



## Librarians and Independent Unions

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TRADE UNIONISM in the United States is usually identified with organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). That federation, which includes approximately 110 national unions, was formed in 1955 as the result of a merger of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. In the early 1970s the AFL-CIO's combined membership represented more than three-fourths of the approximately 20 million employees in the United States who were members of employee organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Some unions have never affiliated with a federation.<sup>2</sup> Others have withdrawn from a federation, functioned as an independent group, and then reaffiliated at a propitious time. Some employee organizations (particularly in the public sector) have shunned the union label, preferring to be called "associations." The National Education Association (NEA), with 1.1 million members among primary and secondary school teachers, is the largest of the independent nonunion employee organizations. State employees, nurses, police, professors, and municipal workers are examples of other employee groups that have formed and sustained independent associations.<sup>3</sup>

These nonaffiliated public employee associations often proclaimed that they were not unions. They rejected written agreements, bargaining, grievance handling, and striking. Instead, they relied on legislation, with efforts at establishing standards, civil service protection, retirement protection, wage improvement, and research.<sup>4</sup> The difference between these organizations and unions has narrowed in the past decade because the associations have adopted union goals and tactics, including the strike. Nevertheless, it is important to

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explore the reasons for the more conservative attitudes among association members.

A key factor in the conservative orientation of public employees is a combination of social and psychological attitudes. Many public employees are recruited from the middle class, and are often white-collar workers who feel that union membership is acceptable for other workers but not for them. Prestige- and status-oriented, many of these employees identify with management and expect promotion and advancement. They are therefore reluctant to join a union, which they perceive as being hostile to management.<sup>5</sup>

The mystique of professionalism and public employment also contributes to the development of conservative attitudes. Many occupational groups in public employment require members to have college degrees or some advanced schooling. Trained as specialists and taught to rely on their own efforts, many public employees have confidence in their individual abilities to prosper.

The public employee's commitment to the employing unit's mission is also a factor in his or her support for the more conservative association. Because they perform vital and personal services, some employees identify completely with their assignments. Nurses, teachers, and policemen are often so dedicated to their assignments that they are willing to tolerate adverse wage and employment conditions.

The role of supervisory influence in promoting conservative attitudes among public employees is often neglected. Supervisors are often leaders in the formation and development of associations because they have leadership skills and considerable work experience. Their presence in associations often limits the development of more aggressive programs, particularly grievance handling. It is also possible, as charged by public employee union leaders, that some associations are so controlled by supervisors that rank-and-file members are basically ignored.

Financial support of an association by its members is typically modest, compared to support of unions. The independent association has no affiliation fees and no ties beyond its membership. Without contracts and grievances, it has fewer service commitments than unions. As a result, an association's dues are typically less than one-half of a union's dues. Many government employees welcome the financial savings. Turnover among government employees is high, and many do not contemplate a long tenure; consequently, they hesitate to make any substantial financial contributions and find the association's limited dues attractive.

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The willingness of various associations to adopt union techniques means that the distinction between unions and associations has been blurring and probably will become increasingly vague. Indeed, these associations have been termed "near-unions."<sup>6</sup> It therefore seems appropriate to regard the various associations recruiting librarians as potential sources of "union-like" activity. This article will explore the present activities of non-AFL-CIO-affiliated organizations with membership among librarians and analyze their potential as spokesmen for librarians.

#### THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The American Library Association (ALA), an old and well-established organization, is currently celebrating its centennial year. Traditionally, ALA has promoted quality library services and research in librarianship, and has attempted to maintain standards of professional education by accrediting graduate library science programs. It has never sought to represent librarians in collective bargaining, but has not opposed bargaining. Indeed, the ALA's Library Administrative Division adopted a policy statement in 1970 which pledged: (1) to encourage passage of laws as a framework for collective bargaining, and (2) to inform and assist all interested parties in developing the capacity to engage in collective bargaining.<sup>7</sup>

ALA's membership is not limited to rank-and-file librarians; it includes institutional members and anyone interested in libraries. In a typical year the ALA enrolls about 5,000 institutional members (usually libraries) and between 25,000 and 30,000 individual members. Approximately two-thirds of the individual members are active, full-time working librarians; the remainder are either library students, retired or inactive members, library trustees, teachers of library science or friends of libraries. Only one of every seven working librarians, therefore, belongs to ALA in a given year.<sup>8</sup>

Because ALA's membership embraces the working librarian, the library's administrative staff, trustees, libraries, and even library benefactors, it seems unlikely that it (or any of its units) could become a collective bargaining agent. Substantial constitutional changes would be necessary to effect such a transformation. Before these changes could be made, the rank-and-file librarian's influence would have to increase. Individuals interested in collective bargaining are more likely to join or establish other organizations to further their goals before attempting to transform ALA. As a result, it does not appear

probable that ALA will emulate NEA or other organizations (the American Nurses' Association, the American Association of University Professors, and various state employee associations) that have embraced collective bargaining.

