



SRRT

Social Responsibilities
Round Table

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Newsletter



Labor & Unions



ADVOCACY & TASK FORCES

All SRRT members are encouraged to volunteer for groups in which they have an interest. Personal members may choose to join groups or form their own for specific purposes, in line with the goals of the Social Responsibilities Round Table. These groups may be Task Forces (usually long-term) or project groups (usually of a very short duration).

If you're interested in being involved in an active task force, please feel free to contact the Task Force's chair.

- [Feminist Task Force \(FTF\)](#)
Coordinator: [Katelyn Browne](#)

Provides feminist perspectives and initiates action on issues related to libraries, librarianship, information services, and ALA. Subscribe to the [Feminist discussion list](#).

- [Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force \(HHPTE\)](#)
Coordinators: [Lisa Gieskes](#) and [Julie Ann Winkelstein](#)

Fosters greater awareness of the dimensions, causes, and ways to end hunger, homelessness, and poverty.

- [International Responsibilities Task Force \(IRTF\)](#)
Coordinators: [Mark Hudson](#) and [Mark Rosenzweig](#)

Advocates socially responsible positions on issues of international library concern.

- [Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force \(MLKTF\)](#)
Chair: [LaJuan Pringle](#)

Supports and advances the observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday as an American celebration.

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On the Cover: Courtesy of Evan Morud / The Daily UW



SRRT Action Council Co-Coordinators

Charles Kratz & April Sheppard

SRRT had a productive ALA Annual. First, our [Resolution on Maintaining Equitable In-Person Participation for All at ALA Membership Meetings](#) passed Membership 100-56-5 before passing ALA Council 128-14-2. This resolution will implement an in-person voting option at future hybrid Membership Meetings that won't require in-person attendees to pre-register in order to vote. Our [Resolution Honoring the Life of Daniel Ellsberg](#) was also approved by ALA Council. At the SRRT meetings, the [Resolution Against the "New Cold War"](#) was approved by SRRT Action Council to be sent to the International Relations Committee for feedback. This resolution urging ALA to call on libraries and organizations to work for world peace will likely be submitted to Council at a future time.

In addition to passing resolutions, SRRT also hosted award-winning author and executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Trita Parsi, for his talk, US-Iran Relations in the Biden Era. Parsi spoke to attendees about current events and the impact of President Biden's foreign policy. The following morning, SRRT hosted a viewing of the film, *Boycott*, which addresses the large number of state laws that prohibit state contractors from endorsing a boycott of Israel.

Finally, SRRT members were everywhere at Annual! Several members served as panelists or moderators for sessions. SRRT Travel Award winners Samantha May and Katherine Witzig attended the SRRT All Task Force & Annual Membership Meeting and participated in a discussion of SRRT activities and perceptions of ALA. Our sponsored Emerging Leader, Amanda He, and her cohort presented their Library Communities Vote Poster Maker. And lastly, SRRT Coordinator, April Sheppard, told everyone about SRRT at their "All About the Social Responsibilities Round Table" poster session.

Post the 2023 ALA Annual Conference brings a new year for SRRT. We are most grateful to you for being a member of SRRT and look forward to a great year ahead for SRRT. April Sheppard and Charles Kratz will serve as Co-coordinators during 2023/2024 and Olivia Blake (formerly Scully) will serve as Coordinator-elect in 2023/2024 and then as Coordinator in 2024/2025. Katelyn Browne will serve as Secretary and Sherre Harrington as Treasurer in 2023/2024. Our thanks to everyone who has been willing to serve on the SRRT Action Council this year.



Image by Colleen from Pixabay.



from the Action Council Co-Coordinators cont.

Membership Update

As of August 2023, SRRT remains the largest round table with 1,732 personal and organizational members. Here are the largest round tables and their membership:

Round table:	Membership:
Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)	1,732
Library Instruction Round Table (LIRT)	1,628
Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT)	1,598
Rainbow Round Table (RRT)	1,494
New Members Round Table (NMRT)	1,417
Sustainability Round Table (SUSTRT)	1,369
Graphic Novels and Comics Round Table (GNCRT)	1,224
International Relations Round Table (IRRT)	1,218
Library Research Round Table (LRRT)	1,143

ALA has 48,008 members.

