ABSTRACT
This paper examines academic library service to labor groups, particularly in the area of Internet training. An informal survey of fifty-three academic libraries in schools with labor study programs throughout the United States and Canada indicates that while many libraries provide support for labor study programs within their schools, few provide direct programming to labor unions. The paper examines libraries that are providing service to union members and details the history of one such program, the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program at Cornell University.

INTRODUCTION
Academic references services are undergoing a dramatic transformation. In light of rapid changes in technology, including the proliferation of research material readily available online, libraries are grappling with the best means of providing information to clientele. Statistics collected by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in the years 1995–2000 saw a significant drop in reference queries at a number of academic libraries (http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/arl/index.html). For example, at the Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, reference statistics declined 21 percent during the academic year 1997–98 and 24 percent during the academic year 1998–99 (Wilson, 2002, p. 49). Though user numbers are falling, many libraries have expanded the boundaries of the traditional reference desk, offering digital reference services through the creation of online tutorials, digital reference resources, and e-mail services. While the growth of the Internet has resulted in new user patterns, it has also altered the potential client base for reference services. In particular, groups that have not been
traditional patrons of academic reference services—such as labor unions—now have a strong interest in information provision.

For example, the Internet is increasingly being recognized by organized labor as an important tool in its efforts to improve the terms and conditions of employment. Labor unions are successfully using this technology to enhance organizing campaigns by reaching larger audiences more effectively. In addition, organized labor’s ability to access laws, regulations, judicial decisions, wage and market data, online news, corporate financial data, safety and health resources, and other information pertinent to union organizing, collective bargaining, and contract administration is contingent upon how well labor can marshal these disparate sources of information. As such, Internet training is a valuable investment for labor unions. This is also a very large group who need and/or could benefit from such training: labor unions in the United States have approximately 16.3 million members (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). Though labor organizations have education departments at the national and state levels, many local unions do not have adequate access to Internet training because of resource constraints.

Academic libraries, and in particular academic libraries associated with industrial relations programs, would seem like another “natural” source of such training. Over 100 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada offer a degree program or other structured study on industrial and labor relations. Academic labor studies programs are meeting some training needs, by, for example, providing noncredit extramural classes for labor union members through extension programs. University libraries, through library resource training, often support these classes. Several libraries have taken this concept a step further by offering training in online research to labor union members not affiliated with the university, often on an outreach basis. More libraries should consider such programs, which provide a positive benefit to labor unions and libraries; address the evolving need to reinvent reference services; and involve a “nontraditional” library patron group.

The approach used by the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program (Cornell University) to provide Internet training is one possible model and will be discussed at length. Initially, evidence regarding labor union’s usage of (and need to use) the Internet will be presented. The results of a survey, conducted for this article, regarding academic libraries’ involvement with training for union members, will also be discussed.

Unions and the Internet

When addressing the benefits to unions of the Internet, noted labor author Eric Lee quoted Karl Marx, who in *The Communist Manifesto* stated: “This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different locali-
This Page Intentionally Left Blank
Library Trends has become the premier thematic quarterly journal in the field of American librarianship."

*Library Science Annual*

practicing librarians and educators use Library Trends as an intial tool in professional development and continuing cation. They know Library Trends is the place to discover ctical applications, thorough analyses, and literature reviews for ide range of trends. See for yourself the breadth of topics covered his 37th volume.

**Library Services to Youth: Preparing for the Future**

ummer 1988) Edited by Linda Waddle

is issue focuses on changes taking place in the young adult age up and forecasts how libraries can best serve this group.

**Art Objects and Art Information**

ll 1988) Edited by Deirdre Stam

is issue uses approaches from information science and art history xamine the concerns of traditional art librarianship.

**Temporary Technology in Libraries**

nter 1989) Edited by Beth Paskoff

is issue discusses contemporary technology in libraries and gests possible future applications.

**Response to Library Automation**

ring 1989) Edited by Janice J. Kirkland

is issue examines the trend toward greater automation in the ary environment and the ways in which library administrators, f, and users are affected.

**cription Price** $50 (plus $3 for overseas subscribers). Single ries are available for $15, including postage. Order from the versity of Illinois Press, Journals Department, 54 E. Gregory xe, Champaign, IL 61820.
was reached that, among other things, ensured the reinstatement of all previously dismissed workers (Davis, 1998).

