https://www.actualitte.com/article/monde-edition/bpi-bnf-les-bibliotheques-dans-un-mouvement-de-greve-generale-illimitee/98246>
<https://sudculturebnf.wordpress.com/category/greve/>



<https://sudculturebnf.wordpress.com>

23rd: Labor Leaders cite low pay as root of unfilled San Diego vacancies

San Diego is facing a “vacancy crisis” with over 1,400 unfilled city jobs, according to labor leaders in the city. *The San Diego Union-Tribune* writes that labor leaders are blaming this problem on the low pay offered by the city.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/communities/san-diego/story/2019-12-23/labor-unions-say-low-pay-for-san-diego-city-workers-has-created-vacancy-crisis>

23rd: Labor Activists seek to unseat leadership of Philly’s biggest union

The Caucus of Working Educators (WE) sought to unseat the incumbent leadership of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), Philadelphia’s largest public labor union, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reports. WE models itself after the labor-militant caucuses

that have come to power in other major metropolitan teacher unions. The new caucus, which has tried to unseat union leaders once before, attempted to reenergize the PFT and give its membership confidence in both themselves and the union. With a contract about to expire over the summer, WE made the case that they bring with them the confidence and will to make demands at the bargaining table that current leadership just can't muster.

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/philadelphia-federation-teachers-election-union-caucus-working-educators-20191223.html>

23rd: Truthout: 2019 Showed Unions Win Big When They Bargain Big
Article from Truthout.org.

<https://truthout.org/articles/2019-showed-that-workers-win-big-if-they-bargain-big/>

January 2020

2nd: Kentucky's new governor makes teacher sickouts legal again

Saying that teachers have a constitutional right to protest legislation that affects teaching and that the "sickouts"—a tactic that has been used by protesting teachers in a number of states to force school closures through coordinated simultaneous use of sick days by teachers—that rocked Jefferson County Schools six times during the 2019 legislative session are legal, Kentucky's new governor Andy Beshear overturned the position taken by his predecessor Matt Bevin.

<https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/education/2019/12/31/gov-andy-beshear-teacher-sickouts-legal-again-kentucky/2784579001/>

2nd: Harvard Grad Students call off strike

Both the *Boston Globe* and Boston's local NPR affiliate, WBUR, reported that Harvard Graduate Student Workers ended their nearly month-long strike on Wednesday, just before teaching positions were set to officially begin on January 1st. The union said that the introduction of a federal mediator to negotiations scheduled for January and a statement from Harvard administration that the student workers interpret as setting a timeline for negotiations to get a contract by January 27th are positive developments in negotiations and a sign they are being listened to.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/12/30/harvard-grad-students-call-off-strike/uemx6YCHygDAo6fuTvW7oJ/story.html>
<https://www.wbur.org/edify/2019/12/31/harvard-graduate-students-to-end-strike-without-a-contract>

2nd: Cleveland Public Library workers left without contract after Jan 1 deadline passes

January 1st marked the deadline for a new contract between the Cleveland Public Library and its nearly 400 workers, but the date came and went, and a January 8th vote was set to determine if the workers would strike or not. A main sticking point between the union and library was the issue of library security following the shooting death of 19-year-old Brandon Cutnoe last July. Library workers pointed to security features that don't work and the termination of a contract with a security firm that, workers say, would reduce response times to violence in libraries. Library workers also pointed to three marketing consultants hired after the shooting to the tune of \$150,000 and double-digit pay increases for library administrators while workers were offered only 1.5% after a 10-year wage freeze. Negotiations are set to restart at the end of January, but many workers view that as too long to wait for needed security improvements.

<https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/cleveland-metro/nearly-400-cleveland-library-workers-are-now-without-a-contract-as-branch-security-remains-a-problem>

2nd: Amazon threatened to fire workers who spoke out on climate

A number of Amazon employees associated with Amazon Employees for Climate Justice told *The Guardian* that they had been contacted by Amazon's human relations department telling them that any future comments made about the company's role in climate change could be grounds for termination. Employees said they were contacted by HR following a change to the company's external communication policy shortly after Amazon Employees for Climate Justice announced they would be joining the September Global Climate Strike marches. Amazon denies that the policy change was designed to target any group of workers in particular, but employees vocal about issues related to climate and Amazon's connections with big fossil fuel companies believe that they have been targeted specifically, noting a climate of fear that has swept over employees who used to be far more vocal about the issue.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/02/amazon-threatened-fire-employees-speaking-out-climate-change-workers-say>

3rd: Google cafeteria workers unionize

Vox reported that 2,300 cafeteria workers across dozens of Google campuses voted to unionize with Unite Here last month after a two-year campaign. The workers are part of Google's vast workforce of contracted workers and are part of the Silicon Valley population who have seen pay decrease while cost of living has increased since 1997.

Workers say that, despite Google's success, they remain overworked and underpaid while also dealing with regular disrespect and even racism from management.