If you are interested in joining a [SRRT Task Force](#) or one of our committees, please contact us at: banhatenotbooks@gmail.com - April Sheppard or Charles.kratz@scranton.edu - Charles Kratz

Finally, please keep a look out for our annual call for applications for our [2024 SRRT Conference Travel Grants](#) that will support attendance at the 2024 ALA Annual Conference in San Diego and the annual call for nominations for the [2024 Herb Biblo Outstanding Leadership Award for Social Justice and Equality](#). Nominations for both awards will be due January 15, 2024.

We look forward to working with everyone this year.

April and Charles





Labor and Unions

Stronger together

“And the Tide’s Gonna Turn An’ It’s All Gonna Roll Your Way”(1)...If You’re Willing to Fight for It

Meghan McGowan, Librarian, Wayne State University, Library Freedom Project and Lawrence Maminta, class conscious, anti-colonial library worker, Long Beach City College, Library Freedom Project

Library workers are under attack. This ongoing attack started with the Global North’s neoliberal restructuring of its economies, which in turn normalized the defunding of libraries and other public goods. This defunding has left library workers vulnerable to organized and well-funded assaults by fascists. There is a way to defend ourselves. The strike wave that has been swelling in the United States since 2020 demonstrates organized labor’s ability to reclaim power. However, only about 25% of librarians are represented by unions.(2) This low union density corresponds to a lack of political education within our field. Librarianship itself is not a substitute for building actual working class power. The only way forward is safe and dignified working conditions for all workers gained through collective and democratic control of our libraries. If library workers are to overcome the immediate attacks from fascists and the consistent devaluing of our labor, we must unionize and engage in political education to realize our collective power.

The dangerous conditions we find ourselves in are the result of timorous liberal politics and workplaces devoid of shared governance. Administrators have eroded library workers’ power by internalizing austerity politics and by sacrificing our wages to appease the neoliberal order. Library workers were manipulated into accepting bleak conditions as administrators preyed on our vocational awe and convinced us that these sacrifices needed to be made to “save” our libraries.(3) Now, when confronted with the growing frequency of right-wing extremists barging into libraries to attack queer people and destroy our collections, administrators have demonstrated their fecklessness by telling library workers to vote in the next election or call the police, the same forces who give cover to these transphobic mobs.(4) Administrators’ non-responses to library workers’ concerns are proof that they fail to grasp the severity of rising fascism, the ongoing pandemic, the climate crisis,

and the denial of reproductive rights. After decades of austerity politics, the only thing that has been “saved” seems to be these administrators’ positions within the class hierarchy.

Leaving workplaces under the control of administrative personnel is a risk library workers cannot afford to take. We can collectively build new standards across institutions that guarantee appropriate compensation and reasonable workplace environments. We can ratify contracts that force administrators to act swiftly and proportionally to the threats we face as library workers. We can unite to create standard contractual language across unions that protect our racialized and oppressed colleagues and hold people accountable when these terms are violated. Organized labor is the most direct way to accomplish these goals. By incorporating political education as a key function of our unions, we can redistribute power through shared governance and create just working conditions.

**Library workers are under attack...
However, only about 25% of librarians are represented by unions.**

Unions have successfully embedded anti-fascist political education into their organizing and strengthened solidarity among membership. In May of 2018, the Sioux Falls AFL-CIO banned people who are members of fascist or white supremacist organizations and those who “consistently [pursue] policies and/or activities directed toward the purposes of any Fascist or otherwise White Supremacist Ideology” from holding office within the union.(5) These ideologies oppose workers’ autonomy and undermine working class power by making unions unsafe for

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There is Power in a Union: January 2021 thru Labor Day 2023

Elaine Harger and Kathleen de la Peña McCook

The Union Library Workers blog has been a project of the Progressive Librarians Guild and was established in 2002.

The inspiration for Union Library Workers was Mitch Freedman's election as president of the American Library Association in 2002 and his establishment of a Special ALA Presidential Task Force on Better Salaries & Pay Equity.

Its first entry was:

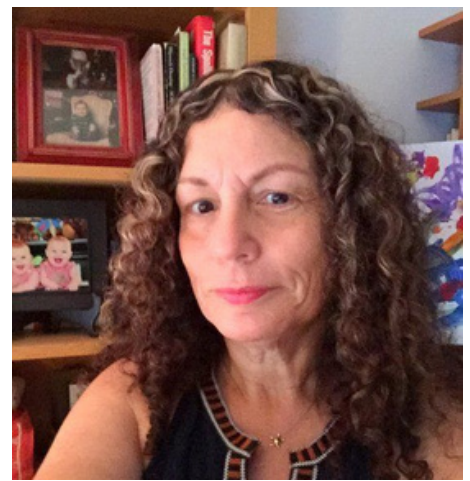
AFSCME Salutes Library Workers —
First Annual Library Workers Day April 20, 2004

WASHINGTON — The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO, the nation's largest union representing librarians and other library workers, salutes the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALAAPA) on its annual National Library Workers Day on Tuesday, April 20. National Library Workers Day is a time to honor the contributions of all library workers, including librarians, support staff and others who make library services possible. National Library Day is part of the celebration of the 2004 National Library Week, which runs April 18-24.

