Employee Relations in Libraries:
The Current Scene

Although only a small proportion of the librarians in the country have actually become union members, the issue of library unionization has attracted attention throughout the profession, and much of the most active library discussion of recent years has been concerned with it.¹

Those words were written thirty-five years ago by Bernard Berelson in an influential article about unionization and employee relations in American libraries. What Berelson described was basically the reaction to passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935, and to the economic and social conditions of the 1930s which precipitated a wave of union organization in the mass production industries of America. Not only librarians and the American Library Association took note of these developments; some salaried professions went much farther than the librarians in responding to the circumstances of the 1930s.

During that decade and in the 1940s, a number of professional engineering societies (e.g., the American Society of Civil Engineers) sponsored collective bargaining programs.² The major motivation of these societies was, however, to prevent the unionization of engineers. Because the NLRA gave no special consideration to the problems and interests of professional employees, many persons during that period were concerned that professional employees in industry would be absorbed by bargaining units in which the majority were
nonprofessionals. The rationale of the engineering societies to justify this departure from their traditional opposition to all forms of collective bargaining is described as reflecting the view that: "while unionism is unprofessional, collective bargaining, if conducted on a conservative and dignified plane is not, in itself, objectionable. It was therefore argued that the collective bargaining device be taken over ... and the societies were urged to take on collective bargaining functions or to organize an all-inclusive association for this purpose."  

The engineering societies quickly lost interest in collective bargaining after passage of the Taft-Hartley amendments to the NLRA in 1947, which provide in Sections 2(12) and 9(b) that professionals are not to be included in a unit with nonprofessionals unless a majority of the professional employees vote for such inclusion. Since they were never really committed to the principle of collective bargaining, the professional provisions of Taft-Hartley and the subsequent decline in union activity among engineers served the societies' purposes well. One might question whether they served the interests of working engineers equally well.

Unlike some of the engineering organizations, the various library associations tended during that period to emphasize their professional orientation and remained aloof from collective bargaining. Berelson estimated in 1939 that the total number of librarians who were union members was somewhat over 700. In a modest way, the 1930s represented an upsurge of interest by librarians (as distinguished from library associations) in collective bargaining.

We have called attention to the actions of the engineering societies in order to emphasize the long history of efforts by professionals to devise a system of decision-making in the employment relationship that would protect personal, professional, and economic goals. A realistic appraisal of the current scene of employee-management relations in libraries must be viewed against the backdrop of this evolution.

In 1939, Berelson correctly observed a growing interest in unionization and collective bargaining among librarians. The fact that the total volume of union activity in the post-1939 period remained extremely modest does not diminish the importance of that development.

In the 1970s we are observing another period of intense interest in collective bargaining. The fact that the 20th Annual Allerton Park Institute is devoted entirely to the question of collective bargaining in libraries is strong, but by no means the only evidence of the resurgence of interest in this topic by the library profession.

The skeptic will ask, "Is the current scene any different from what occurred thirty-five years ago?" That is, have we simply reached another one of those points in time when librarians get excited about unionism and overreact to developments—all with little prospect for lasting impact on
libraries, the library profession or individual librarians? In retrospect, it is not hard to understand why large-scale unionization of librarians did not occur in the 1930s. At the time, most union activity was concentrated in the private sector of the economy—the NLRA applies only to employees in the private sector—but most librarians are employed in public institutions. From the 1930s until roughly 1960, relatively little union activity occurred anywhere in the public sector.

We believe that the current interest among librarians in collective bargaining is justified by emerging developments. Unlike the 1930s, union growth and activity is now concentrated where librarians are—in the public sector and among salaried professional occupations. The NLRA is the Magna Carta for manual workers providing the right to organize and bargain collectively in the private sector. We are witnessing in the 1970s a rapid extension of legislative protection for union activity in the public and nonprofit sectors. Neither librarians nor most other salaried professionals can escape the challenges posed by these developments even if they wish to do so. Thus, the question in 1974 is not really: Are librarians interested in collective bargaining? The question is: In what form will the library profession be swept up by the general growth of union activity in the public sector?

However, it is not only the rapid expansion of collective bargaining legislation for public employees that has changed: there is also a vastly different atmosphere in the 1970s from that in the 1930s which affects librarians as much as it does other professionals. Several elements have contributed to this new climate. Union growth and collective bargaining among professionals have had a slow but continuous expansion since the 1930s. Today few professionals would argue that collective bargaining per se is incompatible with professionalism. There is a new appreciation of what it means to be a salaried professional and a concurrent change in professionals’ expectations of what they want to derive from the employment relationship. Both established unions and traditional professional associations have become more sophisticated in effectively representing salaried professionals. Library administrators as well as leaders of professional organizations everywhere are being forced into a reappraisal of their style of leadership, their relationship to individual professionals, and their role in the collective bargaining process. The concept of participation in decision-making has for many professions become a slogan in promoting various methods to bring about a greater degree of involvement in the management of the employing organization, one of these methods being collective bargaining. The many concrete and visible achievements of collective bargaining by the organized work force since the 1930s have not gone unnoticed by unorganized professionals. We intend in this paper to touch on the implications of these elements in the course of analyzing the current labor relations scene in libraries.
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<th>Type of Library</th>
<th>Number of Librarians&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percentage of U.S. Librarians&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Number Involved in Bargaining</th>
<th>Percentage Involved in Bargaining</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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Table 1. Estimated Extent of Collective Bargaining<sup>a</sup> among Librarians by Type of Library