<https://www.vox.com/platform/amp/recode/2019/12/31/21043467/google-union-cafeteria-workers-unionized-alphabet-silicon-valley-mountainview>

7th: John Sessions Memorial Award call for nominations

The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) of the American Library Association (ALA) put out a call for nominations for the 2020 John Sessions Memorial Award. Established in 1980, the RUSA 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.

<http://www.ala.org/rusa/rusa-john-sessions-memorial-award>

7th: Update on Cleveland Public Libraries

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) began a petition asking supporters of the library workers to sign. The text of their petition reads: "The women and men who work at the Cleveland Public Library proudly serve our neighborhood and our community every day, providing vital resources, services, and information for people like us. However, decisions by Cleveland Public Library executives have eroded staffing, increased workloads and ignored the concerns of the public and the employees about the safety and security at library branches throughout the city. These decisions could put our local library at greater risk. Demand library executives bargain in good faith with Cleveland Public Library workers for a contract that keeps everyone safe and respects the dignity of their work."

<http://www.seiu1199.org>

7th: Appeals court says U of Chicago must negotiate with student library workers

In the waning days of 2019, *The Chicago Maroon* reported that a 7th Circuit Appeals Court judge ruled that the University of Chicago must recognize the collective bargaining efforts of student library workers. The case ended up in the Appeals Court after the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) denied U of C a hearing for its claim that student workers do not have collective bargaining rights because

they are temporary workers. The ruling is the result of an 18-month-long legal battle following student workers voting to unionize under the Student Library Employees Union (SLEU) in June 2017. They are represented by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 743. The University of Chicago seems to be attempting to relitigate a 2016 Columbia University case where the NLRB ruled that student workers do have collective bargaining rights, a fact that both the NLRB and 7th district pointed to, adding that U of C had not presented any new evidence. However, three Trump appointments on the 5-person NLRB has led other unions, including the U of C's Graduate Student Union, to withdraw certificates of recognition to prevent a ruling that would overturn the Columbia case. Currently, SLEU is undeterred and views their appeals court victory as a major step forward.

<https://www.chicagomaroon.com/article/2019/12/29/university-loses-library-union-case-nlr-affirms-c/>

8th: Saskatoon library workers approve contract after three years without

The last contract for public library employees in Saskatoon expired December 31, 2016. This past weekend, members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2669 voted overwhelmingly in favor of a new agreement, the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* reports. The new contract establishes four consecutive wage increases retroactive to 2017. Also included are increased rights for library pages, including sick days. Though CUPE membership voted 98% in favor of the contract, the agreement reached through voluntary mediation is being viewed as only a first step by many who still have sore feelings after administrative decisions from the past three years that included the setting aside of funds for a new downtown library rather than using those funds for wages and a top-down restructuring that caused many employees to have to reapply to their jobs at lower wages.

<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/library-workers-ratify-new-contract-union-hopes-it-brings-stability>

9th: Cleveland Library workers authorize strike

According to Cleveland's local ABC affiliate, a near-unanimous vote by members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1199 authorized a strike if necessary as library workers in Cleveland Public Libraries have been without a contract since January 1st. No strike was called nor a strike notice issued to the library, but the strength of the vote gave SEIU negotiators a much stronger hand at the table as issues of library security remain a sticking point in negotiations.

<https://www.news5cleveland.com/news/local-news/cleveland-metro/cleveland-public-library-workers-vote-to-authorize-strike-if-deal-isnt-reached>

13th: Clark College faculty on strike

Classes at Clark College in Vancouver, WA, were cancelled as the 400+ member Association for Higher Education launched a strike following 15 months of negotiations that failed to result in a contract. *The Columbian* reports that the major sticking point seemed to center around wages for part-time faculty. The union says that up until recently, the college's offers for part-timers were far too little (one adjunct faculty reported making only \$26,500/year with a full course load), while the most recent offer would roll out too slowly.

<https://www.columbian.com/news/2020/jan/10/clark-college-faculty-say-they-will-strike-monday-morning/>

16th: January Library Worklife is out!

The ALA-APA published their January edition of *Library Worklife*, including an article about the Cleveland Public Library Workers' strike authorization, here:

<http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/past-issues/volume-17-no-1-january-2020/>

17th: Concordia University library workers begin strike actions

Library workers at Concordia University voted last November to mandate strike actions after 18 months of negotiations with the university failed to produce a contract. According to *The Link*, the strike mandate requires the Concordia University Library Employees Union to strike for a total of eight hours, and two and a half were carried out on Thursday, January 16th. The university and CULEU had been holding conciliation meetings with the last one ending Monday as the two sides ran into "major blockages." The major sticking points appear to hinge around changes the university is attempting to make to advancement schedules, particularly for new employees. Union leadership says that this has been a goal of the university since the union was formed. Library workers see this as a barrier for new employees and an attack on how they have come to understand their place within the university. According to CULEU leadership, the university failed to negotiate on this issue through all of 2019 and shows no signs of accepting employees' "hands off" perspective. Once CULEU has spent its mandated 8 strike hours, it will convene a new general assembly to determine next steps.