Despite its nonparticipation in collective bargaining, ALA has not been insensitive to the individual librarian's problems. It has long been interested in intellectual freedom and has a standing committee to investigate alleged violations of its standards. In 1971, ALA established a Staff Committee on Mediation, Arbitration and Inquiry (SCMAI) to investigate questions of tenure, status, fair employment practices, due process, and intellectual freedom. After investigating a complaint, SCMAI may recommend that the ALA Executive Board invoke sanctions against the party in violation of an ALA-approved policy.

Individuals who have a complaint are asked to complete a three-page request for action, supplying the specific details of the complaint and the resolution desired. In 1973 and 1974, approximately forty such specific requests were received by the committee; additional letters or communications were received without any action requested. About seventeen complaints were still pending in May 1975. Termination and tenure problems predominated among these seventeen cases, and almost all of these requests for action came from individuals employed in academic or public libraries.<sup>9</sup> In July 1974 ALA adopted a new statement on "Security of Employment in Libraries," and SCMAI has encouraged libraries to establish termination policies to minimize disputes in this area.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by correspondence and informal methods, SCMAI appoints an investigating team which conducts a formal hearing. Only a few cases have necessitated formal inquiries, but several have attracted considerable attention,<sup>10</sup> and one library has been censured. During the first five months of 1975, only six requests for action were received. In view of the recession and the current budget difficulties of libraries, ALA staff members had anticipated a sharp rise in the number of requests.

The SCMAI program represents a collective effort to achieve employment standards for libraries. While still in its infancy, SCMAI's effectiveness will probably be limited to small and medium-sized libraries. Employees in larger units will probably seek redress directly with their employer or by appealing to a government agency, particularly to labor boards having jurisdiction over public employees.

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### THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Public school librarians have been members of NEA for many years. At the elementary and secondary school levels, school librarians typically found the local educational association the only organization specifically interested in their job problems. As a result, participation in local NEA affiliates became an acceptable professional activity. School librarians were welcomed by the local educational associations, and the national organization recognized the librarians' position by establishing a department exclusively devoted to their interests.

No specific data are available indicating NEA membership among school librarians. Assuming that NEA's proportion of membership among teachers prevails among school librarians, it can be concluded that more than 40,000 of the 55,000 school librarians are NEA members. This estimate suggests that NEA has enrolled more working librarians than any other organization.

When NEA embraced collective bargaining during the 1960s, school librarians automatically participated. A 1968 survey of 2,605 educational systems indicated that 978 had negotiated collective bargaining contracts with NEA units. School librarians were covered by virtually all of these contracts.<sup>11</sup>

The NEA contracts examined by the authors contain very few clauses which pertain exclusively to librarians. Only two of the eight contracts include such clauses. The Akron (Ohio) Teachers Agreement spells out a librarian's duties, listing twenty-three specific responsibilities. That agreement and a Milwaukee agreement also specify which support personnel are to be assigned to a librarian. The librarian's lack of visibility is apparent in an examination of 754 reported arbitration awards published by the American Arbitration Association in a three-year period. Librarians and library employees were grievants in seven cases, but only two of these involved an NEA affiliate. None of the seven cases raised issues that were peculiar to librarians.

The school librarians' role in collective bargaining in local NEA units is not entirely clear. The authors have been informed that school librarians are active, perhaps disproportionately active, in leadership roles in local units. Nevertheless, the absence of specific clauses regarding arbitration involving librarians suggests that they may not have many specific job interests that differ substantially from those of the classroom teachers.

NEA membership among librarians in educational units also ex-

tends to community colleges and universities. NEA units have been successful in community colleges, but have been less successful in recruiting four-year institutions. It is widely predicted that faculty in four-year colleges and universities will continue to seek collective bargaining. If the NEA's success rate is not improved, the organization's importance as a spokesman for university faculty will diminish.

Little is known about the status and role of librarians in NEA units at the college level. A study of the occupations included in faculty bargaining units indicates that librarians were included in two-thirds of NEA's college contracts.<sup>12</sup> The Pennsylvania State College System contract, which includes librarians, recognizes that some have faculty status and others do not. The Pennsylvania contract also provides for a 35-hour work week; the employee organization is required by the contract to conduct an election among the librarians to designate a representative, who serves as that group's spokesman. Coverage under this agreement has led to changes in roles for librarians, and was discussed extensively in an issue of *College & Research Libraries*.<sup>13</sup>

A merger of the NEA and the AFL-CIO-affiliated American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has been under discussion for many years. Indeed, some of the subordinate units of these two organizations have merged, and others have entered into a number of cooperative arrangements. Even if the two organizations do not ultimately merge, it seems clear that the difference between "affiliated" unionism and "independent" unionism is narrowing among teachers; of course, if this difference is narrowing for teachers, it is narrowing for librarians.

#### THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Academic librarians have affiliated with the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) for many years. In 1958, for example, it was reported that 738 academic librarians had joined AAUP. In 1973, AAUP librarian-membership was reported at 1,952, or almost one-tenth of the academic librarians.<sup>14</sup>

The AAUP is a very recent convert to collective bargaining; the association's endorsement was made at its 1972 convention. Nevertheless, in late 1975 it claimed to represent about 18,000 faculty members in 35 institutions. There is little doubt that AAUP units will continue to seek collective bargaining, and that the number of units will increase.

Librarians have not always received a cordial welcome from AAUP local chapters. Indeed, some chapters have made no effort to recruit

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librarians and assist them. The ALA's Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) launched a major program during the 1950s to achieve faculty status for college librarians. The AAUP adopted ACRL's position at the 1972 convention. Despite the 1972 affirmation, AAUP units have obtained, and probably will continue to obtain, bargaining rights for teaching faculty which exclude university librarians; examples include the University of Delaware contract and the 1975 bargaining unit certified at Boston University. Nevertheless, the previously cited study of occupational inclusions in faculty contracts indicates that librarians were included in 80 percent of those studied.<sup>15</sup>

The few AAUP contracts available to the authors show the same pattern as noted previously. Some say little about librarians, while others are quite detailed. The Eastern Michigan University agreement includes "librarians with faculty status" as part of the collective bargaining unit and establishes a 37½-hour work week, but contains no other reference to librarians. The Temple University contract, on the other hand, has six pages detailing the procedures for appointment, promotion, and termination, in addition to several other references including a special sick-leave policy, a special work week section, and a special provision for library chairpersons.

Interviews with a few AAUP local chapter leaders and librarians in these units suggest that librarians are generally satisfied with AAUP representation. The librarians' desire for full faculty status (including the coveted three months' summer vacation) remains a distant goal in most academic institutions. Although some AAUP local units are willing to pursue this goal, they encounter some faculty reluctance and considerable administrative opposition.

A detailed account of the experience of librarians in Wayne State University's AAUP unit has been written by a library administrator. He concludes that librarians have benefited from their AAUP affiliation, but suggests that librarians have not been particularly active in pursuing their objectives.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION

Librarians employed by the state libraries in at least two states—Oregon and Massachusetts—are covered by collective bargaining agreements. State employee associations in these two states are recognized as the bargaining agents for most employees and have negotiated general agreements covering them. Individual state agen-

cies may negotiate separate supplementary agreements. The Oregon State Library agreement includes: (1) a management rights and no-strike clause; (2) a negotiating procedure clause; (3) an arbitration provision; (4) job classification, position description, and performance appraisal provisions; (5) a provision mandating employer support for professional development; (6) provisions regarding personal files and access to them; (7) work scheduling provisions; and (8) numerous ancillary benefit provisions, including call-in pay, overtime, rest periods, restrooms, maternity leave, and temperature maintenance.<sup>17</sup>

Librarians in local governments may join municipal associations or local units of a state employee association; little is known about labor relations in these units. In New York state, librarians in small cities and in counties have joined local units of the Civil Service Employee Association. In several New England states and in California, local librarians are undoubtedly affiliated with municipal employee associations. Copies of a few of the contracts have been made available to the authors.<sup>18</sup> Except for the recognition provision, which indicates that librarians are covered by the agreement, there are few clauses which apply solely to librarians. It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the librarians in these units are not particularly active in pursuing their own goals.

#### THE LOCAL INDEPENDENT

A local independent employee organization has always had great difficulty. Potential leaders will be reluctant to shoulder the responsibilities and risks in developing the organization. The local independent typically will not be able to obtain advice from either national or local union leaders. Manpower and financial support in organizing and negotiating will not be readily available. Any assistance that a local group needs will have to be paid for by the members—often at a very high price. Once organized, some independents have difficulties maintaining membership interest, and are short-lived.

Nevertheless, there are a number of local independent associations of librarians. Organized separately from other occupational groups and zealously guarding their independence, these associations probably exist in about a dozen cities. Many have casual, informal relationships with their library board. Others have secured some form of recognition, and a few have even secured a bargaining agreement. Associations in Boston, Detroit, Buffalo, and Youngstown (Ohio) are

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the largest such units with contracts. The existing literature and the authors' contacts with some of the parties in each of these organizations suggest that these associations are likely to survive.<sup>19</sup>

Two associations share recognition among Detroit librarians. The larger group, the Professional Organization of Librarians, recruits membership among working librarians, while the Association of Professional Librarians recruits members among "all chiefs of departments and coordinators of major activities." Separate representation for department heads is not duplicated elsewhere; contracts in other cities, as well as in Detroit, exclude the library director and other key supervisory personnel from the bargaining unit.