<sup>a</sup>The term "collective bargaining" as used here should be interpreted broadly in that it refers to that negotiations process entered into by librarians and employers or their representatives with the intention of bringing about bilateral determination of employment matters of mutual concern. Only the figures given for school librarians represent bargaining completed through the contract stage.

<sup>b</sup>Estimates of the numbers of U.S. librarians by type of library are those from the Bureau of Labor Statistics given in *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*, 19th ed. 6

<sup>c</sup>*Negotiation Research Digest*<sup>7</sup> states that at the close of the 1972-73 school year, 934,000 NEA members (two-thirds of the organization's 1,500,000 members) were covered by bargaining contracts. Assuming also a two-thirds representation by the AFT (membership 229,000, *World Almanac*, 1974, p. 107), a total of 1,010,333, or approximately one-third of the teaching work force in the United States, are represented through collective bargaining. Presumably one-third of the school librarians are also represented, the school librarian's identity resting as it does with the teaching work force. The figure given here includes only those school librarians under bargaining contracts and does not reflect the many school librarians who are members of NEA or AFT but are not yet represented by bargaining contracts.

<sup>d</sup>A rough estimate which rests on the figures reported in the 1971 survey of bargaining in institutions of higher education reported by Kennelly.<sup>8</sup> Thirty percent of the national random sample surveyed reported bargaining in progress. Sixty percent of those institutions which reported bargaining also reported that librarians were included in the faculty bargaining unit. These percentages have been applied to the number of academic librarians given in *The Bowker Annual*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>e</sup>An estimate of unionized public librarians reported by Guyton.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>f</sup>An arbitrary estimate only; no systematic data regarding bargaining by special librarians have come to the authors' attention.
EXTENT OF UNION ACTIVITY

There are no precise figures on the number of librarians who are covered by collective bargaining agreements, who are union members, or who are engaged in bargaining under other than union auspices. Although such figures are not available (there is an obvious need for research in this area) the estimated involvement by librarians in collective bargaining is approximately 10 percent of the public librarians, 20 percent of the academic librarians, 33 percent of the school librarians, and a scattering of special librarians. Table 1 provides a comparison of the extent of bargaining among librarians within each of the four types of libraries together with the number of librarians employed in each type of library, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The aggregate of these estimated percentages of unionized librarians appears to be about 20 percent or approximately 23,870 of the 114,000 American librarians. Librarians, however, represent only a little over 1 percent of the professional labor force. In contrast, for example, elementary level teachers alone represent 13 percent of the total American professional work force.10

One measure of increase in union activity which holds special import for academic librarians has resulted from the rapid growth of bargaining by college and university faculties. In its annual summary of such activity in two-year colleges, four-year colleges, and universities, the Chronicle of Higher Education in 1971 reported 81 campuses with recognized bargaining agents.11 By the spring of 1974, the figure had risen to 338 American campuses with recognized bargaining agents for faculty.12 A 1971 survey inquiring into the inclusion of librarians in faculty bargaining units found that approximately 60 percent of those campuses engaged in faculty bargaining did include librarians in such units.8 More recently, John Weatherford’s survey for the Council on Library Resources identified several schools which had specifically excluded librarians from faculty bargaining units, among them the sizable University of Delaware.13

Elementary and secondary school librarians are even more closely identified with teaching faculties than are academic librarians with faculties in higher education. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) together represent in bargaining over one-third of the country’s teachers. It is reasonable to assume, and we have done so in Table 1, that this figure includes approximately one-third of the country’s 52,000 school librarians.

Although the number of librarians represented by unions in a bargaining relationship is only about one-fifth of the potential, this figure substantially understates the number of librarians who are affected by bargaining activity, and omits entirely the number of librarians who receive some form of
representation from quasi-union professional associations and from single library staff organizations.

Another measure of the fact that unionism for librarians is attracting wide and active discussion is the number of articles on the subject published and indexed in *Library Literature*. In the ten-year period between 1960 and 1970, approximately eighty citations have appeared, and in the first three and one-half years of the present decade, from 1970 through April 1974, more than 100 citations have been counted under the heading “library unions” alone. Numerous additional articles can also be found under headings such as “strikes” and “labor and the library.”