<https://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/concordia-library-workers-begin-strike-actions>

27th: Cleveland Public Library, Employees Union reach deal to avoid strike

The *Cleveland Scene* reported that a deal was finalized between Cleveland Public Library and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1199 negotiators. The deal, reached on the last scheduled day of negotiations, prevented a strike that was set to begin on February 4th following an overwhelming vote by membership to authorize strike action. The contract must still be ratified by membership at a vote scheduled for this coming Wednesday. No details of the contract have been made public yet.

<https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2020/01/24/library-workers-and-administration-reach-tentative-agreement-preventing-strike>

February

3rd: University of Western Cape (SA) classes disrupted by student strike

The Student Representative Council (SRC) at University of Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town, SA, marched on classes along with other student-affiliated political organizations. UWC SRC was calling on students to gather for a meeting, according to *IOL*, as students launched a strike with demands around accommodations, debt clearance, and course registration. According to the SRC, around 9,000 students have not been able to register for courses in 2020 due to the university's approach to debt clearance which places a large financial burden on students. SRC is calling on the academic program to be delayed for a week to allow all students the opportunity to sort out their registration.

<https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/student-strike-brings-first-day-of-classes-at-uwc-to-a-halt-42032046>

3rd: Mount Alison University classes suspended as teaching faculty, librarians strike

Negotiations between Mount Alison University in Sackville, NB, and the school's faculty and librarians union broke down, resulting in an indefinite strike launched Monday morning. According to the CBC, despite negotiations late last week and into the weekend and a lot of ground being made on some issues, talks couldn't advance enough on issues such as academic resources, workload, job security, and part-time faculty compensation. While the university says it offered its last best offer in good faith Sunday night, Mount Alison Faculty Association leadership viewed the proposed deal as a "take-it-or-leave-it" approach and that the university was not willing to actually negotiate on the terms in contention. This is the second time in six years the MAFA has gone on strike, in 2014 a three week strike

only ended after both sides agreed to binding arbitration. This time, negotiators have called in a provincially appointed moderator.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/mount-allison-strike-day-one-1.5449636>

10th: Mount Alison strike ends as tentative agreement reached

A tentative agreement reached between the Mount Alison Faculty Association and Mount Alison University over the weekend brought a strike by the school's faculty and librarians to an end, *Global News* reported. Details are being withheld until union members have a chance to agree to the contract later this week, but known points of contention centered around accommodation for faculty and librarians with disabilities, part time compensation, workload, and resources.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6525736/mount-allison-strike-ends/>

12th: Graduate Students reach tentative agreement with Harvard, go back on wildcat strike at UCSC

The Harvard Crimson reports that the Graduate Student Union and Harvard University reached tentative agreements on three potential contract provisions last week. Meanwhile, Graduate Students at the University of California Santa Cruz launched an open-ended wildcat strike for a cost of living increase, Monday, to meet high housing costs in one of the nation's hardest rental markets. The *Santa Cruz Sentinel* reports that pickets were set up at both main entrances to the main UCSC campus, virtually shutting down all access to the campus at one point on Monday. Striking teaching assistants were joined by teaching faculty and undergraduates swelling their ranks, but making member participation in the unsanctioned strike difficult to determine. Solidarity rallies were reported Monday on other UC campuses.

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/2/11/HGSU-new-bargaining-agreements/>

<https://www.santacruzsentinel.com/2020/02/10/ucsc-graduate-students-go-on-strike/>

26th: UCSB Students to join UCSC wildcat COLA strike

Monday evening, graduate students at the University of California Santa Barbara voted to go on strike Thursday if their demands for a cost-of-living adjustment were not met by administrators. Student paper the *Daily Nexus* reports that the vote followed a 16-hour occupation of Cheadle Hall calling on UCSB's chancellor to email UC president Janet Napolitano as well as UC Santa Cruz administrators to denounce threats to fire striking graduate students at UCSC. Much like the UCSC stoppage, the UCSB strike would be a wildcat action as students are acting independently of the United Auto Workers

union that represents graduate students in the UC system. Cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) have been a focal point of graduate student organizing across the UC system with movements on every campus except San Francisco.

<http://dailynexus.com/2020-02-24/breaking-ucsb-graduate-students-vote-to-begin-full-strike-on-thursday-for-cost-of-living-adjustment/>

27th: Great Neck Library staff, board of trustees reach deal for tentative contract

The Island Now reports that the Great Neck Library Staff Association has reached a tentative contract deal with the library's board of trustees. According to union sources, staff have been working without a contract since the last contract expired in 2012, though the two sides did sign a memorandum of understanding in 2018. Since the 2018 memorandum, disagreements have arisen between the board as workers who had been with the library for two decades were being told that they had hit the pay cap and would not qualify for further pay increases promised by the memorandum. The contract concludes a campaign by the union to engage the community and involve patrons in the issues as the union was not permitted to strike.

https://theislandnow.com/great_neck/library-union-board-of-trustees-reach-tentative-settlement-on-staff-salaries/

27th: UC Davis grad students prepare to hit the picket line

The Sacramento CBS affiliate reported Wednesday that University of California Davis graduate student workers were joining UC Santa Cruz and UC Santa Barbara in striking for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) pay increase. The decision to withhold grades beginning Thursday is illustrative of a growing movement of graduate students in the UC system who see large quantities of their pay eaten up by California's often competitive housing market; a movement that seems to be growing in momentum even as UCSC graduate students were threatened with losing their TA positions earlier this week.