SOURCE: <https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2004/05/16/afscme-salutes-library-workers/>

Contributors over the years have been:

**Sarah Barriage,
Vanessa E. Berasa,
Braden Cannon,
Craig Guild,
Elaine Harger,
Joanna Kerr, and
Kathleen de la Peña McCook —
the blog's first poster, and the thread who
has tied the years together. E.H.**



Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Library literature has long been rather weak when it comes to reporting on library unions.

One attempt to address this lacuna was Elaine Harger's (short-lived) "Talkin' Union" column which first appeared in *Library Journal* in 1989. At the time Elaine was a member of United University Professionals and a librarian at the Harry Van Arsdale School of Labor Studies, Empire State College, N.Y. "Collective Bargaining at LC." LJ v. 114-11/1/89: 24-26 [with Mark Rosenzweig]. "Library of Congress reorganization" LJ v. 114-11/15/89: 20-22.

The posts in the Union Library Workers blog were consolidated into bibliographic reviews (often with pictures) in the journal, *Progressive Librarian*, from 2006-2021. All reviews are available free at <http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/>.

Here are citations to the earlier consolidations of ULW blog entries:

- Guild, Craig M. (2021). "Union Library Workers Blog: The Years 2019-2020 in Review" *Progressive Librarian* 48 (Spring): 110-165.
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña and Elaine Harger. (2019/2020). "Sticking with the Union After Janus: Union Library Workers 2017-2018." *Progressive Librarian* 47 (Winter): 139- 162.
- Barriage, Sarah, Elaine Harger, Kathleen de la Peña McCook. (2016/2017). "Union Library Worker Blog 2016 Review." *Progressive Librarian* 45 (Winter): 135-168.
- Barriage, Sarah. (2016). "A Seat at the Table: 2015 Union Review." *Progressive Librarian* 44 (Spring):111-119.
- Barriage, Sarah. (2014). "Showing Solidarity 2014 Union Review." *Progressive Librarian* 43 (Winter) 102-114.
- Barriage, Sarah. (2014). "The Union Can't Sit Idly By. 2013 Union Review" *Progressive Librarian* 42 (summer): 123-136.
- Barriage, Sarah. (2013). "Library Workers Will Not Be Shushed": 2012 Union Review." *Progressive Librarian* 41 (Fall): 86-97.
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. (2012). "Collective Bargaining as a Human Right. Union Review 2011" *Progressive Librarian* 38/39 (Spring): 69-90.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathleen_de_la_Peña_McCook



- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. (2010). "There is Power in a Union — 2009-2010." *Progressive Librarian* 34/35 (Fall/Winter): 76-87.
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. (2009). "There is Power in a Union — 2008-2009" *Progressive Librarian* 32 (Winter/Spring): 55-67.
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. (2007/2008). "There is Power in a Union — 2007." *Progressive Librarian* 28 Winter: 70-78.
- McCook, Kathleen de la Peña. (2006/2007). "There is Power in a Union — Union Activism 2006 Timeline." *Progressive Librarian* 28 Winter:101-104.

A compilation of ULW blog posts from January 21, 2023 through Labor Day 2023 was edited by Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Elaine Harger for the October 2023 issue of the SRRT Newsletter.

The compilation is a very large PDF, so please allow time for it to load.

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vulnerable members. ILWU Local 10 has built and sustained militant unionism through work stoppages in direct response to police violence and constantly orient themselves against racial capitalism.(6) By memorializing the radical work of their past union leaders, ILWU Local 10 cultivates a shared sense of purpose in the fight for workers' rights. Higher Ed Labor United (HELU), a coalition of unions in higher education institutions, has worked alongside Debt Collective to coordinate actions in recognition that higher education's inaccessibility negatively impacts workers. 1199SEIU prioritizes environmental justice on their list of demands.(7) As people increasingly face housing insecurity, food insecurity, heat waves, and other climate emergencies, 1199SEIU recognizes climate change's impact on their health and their workloads. The work of these unions demonstrates that our working conditions are not divorced from our material and political conditions.