**PROFESSIONALISM AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

William Goode, in analyzing professionalism from the viewpoint of a sociologist, made himself unpopular with librarians by concluding that librarianship, along with nursery school teaching and podiatry, will never become a profession in the full sense. Louis Vagianos, a librarian, argues that librarians should stop seeking the unnecessary and elusive label of *professional* in favor of skilled service worker status which would improve—among other things—their potential for unionization. Discounting the complaints of the many librarians who assert that “librarians are just as professional as lawyers and professors and should be paid a comparable salary and be given the same respect,” the truth probably lies somewhere between the view that librarianship will never become a profession and the view that librarians should accept their skilled worker status and do away with the wishful talk about professionalism. Wherever the truth may lie, however, the concept of professionalism is central to the many questions which surround and touch upon employee relations and collective bargaining in libraries.

Clark Kerr has described the American university as a mass of uneasy confusion. So we might describe the library in America today, especially with regard to the status of its professional staff: the library is seen in varied roles such as book depository, information storehouse, educational agency, and community or social center; the librarian assumes varied roles such as bookperson, custodian, information scientist, educator, and social activist or community helper. There is widespread disagreement about the function, purpose and appropriate organizational scheme of the library, as well as about the chief function of a library. That is, how different are the functions and purposes of public, academic, school and special libraries? Who is in charge of the library? Who should be? Should the library director or chief librarian carry principal authority? Or should the staff of librarians themselves as autonomous professionals serve as the library’s chief decision-makers? These
questions touch upon crucial aspects of the librarians' concerns with their professional status.

In a collective bargaining environment the decision as to whether an occupation is designated as professional may have an important influence on the composition of the bargaining unit, the scope of negotiations, status as managerial employees, eligibility for certain perquisites, and related matters.

Professionalism impinges on unionism and collective bargaining, but the opposite also occurs. For example, has collective bargaining enhanced the status and autonomy of the librarian as a professional, or has it had the opposite effect? How does collective bargaining affect the ability of both administrators and professional staff to achieve their personal goals and meet their professional and organizational responsibilities? Be it public, school, special or academic library, the American library today is not likely to escape struggling with such pressing questions associated with the concept of professionalism. Research into the literature on professionalism and the rise of various occupations to professional status reveals no general agreement on the meaning of the terms “profession” and “professionalism.” Nor is this the place to attempt such a definition. Yet it is apparent that recognition of professionalism has important social and economic consequences for the members of the occupation who wish to be accorded professional standing in our society; it carries for its members an important assignment of differential prestige. For some occupations the label rather than the substance of professionalism may be the end being sought.

An important element of the ideology of professionalism has been that there exists an essential harmony of interests between the employer and the professional staff. As an expression of ideology, few of us would quarrel with this formulation. Undoubtedly most librarians and library administrators would agree that fundamentally they share in the same responsibilities and have a joint interest in developing the field of librarianship. However, many employers and professional administrators have used the concept of harmony of interest as the basis for a broadside attack on efforts of salaried professionals to organize for purposes of collective bargaining. In effect, these administrators argue that professionals should eschew unionism and collective bargaining on the grounds that it constitutes unprofessional conduct; because there exists a fundamental harmony of interests, mutual confidence is endangered and effectiveness blunted when a union enters the picture; the union is perceived as driving a wedge between staff professionals and administrators. These same persons would argue that any problems arising in the employment relationship can be solved through improved communication and consultation. What this kind of argument does is equate professionalism with loyalty to management. An interest in unionism is automatically viewed as an expression of disloyalty, and by extension as unprofessional conduct. In our
mind there is no doubt that this argument reflects purely managerial interests rather than a concern with maintaining high professional standards.

A more realistic conceptualization of the essential nature of the relationship between staff professionals and administrators can be found in a series of six propositions set out by Jack Barbash:

1. management-employee relations inevitably generate problems;
2. the character of the work makes little difference;
3. it makes no difference who the employer happens to be;
4. although the essential differences of interest between those who are employed and those who employ may be made more bearable, they cannot be eliminated;
5. if there is a difference of interest between the two parties, neither side can be trusted adequately to protect the interests of the other—no matter how high-minded the management, it cannot adequately protect the interests of the employees, and even if it could the employees would not trust management to do so unilaterally; and
6. the only practical way to resolve this inherent conflict between employer and employees rests with a mechanism in which either side can say "no" to the other.

Barbash’s principles seem applicable to the situation of librarians. Librarians as salaried personnel are in a direct relationship with the employer. Because the employer has many of his own goals to achieve, there will develop conflict at various points between his legitimate goals and the equally legitimate goals of the employees who have their own definition of the imperatives for success and survival. Librarians, like other groups of salaried professionals, form protective organizations to speak for and defend their interests in dealings with the employer.

PROTECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS AMONG LIBRARIANS

There are basically three kinds of protective organizations that claim the ability to represent the job and professional interests of librarians—the professional association, the labor union, and the single library staff association. Considerable variations exist among the organizations within each of the three types. Of the three, the library staff association is perhaps the least important insofar as labor relations are concerned; thus, it will be treated last and very briefly.