<https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2020/02/26/uc-davis-grad-student-strike/>

March

2nd: UCSD grad students poll for strike, UCSC fired TAs seek support

Between 54 and 80 graduate teaching assistants at UC Santa Cruz were fired due to their failure to turn in grades as a result of an ongoing wildcat strike. At midnight on Sunday, a poll closed for UC San Diego grad students assessing willingness to participate in either a full wildcat strike or rolling strike actions. The *UCSD*

Guardian covered both stories Sunday. The wildcat strike, calling for a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) pay raise for graduate students who are forced into either overcrowded housing or homelessness in California's pricey real estate market, has so far spread to UC Santa Barbara, where graduate students launched a full wildcat strike, and UC Davis, where students began a grading strike, both on Thursday. UCSC graduate students, who have so far faced arrests and firings since their strike moved beyond the withholding of grades last month, were calling for a day of action across the UC system on Monday and for the strike to spread as far and wide as possible.

<http://ucsdguardian.org/2020/03/01/ucsd-cola-releases-strike-polls-and-ucsc-students-call-for-support-of-fired-tas/>

5th: Hachette Book Group employees walk out to protest publisher's Woody Allen deal

Employees at Little, Brown led a walkout that included other Hachette Brown Group imprint employees including Basic, Hachette Books, Forever, and Orbit three days after Grand Central Publishing—another HBG imprint—announced it would publish a forthcoming book by Woody Allen, *Publishers Weekly* reports. The workers announced that they were taking a stand in solidarity with Ronan Farrow, Dylan Farrow, and survivors of sexual assault after senior leadership at Hachette refused to side with workers filing a complaint with human resources this afternoon. Dylan Farrow is Allen's adoptive daughter and has accused the director of sexually assaulting her when she was seven. Her brother Ronan, an author with Little, Brown where he published his expose on Harvey Weinstein, has stood by and defended his sister over the years.

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/82609-hbg-staffers-stage-walkout-over-woody-allen-memoir.html>

10th: Hachette drops Allen book after workers' walkout & Farrow objections

NPR reports that at the end of last week, Hachette Book Group announced it would no longer be publishing Woody Allen's memoir following a protest by the publisher's employees that ended with a walkout after senior leadership failed to take concerns about the company's relationship with Allen seriously. Ronan Farrow, who published *Catch & Kill* with an HBG imprint, had previously announced that he may not be able to continue to work with HBG after they announced they would publish Allen's book.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/06/812687472/after-woody-allens-memoir-was-signed-book-publisher-s-employees-walk-out>

April

7th: Labor Collections of the Archives and Special Collections of the UAA/APU Consortium Library wins John Sessions Memorial Award

The Reference and User Services Association of ALA announced Monday that Arlene Schmuland, on behalf of employees of Labor Collections of the Archives and Special Collections of the University of Alaska Anchorage/Alaska Pacific University Consortium Library, was unanimously selected as the 2018 winner of the John Sessions Memorial Award. The decision was based off “their consolidation of access to extensive archival materials relating to the history of labor and labor relations in Alaska and their support of the Alaska labor community in which one out of every 5 workers is a member of a union.”

<https://rusaupdate.org/2020/04/labor-collections-of-the-archives-and-special-collections-of-the-uaa-apu-consortium-library-wins-john-sessions-memorial-award/>

15th: San Diego rescinds furloughs for 800 workers

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported last week that the city of San Diego is rescinding furloughs for 800 city workers, many of whom worked at public libraries and recreation centers before the facilities were forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The move followed a grievance filed on behalf of the workers by the Municipal Employees Association. Workers will receive their full pay and will be found alternate city jobs. Unfortunately, part-time workers have seen their hours reduced and wages cut and were not part of the grievance since weaker labor laws don't protect them.

<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/politics/story/2020-04-09/san-diego-rescinds-furloughs-for-800-workers-will-restore-pay-and-find-city-tasks-for-them>

15th: April issue of *Library Worklife* is available

The ALA-APA published the April 2020 issue of *Library Worklife*. It can be found on their website here:

<https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/past-issues/volume-17-no-4-april-2020/>

22nd: Ontario Public High School teachers reach contract deal

Global News reports that the union representing Ontario Public High School teachers reached a tentative agreement with the provincial government, bringing to an end months of contentious negotiations between the government and the four unions representing different groups of teachers in the province. At the negotiation's most contentious points, the unions had instituted rolling strikes throughout the province; however, closures of schools due to COVID-19 had brought such actions to

a close. Union leaders, while admitting they did not win everything they wanted in the interest of providing a stable school system once precautions around the pandemic allow a return to physical school buildings, say the deal represents a win for the interests of parents and teachers. Members could vote on the agreement as early as next month.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6841348/ontario-high-school-teachers-contract-ford-government/>

22nd: CWA threatens to move August 2021 convention over convention center's lack of support for workers

The Communication Workers of America (CWA) has told the convention center in New Orleans it will be moving its 2021 convention if the center does not provide \$100 million in funding for out-of-work hospitality workers, according to reports from New Orleans-based *The Lens*. The CWA says it considers a labor conflict the fact that the convention center has yet to address the demands of the Coalition to Create a Fair Fund for Hospitality Workers, a New Orleans-based coalition of 35 organizations.