The Internet and Political Action

In the past few years, the use of the Internet as a tool of political action has also been evidenced in union Web sites. The AFL-CIO has a political Web site (http://www.aflcio.org/labor2000/index.htm) that includes online voter registration forms, links to congressional voting records, information on political issues impacting working families, and links to other political information Web sites. The Communication Workers of America's legislative Web site (http://www.cwa-legis-pol.org/) goes even further, by providing legislative fact sheets and e-mail links to Congressional representatives.

The Internet and Labor Research

In addition to using the Internet for communication, dissemination of information, and organizing, labor has also adopted the Internet as a research tool. Increasingly unionists are called upon to conduct a variety of labor research, involving the tracking of demographic, economic, legislative, wage and market, and safety and health data. While not all of this information is readily available online, the Web has become an inexpensive and convenient research tool for labor.

One example of the way in which labor uses the Internet for research can be found in the utilization of the Web to locate corporate information. Information such as company ownership, subsidiaries, investors, financial data, safety and health records, and past organizing history is often necessary for unions engaged in contract negotiations. Much of this information is now available online, through various company research sites, such as Hoovers.com, government agencies such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Labor Relations Board, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, online newspapers, and individual company Web sites. As evidence of the importance of this information, the AFL-CIO and individual unions such as the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) now provide Web pages devoted to company research. The Food and Allied Services Trades Department (FAST) of the AFL-CIO has even developed their extensive Manual of Corporate Investigations, available to FAST members free of charge and for sale to all other union members for the price of $25 (http://www.fastaflcio.org/). Despite the growing availability of such resources, many union members remain unaware of their existence.

Labor's Needs Today

Today, the issues that initially compelled unions to start using the Internet are as important as ever. While current figures for labor usage of the Internet are difficult to obtain, two recent surveys provide some evidence
as to how the labor community is utilizing this technology. Florida State University survey data collected during the summer and fall of 1997 from seventy-five U.S. national unions revealed that the reported benefits of using information technology included improved coordination with other unions (cited by 44 percent of union respondents), improved organizing (63 percent), and greater organizational efficiency (91 percent) (Fiorito & Bass, 2000, p. 7; see also Fiorito, Jarley, & Delaney, 2000; Fiorito, Jarley, Delaney, & Kolodinsky, 2000).

A Brooklyn College/Labor ONLINE survey in January 1999 of Web masters of unions throughout the United States (hereafter cited as the Brooklyn College survey) indicated that unions used the Internet to: provide a Web page for public information (59 percent of survey respondents), provide a Web page for member services and information (58 percent), garner e-mail membership (55 percent), and do corporate research for union campaigns (28 percent).

The survey respondents also estimated that 53 percent of union members had access to a computer on the job, 45 percent had access at home, and 48 percent had access at the union hall.

As well as utilizing the Internet for the needs noted above, unions are now taking a more active role in manipulating the technology itself. Most internationals and many locals now maintain Web sites. The Brooklyn College survey results indicated that the unions of 75 percent of the survey respondents maintained a Web site. Union members whose union had a Web site used the site to obtain information on: the union, generally (98 percent); union benefits (62 percent); organizing (38 percent); contract negotiations (23 percent); strike activity (11 percent); and “other,” unspecified topics (38 percent).

Several sources provide more recent data on the extent to which unions are maintaining Web sites. A compilation of listings in the 2001 edition of the Directory of U.S. Labor Organizations revealed that all but 48 of the 162 unions in the directory included Web sites and/or e-mail addresses in their entries. Further examination of additional documentation found that five of these forty-eight unions had Web sites not listed in the directory. This data only reflects the experience of state, national, and international unions in the United States and do not include the experience of locals throughout the United States or of unions in other countries. A recent NBER working paper estimated that there are over 2,700 union Web sites worldwide, though this figure is thought to be on the low side (Diamond & Freeman, 2001, p. 7). The authors of the NBER paper also cited U.S. Census data (the Current Population Survey Internet and Computer Use Supplement), which showed that 79.4 percent of union members used the Internet from home (Diamond & Freeman, 2001, p. 35). In addition to Web sites established by individual unions, there are a growing number of Web sites focusing on the needs of unions in general. Two
of the most comprehensive sites in the field include LabourStart (http://www.labourstart.org), offering daily international coverage of labor issues around the world (including countries such as Nigeria, Argentina, and Israel). The site also features the writings of Eric Lee, a world-renowned author on labor and technology.