The Professional Association

Among librarians, the dominant form of organization has been the professional association. Librarians have shown a tendency toward proliferation of associations to the point where there are now, in addition to the ALA, more than thirty organizations which are national in scope although oriented toward various specializations and service areas.
The predominant association, the ALA, is broadly based with a fairly open membership policy. This is not to say that the ALA is fully representative of American librarians. In 1973, ALA’s membership stood at 30,172 (28,267 personal members) or about 25 percent of the 114,000 American librarians. But this membership figure includes many who are not librarians—trustees, friends of libraries, etc. Interestingly, too, the 30,172 figure represents a decline in membership by some 7,000 from the peak membership year, 1969.20

The ALA, as the most visible professional association—and the oldest, now approaching its one-hundredth anniversary—may be taken as the librarians’ counterpart to the National Education Association (NEA), the American Nurses Association (ANA), and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Unlike these other organizations, however, the ALA has paid relatively little attention to immediate job matters and has concentrated instead on broad professional objectives such as establishing standards for professional practice, accrediting library schools (although there are still more nonaccredited than accredited schools), holding annual conferences, and publishing journals.

The ALA’s leadership posts are often filled by persons high in the management hierarchy. Like many other professional organizations, the ALA has fostered an attitude of full cooperation between employer and employee under the assumption that there exists a fundamental identity, not a conflict of interest, among members regardless of their status as employee, employer, or even trustee. In its view, improved communication, consultation and education of members, with the organization acting as catalyst, would work to solidify and strengthen the bonds of common concern and interest to all members. By contrast, the ANA, the NEA, and the AAUP all have developed collective bargaining programs and compete with established unions to obtain representation rights. The ANA adopted such a policy as early as 1946, and today collective bargaining on behalf of registered nurses is undoubtedly its most important function. The NEA reluctantly turned to collective bargaining in the early 1960s, largely as the result of the pressure created by the success of the AFL-CIO-affiliated American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Today the NEA and AFT pursue very similar collective bargaining policies, and there is talk about a merger of the two national organizations. The AAUP formally adopted a collective bargaining program in 1968, in part as a result of the success of both the NEA and the AFT among college and university faculties.

The ALA has never officially or actively opposed library unionism.21 As early as 1919, speakers were invited to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of union membership at a trustees section meeting. (However, ALA trustees did not present their views at this meeting.) In 1938, the ALA Library Unions Round Table (LURT) was formed by library union members
to coordinate the work of existing unions and to act as a clearinghouse and advisory agent for employees forming new unions. By the late 1940s the LURT had become inactive, its recommended resolutions never having been acted upon by the ALA council. The ALA’s first semiofficial comment on unionism was made in 1939, when the Third Activities Committee included in its final report on reorganization and evaluation of association purposes a strong statement in favor of unions.22 The report was sent to the 1939 council but was not discussed. Thirty years later, in 1968, the subject again surfaced officially. ALA’s President Roger McDonough, in his inaugural address, stated, “I am not against unions per se; I don’t feel that unions can or will exhibit the same concern for the profession that we do.”23 Stimulated by this statement, a 1969 preconvention conference explored the problem of professional associations versus unions, and in 1970 the Library Administration Division Board of Directors adopted a position statement on collective bargaining. Although approved by the executive board of the ALA in April 1970, the position statement has not appeared in the association’s official publication, American Libraries, nor has it been approved by the membership. The position paper states that the ALA will promote bargaining legislation, inform its constituents about bargaining trends, assist library personnel in data gathering, and encourage training programs relating to bargaining. However, the document also states: “The collective bargaining concept and collective bargaining laws generally preclude the membership of both managers and other personnel in the same union or bargaining group...constitutional provision precludes ALA’s becoming a bargaining organization within its current membership and dues structure.”24 Such a stand reasserts ALA’s position as an old-line professional association virtually unmoved by the current trend toward bargaining. Its position is in striking contrast to the posture taken by those professional organizations mentioned previously that have not only officially endorsed bargaining, but also have actively engaged in collective bargaining on behalf of their members.

We may contrast the ALA’s position with that of the AAUP, for example. The AAUP’s statement on collective bargaining, although retaining professional association ideology, makes a firm commitment to collective bargaining as an appropriate mechanism for achieving faculty goals. The 1972 council position on collective bargaining reads in part: “The AAUP will pursue collective bargaining, as a major additional way of realizing the Association’s goals in higher education and will allocate such resources and staff as are necessary for a vigorous selective development of this activity beyond present levels...there is pressing need to develop a specialized model of collective bargaining for higher education rather than simply to follow the patterns set by unions in industry.”25

In summary, it would appear that professional library associations have
not actively opposed collective bargaining efforts, nor have they significantly encouraged movement in this direction. The fact is that over the years, these associations have been relatively passive regarding the employment problems of professional librarians. A study completed in the mid-1960s concluded “that the professional associations among nurses, teachers, engineers, and, in all probability, other salaried professions as well, appear to have the capacity—by adapting to the changing needs and conditions of the professions—for discouraging large-scale unionization in the foreseeable future. Even while eschewing any identification with labor unions, these associations appear quite willing to act like unions to protect their dominant positions in the professions.”26