<https://thelensnola.org/2020/04/20/major-labor-union-threatens-to-cancel-convention-in-new-orleans-if-convention-center-doesnt-address-local-workers-demands-for-relief/>

May

1st: Book Riot: Library workers face layoffs and difficult decisions as institutions fail the test of supporting most vulnerable employees

An article posted last week to *Book Riot* has detailed the trials that some of the library field's most vulnerable workers have been facing amidst the global coronavirus pandemic. As the article details, staff at libraries across the country are facing furloughs, being forced to work without adequate supplies or guidance, and in some cases being transferred to pandemic response work they are not trained or prepared for. Some library worker advocates have begun tracking library layoffs and furloughs brought on by the pandemic in a shared Google Document located at <https://tinyurl.com/librarylayoffs>. They are also encouraging the spread on social media of the hashtag #protectlibraryworkers. Organizers are also encouraging people to support library workers through the work of the HALO (Help A Library worker Out) fund. Advocates for library workers argue that, with budgets already set for libraries at the beginning of the fiscal year, forcing library workers to decide to work in potentially dangerous environments or take paid time off (which many of the lowest paid library staff across the country do not have) or, worse, laying off or furloughing staff amidst this pandemic is both shortsighted and wrong.

<https://bookriot.com/2020/04/24/librarians-under-pandemic-duress>

1st: May Day greetings from ULW blog

Normally, I would want to take International Workers Day, also known as May Day, to wish everyone a happy May Day... and especially on a Friday, a happy weekend. However, this is a very difficult May Day for many people in the world of libraries as many of the most vulnerable members of our field are forced to make difficult decisions or losing jobs and protections after years of service to our institutions. Unfortunately, the future is too uncertain to make any predictions now about what the future may hold, making our work ever more precarious. So instead, I can offer solidarity and best wishes from afar and encourage those who can to contribute to the HALO fund if you are in a position where you can, follow the #protectlibraryworkers hashtag on social media, and register for the #LIBREV(olution) virtual conference scheduled for next Monday. We all need each other, even at a distance, more than ever. May you have a safe International Workers Day.

Always in Solidarity,

Union Library Workers Blog

<https://www.everylibraryinstitute.org/halo>

15th: May Library Worklife is out

The ALA-APA published its May 2020 edition of *Library Worklife*. It can be found here:

<https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/past-issues/volume-17-no-5-may-2020/>

15th: Libraries Gave Us Power: Library workers push back against resiliency narratives amid pandemic

An important article up on the new blog *Libraries Gave Us Power* by one of the founders of the #closethelibraries and #protectlibrary-workers movements pushes back against the popular media narrative that all is well in public libraries as boards and management push workers to take on dangerous and unnecessary work in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should go without saying, but libraries should absolutely not be putting their workers on the front lines of this public health crisis unnecessarily.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201208222527/https://callan.cc/blog/librev/were-here-because-were-here/>

15th: Book Riot: Chicago Public Library to rush reopening despite risk to workers and patrons

Chicago Public Library, one of the last major public library systems to close amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, sent an email to its employees on May 14th setting June 1st as its target reopening

date with employees expected to report next week, *Book Riot* has reported. Staff members, who had already experienced working in a library system well after they felt comfortable, spent the evening in tears, anger, confusion, and outrage. The email from Andrea Telli, Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, announced only vague details about what the library's safety precautions would look like upon the reopening of the library system and did not provide information about what will happen to employees that cannot access childcare or who rely on public transit to get to work that may not be available. With Illinois not expected to peak in confirmed COVID-19 cases until mid-June and with Chicago passing Queens, NY, in terms of total confirmed cases, it is unclear why CPL is making the jump straight to a total reopening so soon.

<https://bookriot.com/2020/05/15/chicago-public-library-calls-staff-back-to-work-plans-full-reopen-june-1/>

21st: Guest post: Call for participation in survey regarding Librarian's Perceptions of Union Participation

A guest post from Mary-Michelle Moore and Heather Hughes of the University of California, Santa Barbara Library:

You are invited to participate in a survey about the benefits and effects of participating in your library's union. Your responses will help us better understand how participation in union activity informs your workplace morale and professional identity. This questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete and will ask about your experience with your library's union, your participation with the union, and how union participation or non-participation affects your interactions with colleagues and morale.

We are employing a mixed-methods approach to our research and may want to follow up with individuals to learn more about your experiences. If you are willing to speak with us further, please provide your name and contact information. Names and identifying information will not be associated with individual answers, nor will personal identifying information appear in the final paper.

Survey link: <http://bit.ly/libunion>

We invite you to take the survey if you work as an academic librarian in the United States. Please feel free to share. We anticipate collecting responses until June 15th.