We must explicitly recognize that libraries cannot sustainably be the neutral space some of our colleagues have claimed.

We must explicitly recognize that libraries cannot sustainably be the neutral space some of our colleagues have claimed. Workers have power and the stakes are too high for library workers to spectate and claim "neutral" positions. Our dedication to respectability politics and vocational awe has only left us with precarity. This is a call to increase union membership among library workers, embed political education into our unions and to

get militant. We cannot wait for the tide to turn. Let's grab our boards and surf this strike wave, too.

1. Dolly Parton. 9 to 5. 9 to 5 and Odd Jobs. RCA Nashville, 1980.
2. Barry T. Hirsch, David A. Macpherson, and William E. Even. (2023). Union Membership and Coverage Database from the CPS. https://www.unionstats.com/occ/xls/occ_2022.xlsx
3. Ettarh, F. (Jan. 10, 2018). Vocational awe and librarianship: the lies we tell ourselves. In the Library with the Lead Pipe. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/#respond>
4. Donald Padgett. (June 23, 2022). Did Police Help Proud Boys Disrupt Drag Queen Story Hour in N.C.? *Advocate*. <https://www.advocate.com/news/2022/6/23/proud-boys-disrupt-nc-drag-story-hour-activists-say-police-helped>;
5. Claire Woodcock. (Sept. 27, 2022). Libraries Across the US Are Receiving Violent Threats. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7vyvb/libraries-across-the-us-are-receiving-violent-threats>
6. Kooper Caraway. (10 Aug, 2018). "No Union For Fascists": Why The Sioux Falls AFL-CIO Banned White Supremacists. *Sioux Falls AFL-CIO*. <https://sd.aflcio.org/sftrades/news/no-union-fascists-why-sioux-falls-afl-cio-banned-white-supremacists>
7. Peter Cole. (Aug. 29, 2017). These Dockworkers Just Showed the Labor Movement How to Shut Down Fascists. *In These Times*. <https://inthesetimes.com/article/ilwu-dockworkers-fascists>
8. 1199SEIU. Environmental Justice, accessed Sept. 28, 2023. <https://www.1199seiu.org/GreenJustice>

Opportunities for Librarians and Unions to Protect Palestinians from Censorship

Nora Lester Murad and Alice Rothchild

As authors of newly published young adult books about Palestine, we've been talking with librarians and teachers around the country about how they center Palestinian narratives in their work. Most often, they end up telling us why they don't talk about Palestinians at all, or the personal cost they experience when they do.

The idea of centering narratives that have been marginalized by censorship has become mainstream in library practice. With the escalation of so-called "anti-CRT" movements and book bans, libraries and librarians are at the forefront of anti-censorship efforts, championing readers' freedom to read, their right to learn the truth, and their right to choose what they read.

When it comes to Palestinians, however, even committed antiracists often pause. The reason? Folks have become socialized (perhaps without their awareness) to think that anything that is good for Palestinians is automatically bad for Jews, and their pre-existing commitment against antisemitism warns them not to take action that may harm Jews.

And there is another reason. Librarians who do include and uplift Palestinian narratives may be falsely accused of antisemitism, and these often vicious accusations can devastate careers.(1) They are different from accusations of racism by groups, like Mothers for Liberty, because librarians know that Mothers for Liberty is racist and their accusations are bogus. Librarians do not know that accusations of antisemitism by groups like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) are racist(2) because groups like the ADL are on "our" side fighting against Mothers for Liberty. It's all very confusing, except that it's not.

To say that Palestinians don't have a right to exist, to talk about their experience or express their opinions, is censorship. Period. Moreover, while Palestinians' ideas may make some Jews uncomfortable, they don't make anyone unsafe – and many Jews stand strongly with Palestinians saying the very same critical things about Israel!

Librarians, and especially their unions, need to become informed about the increasing trend in false accusations of antisemitism against librarians, and how they are emboldened by the new, controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) re-definition of antisemitism. The IHRA is being "adopted" and "affirmed" by states, municipalities, school districts, and institutions that rightfully want to express their opposition to antisemitism and support for Jews. They don't realize, however, that the IHRA turns attention away from actual Jew-hatred (which is an ongoing scourge that all antiracists must address(3)) to protect Israel.(4) Criticism of any state, including Israel, no matter how direct or severe, is protected free speech and is essential to the education that youth and adults need to become informed, empowered, constructive voters, taxpayers, and global citizens.