In addition to a recognition clause, the five contracts in the Detroit, Boston, Buffalo and Youngstown libraries contain clauses typically found in union contracts. All have detailed grievance procedure provisions, culminating in arbitration by a mutually acceptable third party. Four of the five contracts include a management rights clause and a no-strike clause. Only two provide for dues check-off, and only one (Boston) has any form of union security (an agency service-fee arrangement).

An examination of the five contracts quickly confirms that the covered employees are professionals. Two contracts provide for meetings of a staff-management committee that apparently discusses virtually anything associated with the library. Three contracts contain clauses mandating support of professional development, including tuition refunds, leaves for seminars and meetings, and in-service training programs. A sabbatical leave, available after seven years' service and compensated at one-half salary, is provided by one library to "encourage professional and educational development." Four of the five contracts indicate that merit, as well as seniority, is to be considered for promotion; one contract provides that where "qualifications and ability are relatively equal," seniority shall prevail. Lastly, three contracts include sections spelling out what may be placed in an employee's personal file, and when an employee will have access to that file.

Membership among Boston librarians is virtually complete, but a handful have elected to pay the service fee rather than affiliate. Two of the remaining four organizations reported 90 percent membership, while the other two reported enrolling approximately two-thirds of their potential memberships.

The development of the Detroit, Buffalo, and Youngstown collective bargaining relationships has been reported elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Because

there has been no similar account of the Boston experience,<sup>21</sup> a limited number of interviews were conducted among management and association leaders there.

Assistance from a local law firm was crucial in the Boston association's development, and the firm's guidance throughout the years has been quite helpful. The law firm's charges have been modest and can be considered analogous to the per capita tax that a union local pays to its national. The likelihood of the association affiliating with a national union seems quite remote; one association representative's reaction to the possibility was that "attitudes will have to change substantially."

Association spokesmen indicated that they have had little difficulty maintaining membership interest and filling the various organizational offices—except for the presidency; even the most active association members are sometimes reluctant to assume that office. The association's meetings are well attended, and a newsletter is used to inform absent members of the association's activities.

Management and association spokesmen characterize their relationship as "normal." Management representatives suggested that some librarians were uncomfortable in the collective bargaining relationship because they were required to take positions which are in opposition to those of the management. Association representatives discounted the prevalence of this phenomenon and, in turn, indicated that the labor-management staff committee was not "particularly productive because of management's reluctance to have meaningful dialog." The management representative, however, indicated that he found the meetings fairly productive.

Association representatives indicated that negotiations and grievance handling have become more "businesslike" in recent years. Both parties indicated that two or three grievances are arbitrated yearly. Both parties seem to be quite satisfied with their experience in arbitration and regard it as a useful tool.

It seems likely that substantial numbers of librarians will join independent associations whose objectives and tactics will not differ substantially from those of AFL-CIO-affiliated unions. School librarians will affiliate with NEA; college and university librarians will affiliate with either AAUP or NEA. As a result, these two organizations will increasingly become the librarians' representatives in the educational area. Librarians in small cities and those employed by state libraries will join public employee associations. Librarians in a

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few large public libraries will be able to establish and sustain separate independent associations.<sup>22</sup>

Because faculty members in schools and colleges, as well as non-librarians in cities and states, are the vast majority of employees in their respective units, librarians will not control NEA, AAUP, or public employee associations. Indeed, it is likely that the librarian will be submerged within these organizations. Sophisticated and active librarians will develop group goals and then seek to persuade the overall organization to embrace them. If these goals do not conflict with the majority's goals, there will be little difficulty in gaining organizational support. On the other hand, a goal which would benefit primarily librarians at a significant cost to other employees will encounter opposition. The librarians' position in these independent organizations is similar to that of any other occupational group in an industrial or semi-industrial union, including the major unions actively recruiting professional librarians.

It is unlikely that the few isolated independent associations of public librarians will be able to form a national organization devoted exclusively to the librarians' welfare. Even if they did, they could become the spokesmen for only a minor fraction of the public librarians and very few of the school or university librarians. It seems likely, therefore, that they will remain isolated units serving their members but barely visible as national spokesmen. Some will succumb to invitations to affiliate with more broadly based unions or associations, and some may collapse. A 1962 study of the single-firm independent union in American industry concluded that its immediate future was not auspicious.<sup>23</sup> A similar verdict seems appropriate for the independent library association in 1976.

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