22nd: Lightfoot contradicts CPL statement, union responds

Following coverage by *Book Riot* last week on an email sent to Chicago Public Library employees setting a June 1st reopening date, Lori Lightfoot, the city's mayor, disputed that any timeline had yet been established for reopening the library. The *Chicago Tribune* has both

Lightfoot's response to concerns about the library's reopening as well as a response from AFSCME Local 31, which represents the city's municipal workers.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-coronavirus-chicago-libraries-reopening-20200515-lmrqaovpwjdhxoev5hu5a6jomu-story.html>

29th: CPL employees ask patrons to not come to open library

Last weekend, *Scapi Magazine* ran an article in which it quotes an anonymous Chicago Public Library employee imploring patrons not to come into the library when it reopens. The plea comes in the form of an unsigned letter circulating on social media (the employee has withheld their name fearing retaliation from management) that states safety concerns are being brushed off, hand sanitizer in the libraries is expired, and the libraries lack enough plexiglass to run the library safely. This letter comes after previous statements by AFSCME Local 31 in which the union said it had not been consulted in reopening considerations and was caught off guard when Library Commissioner Andrea Telli emailed staff earlier in the month asking them to report to work May 20th.

<https://scapimag.com/2020/05/23/chicago-librarians-asking-no-one-come-to-newly-opened-libraries-top-administrators-are-forcing-an-unsafe-plan>

June

4th: UC-AFT statement on the police murder of Floyd, Taylor, and protection of Arbery's killers

On Monday, UC-AFT Executive Board released a statement on the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the failure of law enforcement to protect Ahmaud Arbery or persecute his killers in a timely fashion. The UC-AFT represents all non-senate faculty and librarians in the University of California system. The statement can be read here:

<https://www.ucaft.org/content/uc-aft-statement-police-murder-george-floyd>

8th: Black Lives Matter in the library and the workspace

Over the past two weeks, the nation and globe have been rocked by demonstrations set off by the police and vigilante murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Despite the continuing fear of the growing COVID-19 pandemic, people have turned out in the thousands in their local communities; and many more have offered their support online, unable to attend the demonstrations due to

health concerns. Communities that have never seen demonstrations before have seen hundreds take to the streets, and even historic hotbeds of Klan activity have seen communities demand justice for Black victims of police and vigilante violence and an end to systemic racism that regularly strips Black Americans of their most basic rights.

Library workers should take this moment as an opportunity to support this movement in whatever way we are able as a field committed to equal access to information and information justice. Further, we should take a deep look into a profession that has long upheld white supremacist power structures and relied on systemic gatekeeping that has resulted in a disproportionately white profession, even in libraries that serve predominantly Black communities.

Too often, library professionals decry the inequality in our profession or wax philosophically about ideas like antiracist practices and decolonization without changing the ways our libraries function. Comfort is often given precedence over the difficult changes that will need to be implemented within our libraries and our profession.

It is well past time to listen to our Black colleagues and patrons, who are all too familiar with the disregard given to their concerns. Our libraries were built upon white supremacist ideals of propriety, civilization, worth, individualism, objectivity, and space by the likes of Melvil Dewey, Andrew Carnegie, and the Boston Brahmin class. The literary canon reflects these same ideals, and the publishing industry has yet to make the changes demanded for years by authors of color. This is to say nothing of higher education, which remains painfully unrepresentative of society and pushes the voices of Black academics along with other marginalized groups into the periphery or niche fields.

While the labor movement was indisputably founded upon the racist ideals of the early AFL, which sought to elevate the white labor force from the newly freed Black workforce following the Civil War, and white workers benefited the most from the labor peace that followed WWII, we also know that the labor movement has a long history of antiracist struggle when Black workers have been allowed the space to lead. From the Industrial Workers of the World to the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement to Amazon workers who have launched one-day strikes just 25 miles outside of Minneapolis, Black workers have often been at the forefront of the labor struggle.

Those of us fortunate to be in a union ought to be asking our union leadership what it plans to do to ensure more Black librarians are hired. We should all be examining our library collections and programming, as well as library policies about handling disturbances in the library. We must be aware that every time police or armed security is called, we are putting our Black coworkers and patrons at risk.

Calls are being raised to defund police departments across the country and redirect those funds to services that will help communities without having to turn to law enforcement as the first and last choice. Libraries that have been starved for funding, that have seen the very real needs of our patrons to receive social services, psychiatric help, improved education systems, housing, food security, jobs, and so much more, have an opportunity to lend our voices to this discussion and this call. Libraries and library workers often lament that the library has become the catchall in the wake of the hollowing out of our social safety net, with library workers needing to wear many hats that we have never been trained to wear; now is the opportunity to join the efforts to see that that is no longer the case.