Another notable Web site that discusses union issues is LaborNet (http://www.labornet.org/), which was founded in 1991 to build a democratic communication network for the labor movement. LaborNet established the first regular labor news site in the United States and today, in partnership with the Association of Progressive Communication, has established LaborNets in Canada, the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, and Korea. The site provides labor news, strike information, discussion forums, and other labor-related writings.

Other evidence of the unions’ increasing use of the Internet includes the fact that over the past few years there have been several conferences concentrating on labor and technology, one of the most recent being the LaborTech Conference held on 7–9 December 2001 at the University of San Francisco. This conference attracted labor members, information technology specialists, and librarians who came together to discuss the use of technology in labor, as well as to offer practical workshops. Session topics included: How to Build a Labor Web Site, Democracy and the Internet, Using the Web and Information Technology (IT) for Research, and Using the Web and IT for Organizing. Among those presenting were librarians from UC Berkeley and the Holt Labor Library in San Francisco.

Further confirmation of labor’s increased use and presence on the Web was evidenced in a proposal put forth in 2000 to create a top-level domain (TLD) name for unions. In July 2000, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) adopted a resolution calling for private-sector proposals for new TLDs (“Top Level,” 2000, p. 880).

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in conjunction with thirteen other unions submitted a proposal to obtain a TDL designation for labor. The ICFTU, which was established in 1949, has 221 affiliated organizations (including the AFL-CIO) in 148 countries and territories on all five continents and a membership of 156 million (http://www.ICFTU.org). In its proposal to ICANN, the ICFTU submitted the request on behalf of thirteen international trade unions. The purpose of the TLD has been described as five-fold:

a) To provide a strong and clear identity for workers’ organizations on the Internet;
b) To facilitate the efforts of employees to find and contact trade unions in their country, sector, or enterprise;
c) To help Internet users identify bona fide trade union organizations as distinct from bogus unions such as government-sponsored labour fronts, and company-controlled unions;
d) To form part of the ongoing international effort to bridge the "digital divide," by building meaning and utility into the Internet for workers, regardless of country, or economic status; and
e) To facilitate employee and public access to a wide variety of union-sponsored services, including apprenticeship and training programmes, health and pension benefits, family and community services, etc.\(^3\)

The proposal from ICFTU was ultimately denied when ICANN made the controversial decision that the international unions making the application "were not democratic." ICANN has since come under fire for the allegedly arbitrary way in which it assigns new, top-level domain names ("Net Can’t Be," 2001, p. 8).

Labor is also taking a role in providing Internet Service Providers as well as Web browsers designed specifically for unions. LabourStart and Opera Software have cobranded a free, trade union Web browser, Opera (http://www.opera.com), which takes into account low-end users, yet downloads quickly; provides links to useful sites for labor union members; and works in multiple languages. The AFL-CIO has an Internet service (http://www.workingfamilies.com) that provides—for a nominal fee—unlimited Internet access, e-mail, 5 MB of Web space to build Web pages, and access to newsgroups covering a variety of topics.

In recognition of the increasingly important role the Internet is playing both in business and daily life, John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, has taken measures to ensure that more unionists have access to computer technology, thereby overcoming the digital divide often experienced by underrepresented groups (AFL-CIO, 1999, p. 1).

In addition, several corporations now offer low-cost computers to their employees as part of their benefits package (Greengard, 2000, p. 18). This technology chasm, however, cannot be bridged by hardware alone. Training and the acquisition of Internet skills are imperative, given the numerous benefits of Internet usage for "nontraditional" library clients such as labor unions.

Various aspects of Internet training are discussed in the remainder of this paper.