To this end, we have spent the last year talking with a range of people with experience being attacked/smeared by false accusations of antisemitism and folks in organizations with the mandate to protect them, including unions. We have learned that there are virtually no resources for unions to support librarians who face a smear campaign or who are the targets of complaints by patrons or



community groups because they have included Palestinians in their work. Unions are able to support teachers against threats to their contractual rights, but many simply lack the knowledge about what's happening to understand and contextualize the attacks, leaving them unprepared for the organized and effective attackers, their mobilization of the community, and their use of the media.

Through our research, we have collected the advice we've obtained from victims, lawyers, advocates, and activists into a draft document. It includes appendices with information about the organizations that are making accusations of antisemitism based on the IHRA definition and the ecosystem of organizations that are supporting librarians and teachers faced with these attacks. We are moving towards finalizing the information in a format that we hope can be useful to unions, library administrators, and librarians themselves.

Some of the most important insights and advice we've identified so far include:

- Tell the truth: Criticism of Israel is not antisemitic.
- Palestinians face censorship that deserves proactive support from librarians.
- False accusations of antisemitism are attacks against Palestinians and the movements that support their humanity.
- It is never too early to report a smear or attack or the fear of one to the organizations that are supposed to support you.
- If you ask for help and don't get it, contact someone else.
- Even if you don't need help, report your concerns so data can be collected.
- Library administrators must be informed about the increasing problem of false accusations of antisemitism and be prepared to defend against censorship, not cave to pressure from pro-Israel interest groups who purport to represent all Jews.

Our hope is to create information that will support librarians' unions and library administrators and librarians themselves to anticipate, prepare for and respond to censorship of Palestinians as they would to attacks against Black, brown, queer and other communities. Anyone interested in contributing to our project or being informed when information is made public can contact nora@noralestermurad.com and contact.alicerothchild@gmail.com.

1. "Backgrounder on Efforts to Redefine Antisemitism as a Means of Censoring Criticism of Israel." Palestine Legal. January 2020. <https://palestinelegal.org/redefinition-efforts>.

2. "The ADL is Not an Ally: A Primer." DropTheADL Campaign. August 2020. <https://droptheadl.org/the-adl-is-not-an-ally/>.

3. "Five Principles for Dismantling Antisemitism." Independent Jewish Voices and others. April 6, 2021.

<https://www.ijvcanada.org/jerusalem-declaration/>.

."IHRA's True Intentions: This Is The Speech about Israel and Palestine that IHRA Wants to Silence," by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East. https://www.cjpme.org/ihra_intentions

Bios

Nora Lester Murad is an author, educator, and activist. Her young adult novel, *Ida in the Middle*, (Crocodile Books/Interlink, 2022) won the 2023 Arab American Book Award and an Honor Award from *Skipping Stones* multicultural magazine. From a Jewish family, Nora and her Muslim Palestinian husband raised their three daughters in the West Bank. She shares resources for teaching about Palestine in schools and libraries at www.IdaInTheMiddle.com and blogs at www.NoraLesterMurad.com.

Alice Rothchild, author, filmmaker, and physician, is focused on human rights and social justice. Her most recent book, *Finding Melody Sullivan*, is a young adult novel exploring grief and friendship in the setting of broader political questions raised by realities in Israel/Palestine. She is a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and the mentor liaison for *We Are Not Numbers*, a program for young Gaza writers. Her middle grade novel, *Old Enough to Know*, will be published in December 2023. She is completing a graphic novel focused on the Jerusalem Shufat refugee camp. For more information: www.alicerothchild.com and www.alicerothchildbooks.com.