The major associations among teachers and nurses have effectively made the adjustments in structure and function to encompass the need for effective bargaining on behalf of their members. The AAUP seeks to remain the dominant professional organization among faculty by adopting a collective bargaining stance; the outcome is still uncertain. In the case of librarians, the actions taken by the ALA in 1970 probably preclude the association from becoming a collective bargaining representative for librarians. However, were the ALA inclined even now to develop a collective bargaining program and to seek representation rights for librarians, we suspect that effort would not have much prospect for success. Such a decision might have succeeded during the 1960s; now it appears too late. Therefore, the basic pattern of labor relations in libraries is being developed within the framework of employee organizations already deeply committed to collective bargaining.

The Labor Union

What distinguishes the unions from the various associations in light of the present discussion is their early acceptance of the concept of collective bargaining with the employer. The unions, being characterized by varying degrees of militancy and success, were vigorously opposed by many librarians and by library management.

In the case of salaried professionals it is generally an oversimplification to draw a sharp distinction between the professional association and the union model. This matter requires some elaboration here because for many professionals the word "union" invokes an image of industrial unions in the mass production industries. The stereotype in many people's minds is that of a strike-happy organization, led by power-hungry leaders who care about nothing but getting more money, tying management's hands, and stifling any opportunity for individual growth and achievement. That this stereotype does not describe the unions with which the writers are familiar needs to be stated, but not belabored. We wish to emphasize, however, that many of the unions
seeking to represent professional employees differ in significant ways from those usually portrayed as being the mainstream American labor movement. The more successful of them tend to comprise an amalgam of characteristics drawn from both traditional professional associations and traditional trade unions. Perhaps a more accurate description would be to call them quasi-unions or quasi-professional organizations.²⁷

The 1960s saw a marked movement in the direction of convergence of goals, tactics and strategies of the two kinds of protective organizations—the associations and the unions. That convergence has advanced farther among some salaried professionals (e.g., teachers and nurses) than it has among others (e.g., engineers and scientists).

We have seen actual mergers of associations and unions, notably those of the NEA and the AFT affiliates in the city of Los Angeles and on a statewide basis in New York. We have also seen significant functional changes on the part of professional associations; a notable example is the American Association of University Professors. We have even seen shifts in identity from professional association to union, as exemplified by the NEA. In short, we are witnessing the demise of the primacy of pure professional associations and the pure union in the world of professional employee relations. Among professional associations of librarians, however, we have witnessed neither mergers nor functional or identity changes.

Because librarianship lacks a professional association as trend setter in bargaining—the ALA having gone on record as refusing to function in this role—librarians have tended toward diversity in the kinds of bargaining undertaken. Those employed in academic libraries, as already noted, have more often than not been included in a faculty bargaining unit, represented variously by the NEA, the AFT, the AAUP, or independent bargaining agents.

Librarians in public libraries have bargained chiefly through established unions, notably the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). AFSCME locals of library personnel tend to vary as to the composition of the bargaining unit. In New York, for instance, extremely successful AFSCME locals at three major libraries—the Brooklyn Public Library, the Queens Borough Public Library, and the New York Public Library—have been composed of approximately the same number of clerical and blue-collar employees as of librarians. Librarians in the city of Los Angeles, which along with the Brooklyn and New York Public libraries is considered one of the three largest library systems in the country, organized through an AFSCME local which represents librarians only. Librarians employed by the Los Angeles County Library are represented by the Service Employees International Union in a unit consisting entirely of librarians.

Another pattern of bargaining unit composition consists of multiple occupational categories at several levels of government in the same bargaining
unit. Librarians in Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Rochester, New York are represented in such mixed bargaining units.\(^2\)\(^8\)

While the AFSCME’s share of organized librarians has grown considerably with the nationwide increase in public sector collective bargaining since the 1960s, numerous independent mixed units of public employees also represent librarians.\(^2\)\(^9\) The Civil Service Employees association of White Plains, New York is an example of the independent municipal employees’ union. Opinion is divided as to the appropriateness of a mixed unit for librarians. In response to an attitudinal survey conducted in 1968 as a project of the ALA’s Library Administration Division, both administrator and union views differed sharply. Asked if library employees should be part of the same bargaining unit as other city employees, one administrator replied “No,” while another suggested that fifty library employees within the city’s employee group of 2,000 would have less leverage in a separate unit than in one which included nonlibrarians. Similarly, one union spokesman supported the strength-in-numbers argument while another noted that mixed units were especially inappropriate for professional librarians who have no counterparts in other city departments.\(^3\)\(^0\)

There is mounting evidence of concern over strength through size of bargaining units. Dennis Stone emphasized this in his assessment of the prospect of unionism as of summer 1974. He noted that the consensus of union and association offices in Washington, D.C., was that librarians were simply too small a group to be effective in bargaining units representing only librarians.\(^3\)\(^1\) Stone believes that two public employee bargaining bills supported by organized labor, if enacted at the federal level, would bring considerable impetus to bargaining among librarians and other public employees. One of the bills (HR 8677) would set up a National Public Employment Relations Commission (NPERC) for public employees. The other bill (HR 9730) would bring public employees under the jurisdiction of the present National Labor Relations Act. Should either bill pass—and many persons predict that such legislation will be passed—bargaining unit composition would undoubtedly become more uniform along the guidelines or provisions of the NPERC or the NLRB.