**Labor in a University Setting**

According to Peterson's *Graduate Programs in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, 35\(^{th}\) edition, 2001*, there are forty-six universities offering industrial and labor relations graduate degree programs throughout the United States and Canada. In addition, *Peterson's 4 Year Colleges, 31\(^{st}\) edition, 2001*, lists seventy-one schools in either country with four-year degree programs in "Labor/Personnel Relations." Many of these schools offer extramural classes for union members—most of which consist of noncredit courses leading to a certificate of completion.
In light of how widespread these degree-conferring and extramural programs are, it would be natural to presume that the academic libraries affiliated with these programs would be involved, to some degree, with servicing the labor community. The available evidence of the extent of such involvement, among a variety of dimensions, will be presented next; it reveals a decidedly mixed record.

Several university libraries have won the John Sessions Memorial Award presented by the American Library Association’s Reference and User Services Division (RUSA). This award, which was established in 1980, recognizes a library or library system that has made significant efforts to work with the labor community. A panel comprised of three to five RUSA members who have “demonstrated interest in or experience with library service to labor groups” judges submissions. A special plaque, supported by a donation from the AFL-CIO, is presented to recipients. Academic libraries that have won the award over the years include the Bobst Library at New York University, the University of Texas at Arlington, the Catherwood Library at Cornell University, Georgia State University, Ohio University, Wayne State University, Rutgers University, the University of California/Berkeley Institute of Industrial Relations Library, and Southwest Missouri University. A complete list of winners is available at http://www.ala.org/rusa/awards/awd_sessions.html.

Professional Committees

In addition, there are several professional committees created specifically for librarians who specialize in labor relations, including the Committee for Industrial Relations Librarians (CIRL); the AFL-CIO/ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, a division of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA); and the Labor Issues Caucus of the Special Library Association. The AFL-CIO/ALA Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups (hereafter referred to as the joint committee), which was established in 1946 by the American Library Association Council, was initially formed to explore ways in which public libraries might develop services for labor groups. By 1974, the joint committee’s charge had changed, as it now was to “initiate, develop, and foster... ways and means of effecting closer cooperation between librarians and labor organizations” (ALA Handbook, 2000, pp. 21–22). Presently, the committee membership consists of nine librarians from a mixture of libraries (including university, public, and specialized libraries) and nine representatives from the AFL-CIO. A librarian and labor official cochair the committee, which meets each year at the midwinter and annual ALA meetings and has a panel presentation at the latter.

In 1946—the same year the joint committee was established—directors from eight U.S., university-affiliated industrial relations centers convened to discuss how to enhance cooperation and collaboration between these centers. As an outgrowth of this meeting, the Committee of University In-
Industrial Relations Librarians (CUIRL) was formed the following year. Over the years, membership in this committee spread to include public, special, and government librarians; officials from the business and government sector; and interested parties in other countries. To better reflect the changed nature of its membership, the "university" portion of the committee title was dropped, and the committee was thus referred to as CIRL (Newsom-McGinnis, 2001).

Unlike the joint committee, membership in CIRL is open and flexible, and the organization has no affiliation with a library organization per se. CIRL meets yearly, in the United States and abroad, with meetings comprised of discussions and presentations focused on a central theme. The Special Library Association (SLA) Labor Issues Caucus was established in 1991 as an offshoot of CIRL. Many CIRL librarians were also members of SLA and after meeting informally at SLA for several years, a group of librarians decided to petition SLA for authorization to create a Labor Issues Caucus. Like the joint committee and CIRL, the caucus typically presents a program in conjunction with its annual business meeting. While the caucus has explored the possibility of formally affiliating with an SLA division as a roundtable or section and has also considered the possibility of merging with CIRL, it has decided to retain its present form for the foreseeable future (Newsom-McGinnis, 2001).

Direct Training to Unions: What Libraries are Doing

Participation on professional committees is one manifestation of university libraries' involvement with organized labor. Another form of involvement (at least, potentially) includes direct service provision through library-based training programs for union members. In light of the existence of over 100 colleges and universities with labor relations programs, unions' increasing use of the Internet, and the previously mentioned dearth of such Internet training on an in-house basis (particularly, at the union local level), one might assume that university libraries are addressing this training void. However, the existence of such library-labor Internet training collaborations has received little attention in the academic literature.

Because of the lack of data or other information about Internet training programs for unions that are offered by university libraries, this author conducted a survey to see whether reference librarians are actually providing such services. An informal, e-mail survey of fifty-three academic libraries throughout the United States and Canada (see Appendix) was conducted. This survey targeted schools with degree programs and/or institutes or centers in labor studies; to identify the relevant group to survey, a variety of resources were consulted, including Peterson's Graduate Programs in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, 35th ed., 2001; Peterson's 4 Year Colleges, 31st edition, 2001; and the following Web sites:
Nineteen of the fifty-three schools surveyed had noncredit certificate programs for labor union members.