from SRRT's Emerging Leader



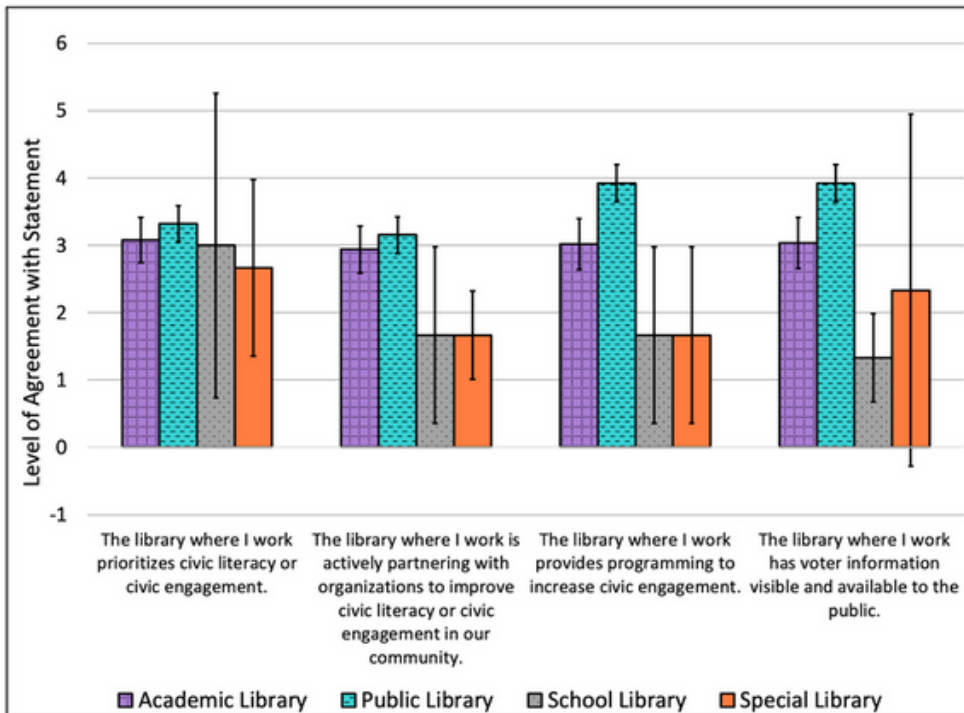
Amanda He, STEM Instruction and Engagement Librarian, New York University



Amanda He
SRRT's 2023 Emerging Leader

I was selected to be the 2023 SRRT sponsored ALA Emerging Leader. I worked with Kelly Bilz, Jennifer Castle, Hale Polebaum-Freeman, and Laura Tadena on the GODORT and SRRT co-sponsored project Library Communities Vote, which tasked leaders with creating a toolkit for librarians to support community members to register to vote and voting. In this project, the group surveyed librarians within the United States to establish an understanding of attitudes towards civic literacy and engagement in libraries, existing work at libraries related to civic literacy and engagement, what gaps to service existed, and what services librarians were interested in. While conducting the survey, the group created the Library Communities Vote Poster Maker, a tool specifically designed to create an infographic that gathers current, non-partisan voting information in an accessible format. You can learn more about the Library Communities Vote project via our public facing folder: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1awwZu_9LvkyxHLLGv3_tDvt1Mq-pdAtmbGRA1lxsQ/edit?usp=sharing

Samples



Sample graphics from the Library Communities Vote project



[Read the full report and see all the graphics!](#)

Figure: Current library civic literacy and engagement activities according to surveyed library staff, sorted by library type. The bar graph value represents the average of total responses from individuals of each library type. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 3 representing neither agree nor disagree and higher numbers representing stronger agreement. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. N = 133 (50 academic, 77 public, three school, and three special libraries).

From the SRRT Conference Travel Grant Winners

Conference Newbie Review

Katherine Witzig, Library Administrative Assistant III, Oklahoma City University's Chickasaw Nation Law Library, Member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (Chahta)

Though I have been to quite a few comic book conventions in my time (the largest in Dallas, TX), my professional conference experience before ALA Conference this year was limited to two years of attending the Oklahoma Library Association's Annual Conference. I didn't even know anyone personally who had attended ALA's Conference before, so it was a great unknown. I sincerely appreciate SRRT and their travel grant for enabling me to attend.

The strengths of the event were the variety of sessions available and the opportunities to connect with professionals from across the nation. Before the conference, I attended the REFORMA Institute where I made friends with other information professionals serving Spanish-speaking communities. During the conference, there was rarely a time slot where I didn't have at least three preferences for sessions to attend and narrowing them down to one was very difficult. As a virtual student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, I was able to meet and connect with fellow MLIS students in person at the Writer's Museum. It was incredible to experience meeting fellow members of the American Indian Library Association (AILA) face-to-face that I had only previously encountered over Zoom. Experiences like these made me excited about my career path and energized to continue growing as a professional.

Unfortunately, there were elements of the conference that dampened that spirit, and I would be remiss in not addressing them. While the high number of sessions offered variety, they were not offered in uniform time blocks and frequently overlapped in obstructive ways. Often, I felt overwhelmed with the task of deciding my path for the day, and I felt even more so when it came to physical attendance. The sheer volume of people and topics required an enormous amount of space, and while this can simply be daunting for some, it was (at times) insurmountable for me.