Benjamin Aaron, in his analysis of both pieces of proposed legislation, questions the underlying premise of these bills, that is, the desirability of the federal government’s preemption of the entire field of labor-management in the public sector. He suggests that neither bill will be needed if the present trend continues among the states toward passage of bargaining legislation at the state level for public employees. Aaron argues for a simpler approach than the full-scale federal control over public employee bargaining as proposed in both these bills. He suggests instead a federal statute which would establish basic bargaining rights for public employees, those rights having been already
established in most large states. The statute would apply only in those states in which legislation has not already been passed affirming, for example, the absolute right of public employees to organize and to engage in collective bargaining (as opposed to so-called meet and confer procedures) as well as five related basic bargaining rights.3 2

The bargaining units established under the National Labor Relations Act, Executive Orders 10988 and 11491 for federal employees, and most of the legislation adopted for state and local employees, rest on the fundamental criterion of “identifiable community of interest” rather than the “broad common goals” criterion which is favored by many library administrators. Management often considers as the most appropriate bargaining unit the broadest grouping of employees, because this permits dealing with one large all-inclusive unit rather than a multiplicity of competing organizations.

An appropriate unit with an identifiable community of interest is usually defined in terms of distinctiveness of function, similarity of job skills, and mutual interests in job-related problems and grievances. In the case of a library, the broad goals which all employees presumably hold in common—for example, high quality service to the public—might be the basis for the most appropriate unit. With identifiable community of interest currently being the single most important consideration in unit determination, the criteria distinguishing professionals from other categories of employees become significant. In professional work the emphasis presumably is on the intellectual as opposed to routine decision-making, on qualitative rather than quantitative output, and on specialized and advanced knowledge in contrast to general academic education or vocational training. In the private sector and in federal employment, professional personnel may not be included in a unit with nonprofessional employees unless a majority of the professional personnel vote for such inclusion. The same options are available to professionals in much of the state and local legislation that has been enacted for public employees.3 3 Many questions still remain about how to deal with supervisory personnel. Executive Order 11491 for federal employees provides that unless required by practice, prior agreement, or special circumstances, no unit may include both supervisors and the employees they supervise. Yet, because of uneveness in legislation, there are many exceptions. The Washington State Professional Negotiations Act of 1965, for example, provides that all professional employees in a given school or community college district, except the chief administrative officer, are automatically included in the same bargaining unit.
The Staff Association

A discussion of library employee relations would not be complete without mention of the staff association and its potential as a mechanism for structuring professional employee relations. However, because staff associations do not and could not engage in collective bargaining without transforming themselves into at least a quasi-union type of organization, they will not be treated here in great detail. Historically, the staff association has served principally to organize and to promote social activities, and only informally to improve the economic welfare and working conditions of the staff. Bryan's 1949 study included in the Public Library Inquiry, documented the predominance of social activities over all others on the part of staff associations. Ninety-five percent of the librarians in her survey, however, expressed a desire that their staff associations work toward improved economic welfare. Another 93 percent see aiding the professional development of librarians as a focus for many staff associations. This aim was indicated as a desired activity by some 93 percent of the 2,000 public librarians who responded to Bryan's survey.

In academic libraries on campuses where librarians are not represented in the faculty senate or by formal collective bargaining, the staff association may serve as a representative body for the librarians or as a mechanism to improve personnel policy or to bring out greater participation in policy development or implementation. Overall, however, if measured on a continuum or scale of effectiveness in structuring employee relations, the staff association would lie at the laissez-faire extreme.

PROFESSIONAL GOALS IN BARGAINING

We have suggested the hypothesis that the wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment for librarians will increasingly be established through negotiations between the employer and a certified bargaining agent. Bargaining creates a number of difficult problems for librarians, not shared by many other salaried professionals. Most crucial in this regard is the makeup of the bargaining unit. School librarians typically find themselves in the same unit with teachers, where of course they constitute a small minority, or in a unit composed of an assortment of supportive professional and semi-professional staff such as school nurses, playground directors, and counselors. In colleges and universities we typically find librarians together with the teaching faculty, where they again constitute a small percentage of the unit or with other nonteacher professionals such as professional researchers, extension specialists, and accountants. It is unlikely that there will be many bargaining units for school and academic librarians containing exclusively librarians or
even units where librarians constitute a majority. Public librarians are somewhat more likely to have their own units, but their problem may be whether the unit is large enough or strong enough to be taken seriously by anyone. There is little evidence to suggest that the interests of librarians are being given special attention in collective bargaining legislation or by agencies such as employee relations commissions. Part of the responsibility for this must rest with the library profession itself because of its failure over the years to articulate a consistent philosophy about the vital job and professional goals of librarians and the extent to which collective bargaining might serve to achieve these goals.