Those of us who work in libraries ought to join the call, loud and clear:

- Black Lives Matter
- Black Books Matter
- Black Library Workers Matter
- Black Communities Matter
- Black Education Matters
- Black Health Matters

19th: Articles on Library Labor and Related Industries

Several recent developments in conversations and actions regarding labor in library and related fields have come up in recent weeks; some important stories and articles ULW Blog readers may be interested in follow:

First, *Library Journal* published an editorial at the beginning of the month by Meredith Schwartz, calling for a national library labor organization:

<https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=Library-Labor-Editorial-covid-19>

There have been two recent developments in the publishing industry as well. On the 8th, *Vulture* published an article on a one-day strike by 1,300 publishing sector workers who were protesting systemic racism in the publishing industry:

<https://www.vulture.com/2020/06/publishing-strike-racism-book-industry.html>

Also, authors have begun a social media-based movement hashtagged #publishingpaidme to highlight disparities between what Black authors are paid compared to non-Black authors. Buzzfeed has more on that story here:

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/tomiobarro/publishing-paid-me-twitter-hashtag-black-lives-matter>

July

6th: Philly Free Library workers say 'no confidence' in library leadership

Less than a day into the return of library workers to the physical spaces of the Philadelphia Free Library, and with no patrons allowed in the buildings, employees were already sharing stories of a woefully underprepared system that was beginning to open back up. According to local PBS affiliate WHYY, employees reported expired and missing sanitizing wipes; nearly expired hand sanitizer; lack of soap; overheated, unclean spaces; and inadequate PPE among other concerns of misallocated resources and racism. These concerns inspired a petition launched by unionized employees of the library system declaring "no confidence" in library leadership and demanding the Board of Trustees force the current library director to step down and for the union to be consulted on finding a replacement. The petition followed a day after Black library workers had released an open letter regarding racism in the library system.

<https://whyy.org/articles/breaking-point-philly-free-library-workers-declare-no-confidence-in-leadership/>

13th: Authors cancelling events at Free Library of Philadelphia over treatment of Black employees

At the end of June, Black employees of the Free Library of Philadelphia issued an open letter detailing the discrimination and disregard for safety following an order for staff to return to library buildings. The letter is very much worth a read in its own right, especially as many of the issues detailed are not unique to Black workers in the FLP system. The workers have now begun to see further support coming from authors who had scheduled events at the FLP. As of July 8th, *LitHub* reported that six authors had all cancelled events in solidarity with the workers after hearing that the concerns raised by Black workers were not being addressed and the situation on the ground had not improved.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17LEyjd7_UVOR6kZwDqllgOrA8uyKdil/view

<https://lithub.com/black-workers-say-theyre-mistreated-at-the-free-library-of-philadelphia-and-authors-are-canceling-events/>

13th: NLRB considering abolishing or scaling back contract bar doctrine

Reuters is reporting that the National Labor Relations Board has put out a call for amicus briefs regarding the status of contract bar doctrine. The doctrine, a long-established precedent observed by the NLRB, prevents union decertification elections for three years after a

collective bargaining agreement comes into effect. The doctrine is being challenged by a poultry plant employee in Delaware, represented by the National Right to Work Defense Foundation, who claims that the precedent restricts employees' "free choice."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/employment-nlrb/nlrb-at-work-board-calls-for-input-on-abolishing-contract-bar-rule-idUSL1N2EH0Q2>

20th: Workers in 25+ cities walk off jobs to confront systemic racism

In a press release issued July 8th, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) reported that thousands of workers in 25+ cities organized by SEIU, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the American Federation of Teachers, United Farm Workers, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and the Fight for \$15 and a Union would walk off the job July 20th to demand action from corporations and the government to confront systemic racism. Workers who cannot strike for the entire day will walk off the job for 8 minutes, the amount of time a Minneapolis police officer knelt on the neck of George Floyd, to draw attention to the issues of systemic violence directed towards Black people in the United States. Along with the press release above, you can also find more information on the action on the Strike for Black Lives website.

<https://www.seiu.org/2020/07/tens-of-thousands-in-25-cities-to-strike-for-black-lives>
<https://j20strikeforblacklives.org/>

29th: D.C. Public Library workers raising concerns about coronavirus safety

Towards the end of last week, the *Washington Post* reported that, despite the assurances of the library system head, library workers in the Washington, D.C., public library system are raising what they say are serious concerns with safety around the spread of the coronavirus. Employees in the system, which opened much more aggressively and earlier than many other public libraries across the country, say that the libraries are keeping them in the dark about potential cases and exposures, have failed to implement sufficient cleaning protocols, and are struggling with mask requirements. While many neighboring systems are limited to curbside access only, D.C. has opened up the inside of 14 locations across the city.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2020/07/23/librarians-alarmed-about-coronavirus-safety-dcs-reopened-public-libraries/>

August

14th: The challenges of organizing book industry workers

Jacobin Magazine published an article earlier this week that will likely be of interest to many readers of the Union Library Workers blog: “Why Organizing Workers in the Book Industry Is So Damn Hard” by Bethany Patch and Joshua Barnes can be read here.