I am a physically disabled individual, and I did not feel that this conference was designed with me in mind. The shuttles from the hotels to the convention center had several steps and were difficult for me to climb with my cane in hand. (They would have been completely unavailable to me if I were wheelchair-bound.) To ALA's credit, motorized scooters were made available for use in the main building, but so many sessions and meetings were held in other locations, and conference staff could not definitively answer if I could even navigate them to buildings attached to the convention center. Operating a motorized scooter knocked me out of visiting smaller or narrower spaces, so I was unable to see any of the poster sessions, since these rooms were typically packed with people. Additionally, the audience seating for most sessions only had space for scooters at the back of the rooms, which sometimes also caused problems for seeing the presentation screens.

Nevertheless, I am excited about the connections I made while there, and I look forward to continuing my research to support the seeds of inspiration sown while I was in Chicago. While I believe the conference has considerable room for improvement with its physical accessibility, I am thankful to have attended and experienced the event thanks to SRRT's travel grant. I look forward to becoming more active in the SRRT community and hopefully advocating for increased virtual and physical accessibility for ALA events and initiatives.



Reflections on the ALA Annual Conference: Unions & Fighting Harassment in Our Workplaces

Samantha May, Teen Librarian

My first career was as a Union Organizer with National Nurses United. I loved talking with people and Organizing to build the power of the working class, but I knew that my true home was as a part of the rank and file. Even though I am no longer staff with a union, I am an active volunteer of the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC) which provides advice and support to workers that are organizing in different types of industries across the United States. As a new librarian, I attended the American Library Association 2023 National Conference curious about how other librarians and the library profession as a whole relate to organized labor. I want to thank the Social Responsibility Round Table for the generous scholarship that allowed me to attend this convention.

Even with my background in organized labor, I sometimes find myself wondering how to fix some of the problems that arise in the daily lives of library workers. In June 2023, a problem staff was discussing on a daily basis was how to make library administration take concerns about sexual harassment from

harassment is just a part of being in public service and that they should grow thicker skin. When staff advocated for other employees that experienced harassment, we were told that there was nothing management could do. I was curious to hear how other library workers have dealt with similar experiences in their institutions.

After listening to the initial discussion of Grabmeier's essay and hearing the experiences of other library workers, I asked "What can we do when our advocating fails? What can we do to make the administration hear our concerns and take action?" One attendee said that things will be different when current library directors retire and a new generation takes over. This is unfortunately a common solution presented to the issue of unresponsive leadership. It is ultimately not a solution that works for workers that are currently experiencing harassment on the job. After some discussion, another participant behind me said "go to the union!"

If I'm being honest with myself, I already knew the answer to

Even with my background in organized labor, I sometimes find myself wondering how to fix some of the problems that arise in the daily lives of library workers.

patrons seriously. In my workplace, workers sometimes feel like they have to put up with harassing behavior in order to provide exceptional customer service. If harassment continues, management blames the employee for not setting boundaries.

Unions and collective action were on my mind the most during a discussion of Maggie Grabmeier's Braverman Memorial Prize-winning essay "Out of Bounds: Sexual Harassment from Patrons in the Public Library." I found this author-led discussion intriguing and relevant to conditions that workers at my library were experiencing. In my workplace, instances of sexual harassment from patrons have historically been brushed aside. Employees have been told that sexual

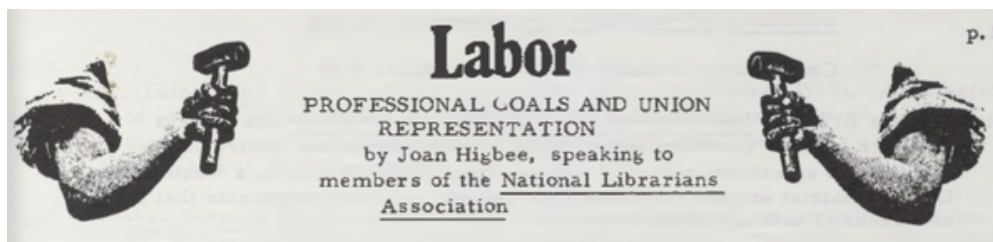
my question. I knew that the most effective way to impart lasting change in our workplaces and in our world is by coming together through a union. I knew that part of the reason my colleagues and I had been unsuccessful in advocating for improved workplace harassment policies was because we were trying to make change individually rather than collectively. The demands of workers are more powerful when there is a movement behind them and a threat of escalation, whether that be the threat of going to the media or the threat of going on strike. Unfortunately in my workplace, employees have already left the profession because of sexual harassment. Even in their absence, we have the responsibility to organize to ensure that other people do not have the same experience in the future.