There is now enough experience with professional worker collective bargaining in the public sector to suggest, at least in broad outline, the basic bargaining strategy of professionals who are in a position to establish their own goals and devise their own bargaining policies.

In many respects, what professionals seek to achieve in their jobs and careers is no different from what all other employees—professional, as well as white- and blue-collar—strive to obtain. But there are also important differences. Of course, differences also exist among those occupations typically placed within the category "professional." Professionals everywhere seem to hold in common the idea that work is more than "just a job." They expect to give a good deal of effort to their work and careers, and they hope to obtain a high level of reward for their efforts. To illustrate this commonality, it is helpful to separate into two categories the goals sought by professionals. We can call then Level I and Level II goals.

Level I goals may be defined as those relating to fairly short-run job and work rewards. These goals are common to all categories of workers, irrespective of education, function, status, and related qualities; they have a "now" focus. Typical Level I goals include the fundamental concerns of satisfactory wages or salaries, suitable working conditions, fair treatment, reasonable fringe benefits, and a measure of job security. While conflicts do develop over the employers' obligation to meet employees' specific demands with respect to these goals, wherever collective bargaining exists in the public sector there is general recognition that they are appropriate subjects for the bargaining table.

Level II goals may be defined as the longer-run professional goals—those not generally held by manual workers as realizable objectives. Although they may be viewed as highly desirable by all workers, these goals are seldom translated into concrete objectives except by professionals. They are centrally related to the mission and content of the functions performed by members of the profession. Much of the substance of Level II goals is encompassed in the concepts of autonomy, occupational integrity and identification, individual career satisfaction, and economic security and enhancement.35 Taken together these four concepts define much of the substance of professionalism.
While Level I goals may lack the glamor associated with Level II goals, their importance must not be underestimated. Like the first levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, they serve as the necessary foundation for higher level needs— for Level II goals. 3, 6 Historically, librarians as a group have experienced greater frustration than many other salaried professionals in achieving Level I goals, particularly satisfactory salaries.

Each of the Level II goals is important to the current reappraisal of employee relations in libraries. Salaried professionals no longer derive much satisfaction from the rhetoric of professionalism. They are demanding its substance, and more and more they are resorting to collective bargaining to achieve it. They are no longer satisfied with being told that they are sharing in management decision-making, that they are expected to live up to a high professional calling, and that unionism is incompatible with professionalism.

Autonomy, whether for self-employed or for salaried professionals, suggests the professionals’ right—indeed, obligation—to practice in their work that which they know. They expect to be trusted—not judged—by those to whom they make available their specialized knowledge. Once admitted to full membership in the profession, they expect to adhere to a code of conduct formulated by the profession and binding on all its members. They desire an authority structure which recognizes the characteristics of their professional role. Reference librarians in a large university library, for example, who must operate under a single-copy purchase policy imposed over their objection by the library director and the board, have suffered an erosion of professional autonomy.

Occupational integrity and identification refers to delimitation of professional boundaries in dealings with clients and employees and to attainment of public recognition. With respect to internal organization, a profession will adopt a policy on entry, will take protective action against threats to its prerogatives and status, and will resist transfer of primary loyalty away from the profession to the goals of the employing organization. The recent employment of a nonlibrarian as head of the San Francisco Public Library has received considerable negative response from librarians on the West Coast. The upcoming selection of the Librarian of Congress highlights the same issue.

The matter of individual career satisfaction concerns the professionals’ desire to retain a good deal of direct control over decisions affecting their work and careers. The hierarchical authority structure of most libraries interposes a screen between the professional employees and the library administration, with administrators making most of the critical decisions regarding the deployment of professional staff and rewards for performance. “To be recognized as experts in their field, especially by their employers,” “to be protected from unqualified outsiders,” “to do satisfying and socially useful work,” and “to have a predictable line of career development without leaving
the profession,” are phrases commonly used in the literature to describe this area of interest. Individual career satisfaction has been thwarted, for example, for the children’s librarian who wishes to practice in his or her area of specialization rather than to assume administrative functions, but who finds no career ladder available.

Finally, the concept of economic security and enhancement in the Level II goal context goes beyond simple monetary gain. What makes this category important is the notion that the level of reward should be pegged not so much to the contribution made to the employing organization directly, nor to the need for adequate income to sustain a certain standard of living, but rather to the direct relationship of rewards and the quality of service rendered. Thus, the quality of the library service performed at a branch, rather than the number of books circulated or the seniority of the branch librarian, would be the base from which to measure professional worth.