<https://jacobinmag.com/2020/08/book-industry-union-organizing>

28th: Professors organizing for Sept. 8-9 #ScholarStrike and online teach-in for racial justice

University of Pennsylvania Professor Dr. Anthea Butler was inspired by what she saw when the WNBA, NBA, and numerous other sports leagues saw players strike to bring attention to ongoing issues of racial justice and white supremacist terror in this country when she began organizing a #ScholarStrike earlier this week. Joined by Dr. Kevin Gannon, the two have put together a Google form for academics interested in organizing or learning more about the planned Sept 8-9 action. *Inside Higher Ed* has a story up on their site about organizing efforts, and you can follow the #ScholarStrike tag on social media to follow developments.

[https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/28/](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/28/professors-plan-strike-racial-justice)

[professors-plan-strike-racial-justice](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/08/28/professors-plan-strike-racial-justice)

<https://twitter.com/TheTattooedProf/status/1298790551207251970>

September

9th: UM grad students vote to strike

Both the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* are reporting that the roughly 1,000-member Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) at the University of Michigan (UM) has voted in favor of a strike against what members of the union say are unsafe working conditions in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Strikers will face an uphill battle as a new contract was just ratified in April and public sector strikes are illegal in Michigan. School officials are already speaking out against the action to the press, claiming that it violates the terms of the contract that prevent GEO members from interfering with university business. GEO points to the ongoing pandemic and the summer’s uprisings against police brutality as evidence that, while a contract was agreed to in April, there are new issues that need agreement between the union and the university.

Among the union’s demands are calls for greater flexibility in how graduate students are able to conduct their work, including remote instruction, increased testing, and contract tracing. There are also calls for greater support for international students, ending university

cooperation with police, and extensions on degree completion.

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2020/09/07/university-michigan-grad-instructors-strike-person-classes-start/5738731002/>

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/09/07/um-grad-student-employees-strike/5738469002/>

9th: U of K students plan strike over rising COVID cases

As positive COVID-19 cases rose to 546 on University of Kansas's campus last week, student organizing group the Jayhawk Liberation Front began organizing a student strike demanding a campus closure. Local NBC affiliate KSNT reports that students participating in the strike would not show up for scheduled classes or, in the case of online classes, not log on and email their professors informing them of their participation in the strike. The petition demanding closure specifically calls out campus leadership for endangering the health of not only students on campus, but the surrounding community as well. Demands also include free exit testing, housing for students in need, and hazard pay for those who have to work.

<https://www.ksnt.com/news/local-news/ku-students-plan-strike-demanding-campus-close-after-rising-coronavirus-cases/>

October

6th: Brooklyn Friends School faculty & staff launch indefinite strike

Amidst efforts by the private, religious school, the Brooklyn Friends School, to break the faculty union that formed and began negotiations with the school in the Spring of 2019, school employees argue that the efforts to decertify the union, and hiding behind a recent NLRB ruling that states the board holds no jurisdiction over religious institutions, flies in direct contradiction to the school's stated beliefs in social justice. Mindy Isser interviewed a teacher at the school for *Jacobin Magazine*. The interview ran yesterday, the first day of the strike.

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/10/unions-social-justice-brooklyn-friends-school-strike>

6th: Judge declines to halt new rule requiring annual dues authorization

A federal court judge in Detroit declined to stop a new rule last week, approved by the Michigan Civil Service Commission, that requires state employees to reauthorize their dues each year. The story in *The Detroit News* also states that the rule further eliminates agency fees, which help unions to cover the costs of services paid to non-union members.

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/10/02/judge-declines-stop-rule-requiring-michigan-state-employees-to-ok-union-dues-annually/3593124001/>

November

2nd: Administrative and support staff on strike at UOttawa

Last week, the 1,300 member PSUO-SSUO, the University of Ottawa union representing support and administrative staff, went on strike after failing to come to agreement with the school on issues such as health benefits, retirement allowance, and parental leave top-ups, *Fulcrum* reports. PSUO-SSUO represents employees such as lab coordinators, mental health counselors, financial officers, and academic advisors.

<https://thefulcrum.ca/news/psuo-ssuo-strike-the-impact-on-students/>

2nd: Haverford students on strike to protest killing of Walter Wallace Jr.

Following an October 28th march, the majority of Haverford College students went on strike to protest last week's police killing of Walter Wallace Jr. The student paper *The Clerk* reports that participating students were being asked by organizers to halt "their involvement with any college-related activities, including attending classes, working on-campus jobs, and participating in extracurriculars or athletics." Organizers, listed in the original email call as "Women of Color House, Black Students Refusing Further Inaction, [and] the Black Student League," ended their call for the strike with a list of 12 demands including the resignation of the schools Chief Diversity Officer and her replacement by a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color) candidate. For more on the student strike and demands, follow the link to the original Clerk article.

<http://haverfordclerk.com/three-days-into-the-student-strike-the-organizers-have-the-momentum/>

4th: U of Manitoba faculty vote to strike

According to the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA), 80% of voting members voted to strike amid an ongoing labor dispute with the school's administration. *Global News* reports that the UMFA has asked the administration to either agree to binding arbitration or respond to the union's last offer. The union, which represents 1,240 full time faculty, librarians, lecturers, and instructors, have been in negotiations with UM since August.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7437887/university-of-manitoba-faculty-association-votes-strike-action/>