Still, the work of organizing a union is difficult. While my current job is non-union and my colleagues and myself do not have the legal rights that come along with official recognition, that does not stop us from having the ability to unite together around issues that we want to see improved in our workplace. In states like Florida, where public sector unions are increasingly under attack, the future of the labor movement will need to be driven by unofficial unions and networks of workers that want to fight for change.

If you want to start organizing in your workplace and don't know where to start, I encourage you to reach out to the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee at workerorganizing.org. Whether you work at a non-union library or have a less than responsive union, an organizer will get in contact with you within 72 hours.

VOICES FROM THE PAST

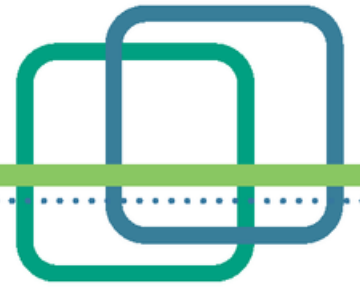
In every issue, we offer excerpts from past newsletters. In every issue, we offer excerpts from past newsletters. This excerpt is from the [April 1982 newsletter, issue 63](#). Taken from Joan Higbee's Professional Goals and Union Representation speech to members of the National Librarians Association. The SRRT Newsletter archive can be found at <https://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/newsletter-archive>.



"Only by fusing the knowledge of those goals and objectives that distinguish their profession with negotiating skills at the bargaining table can librarians truly defend their right to function as fully productive human beings. Sections in union contracts that are written to assure time for professional reading, writing, and conference attendance are ended to prevent burn out and assure the individual librarian's identification with librarianship as a whole. The impact of standards for on-the-job performance must be carefully monitored by unions so that quantifiable forms of production are not used improperly in cost/benefit analysis to deny professional leave and restrict staff to endless days of repetitive tasks.

In coming to terms with their own needs, librarians may prove a creative force within the union movement."

Call for Submissions



The SRRT Newsletter is always looking for good articles, essays, and letters to the editor. The next submission deadline is **December 31, 2023**. Our theme will be the right to privacy in libraries and anonymity on library issues.

The SRRT Newsletter invites submissions from library and information workers, students, educators, and all others who recognize the critical importance of libraries in addressing community and social issues. Submissions should be 500 to 1,000 words and should include the article title, author's name and title, and school or place of work (optional). Graphics are encouraged. If using images that are already on the Internet, the URL of the image and a caption or description may be added to the text of the submission.

Please submit your articles via our online form: <https://forms.gle/SHXBopn8L8ixWg3qZ>.

In memorial submissions can be submitted online at: <https://forms.gle/LoA12bFv5FNsBew88>.

Please send any questions and graphics to the SRRT Newsletter Editorial Board at srrt.newsletter.content@gmail.com.

Submit an article!



Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Reviews

Submissions for book or media reviews should be sent to Laura Koltutsky, SRRT Newsletter Reviews Editor, at laurakoltutsky@gmail.com, indicating "Reviews" in the subject line of your email.

Submissions should be sent electronically in MS-Word format or a Word compatible format. Reviewers should keep their reviews to 300-500 words; any length much shorter or longer should be discussed with the reviews editor prior to submission. Reviewers should avoid conflicts of interest. Full disclosure should be made to the reviews editor when appropriate.

Submissions to SRRT Newsletter Letters to the Editors

The Newsletter invites readers to submit letters to the editors relating to social responsibilities and libraries. The letters should be respectful and thoughtful, either respond to specific content in the newsletter or include suggestions for topics of interest to SRRT members to be addressed in future issues. We will only publish letters of more than 200 words in exceptional circumstances.

Letters may be edited for length, grammar, and accuracy. You will be notified if your letter will be published.

Submit your letters to Laura Koltutsky at laurakoltutsky@gmail.com. Please indicate "SRRT Newsletter Letter to Editors" in the subject line of your email. You may submit your letter as an attachment in one of these formats: .doc, docx; or in the body of your email message.

Letters must include your full name, address, a telephone number and email address if you have one. This is for us only -- we don't share this information.

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