Several observations may be made in comparing Level I and Level II goals. Whereas Level I goals were defined as being more “now” oriented than Level II goals, at some point the Level II goals may become just as instantly compelling for professionals as Level I goals. In collective bargaining, Level I items may involve greater immediate dollar cost to the employer than Level II items. On the other hand, Level I items are less frequently disputed as appropriate subjects for bargaining. The Level II issues, while clearly having economic consequences, are from the employer’s viewpoint of greatest concern because they may provide a fundamental challenge to managerial authority. For that reason, Level II goals are frequently more intractable in terms of conflict over whether they are appropriate subjects for collective bargaining.

The evidence from bargaining by professionals with considerable experience in the process indicates that, early in the relationship, the primary stress of the bargaining organization seems to be on securing Level I goals, or “bread and butter items” as they are frequently called. However, it is also true that no sooner are acceptable Level I benefits established than the professional bargaining organization turns its attention to Level II issues. In actual negotiations, this often takes the form of initially negotiating a concept into the contract (such as peer review) and working out in subsequent negotiations the details of its implementation. The final outcome often is deep penetration into areas of decision-making formerly reserved exclusively for management.

In general (with some notable exceptions), unions composed of and oriented toward the problems of manual workers tend to concentrate in their bargaining activities on achieving more benefits in the Level I area; if tradeoffs are to be made in bargaining, they are typically willing to give up the Level II goals for increased Level I benefits. In the case of professional worker
bargaining, the process becomes considerably more complex. Any bargaining organization that wishes to retain the support of its professional constituents in a collective bargaining environment must demonstrate, on a continuing basis, its ability to secure Level I goals at an acceptable level. It also seems clear, however, that this same organization, if it is responsive to the central concerns of professionals, will strive continually to secure Level II goals. Stated another way, the organization will work continually to expand participation in decision-making in all the areas of concern to professional employees. Indeed, it can be argued that if an employee organization does otherwise, it would forfeit its claim to being able to represent the full range of job and professional interests of its members. The hypothesis may be suggested that the greater the degree of professionalism of the occupation involved, the greater the pressure on the bargaining agent to work effectively in the Level II area.

This analysis, if correct, raises a number of very important issues for librarians in view of the wide assortment of organizations which represent them. Do such organizations give the kind of attention to the job and professional interests that librarians feel they are entitled to? From our perspective, the problem is not that of having to decide whether an AFL-CIO-affiliated union or a professional association-turned-bargaining agent can do a better job. Each type of organization has demonstrated its basic ability to work effectively on behalf of professionals in the employment relationship. The dilemma confronting librarians is a more parochial one. In those cases in which they have their own bargaining unit, the unit will almost invariably be extremely small, in a relative sense, raising questions about its potential effectiveness. In those cases in which librarians are combined with non-librarians, the former almost invariably constitute a minority in the unit, raising the question of whether the distinctive needs and interests of the librarians will be given adequate attention. There are so far no easy solutions to these problems; nor is it clear to us that librarians will be given much choice in the matter.

The question of unionism and collective bargaining among librarians has been a topic of active interest since the 1930s. Although there has been a union presence among librarians for many years, its total impact has not been great. This situation is likely to undergo drastic change. The 1960s saw the beginning of large-scale unionism and collective bargaining among public employees, and especially among professionals, a pattern which has continued into the 1970s. A substantial majority of the nation's 114,000 librarians are employed in public institutions.

There is nothing that even approaches a consistent pattern in the type of organization representing librarians in bargaining or in the composition of
the bargaining units in which librarians find themselves. One can only conclude that the quality of representation librarians receive varies considerably from case to case.

The central conclusion which emerges from our view of the library labor relations scene is that librarians, as professionals, appear to have little opportunity to exert real influence on the critical decisions involving composition of bargaining unit and choice of bargaining agent. In this sense librarians are in a dependent position—an uncomfortable one for a proud profession to find itself in.

Librarianship constitutes a small profession; its members are dispersed geographically and work in many different institutional settings. These and related factors undoubtedly contribute to the dependency of librarians on the good will of others for their job and professional enhancement. As a profession, librarianship has been less vigilant in advancing its professional interests and in developing structures for collective action in the employment relationship than is true of most salaried professions.

It seems that the future of employee relations in libraries will depend upon the appropriateness and success of existing and changing governance structures in libraries. It will depend on the passage of new—and changes in existing—bargaining legislation. It will depend heavily upon the extent of professionalization and the projection of this development outside the profession. It will depend upon congruence in perceptions of the nature of the profession among librarians themselves, as well as among the public at large.

REFERENCES

3. Matter of Globe Machine and Stamping Company, 3 NLRB 294 (1937). This fear among many engineers was to a large extent unfounded. In fact, professional engineers were given special consideration by the NLRB in the establishment of bargaining units under the Wagner Act. As early as 1937 the NLRB was applying the “Globe Doctrine,” which provides that within a plant “where the considerations are evenly balanced, the determining factor is the desire of the men themselves.”