The e-mail survey of fifty-three libraries connected to labor studies programs in the United States and Canada was conducted between October 2001 and January 2002. Librarians who were identified as being most likely to provide service to labor groups were queried as to the level of training support they provided (including Internet training) for union members in the university's extramural certificate program and/or for labor unions not involved with any certificate or other classroom program.

Responses were received from slightly under one-half (twenty-five) of the libraries contacted. Approximately one-third (36 percent) of respondents provide services related to either degree or certificate curricula, including bibliographic instruction, collection development, and interlibrary loan. The remaining two-thirds of respondents did not, for the most part, give a reason for the lack of their services to labor studies certificate programs. However, several of these schools indicated services had been offered in the past but were no longer available—at least one library cited lack of resources as a reason for not continuing this service (A. Perkins, personal communication, October 19, 2001). Several other respondents not currently offering services expressed a willingness to do so if asked.

At least two libraries surveyed are exploring distance education for labor unions.

Library materials from an annual training session (the Steelworkers Summer School at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) are now being used in a new, Web-based distance learning course that is offered by the school's Labor Education Program (M. Chaplan, personal communication, February 5, 2001). At the University of Rhode Island, librarian Andree Rathenmacher is developing a series of information literacy modules on research skills needed for labor relations. The modules include assignments designed by Labor Research Center faculty as well as by the faculty librarian (A. Rathenmacher, personal communication, December 13, 2001).

A handful of libraries offer outreach services to labor union members who are not necessarily affiliated with a university certificate program. The University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations Library has a subscription program in which labor union members pay an annual fee to access the library and its services. This program has been in existence for
more than twenty-five years; ten labor unions are currently subscribed and pay a fee of $695 CND per year. The library also provides “current awareness services” (one highlights journals and another is a weekly e-mail news-alerting service called Weekly Work Report). While training is not routinely offered, Elizabeth Perry, a librarian at the center, has presented customized workshops on an ad hoc basis (E. Perry, personal communication, December 4, 2001).

Another library that has made a concerted effort to offer distinctive services to the labor community is the University of California at Berkeley’s Institute of Industrial Relations (IIR) Library. Since 1989, Library Director Terry Huwe and Library Assistant Janice Kimball have presented a number of programs for labor groups. In August 2001 the library hired Lincoln Cushing as its new Electronic Outreach Librarian, further extending the library’s ability to offer reference, training, and outreach to organized labor. The library works with a variety of unions, including the California Labor Federation, the AFL-CIO’s statewide leadership body. Workshops usually are offered in response to the request of a specific union and are presented as packaged programs utilizing Power Point.

Cushing believes there is a need for additional training in labor unions. Berkeley’s IIR library has taken the lead in providing such assistance, both at the rank and file and staff levels, viewing labor patronage as a natural extension of their service. While no formal budget for outreach exists at the library level, library outreach services are well-supported and all workshops are offered free of charge. Berkeley’s IIR library also has a strong presence on the Internet with a continuously updated and comprehensive Web site that features full-text research reports, bibliographic and electronic guides, labor images, and other resources. The quality of this Web site was recognized nationally, as the IIR library won a John Sessions Memorial Award in 1998. At the time of the award, the IIR estimated receiving over 10,000 “hits” per week from users all over the world. Cushing, however, also believes that it is important to reach out beyond the Internet, and he envisions publishing a series of “how to do research articles” in labor-oriented publications (L. Cushing, personal communication, October 25, 2001).

THE CATHERWOOD MODEL

While training in specialized databases such as ABI/Inform and LEXIS/NEXIS is available through some labor extension programs, such databases pose two limitations to “nontraditional” groups such as labor unions: 1. they can be prohibitively expensive if unions want to acquire direct access, and 2. they may only be accessible to labor through universities or large public libraries.

Training needs and access issues influenced the design and implementation of the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program at Cornell
University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR School). For three years (1998–2001), the Labor Outreach Program offered Internet training programs to labor union members across the state of New York and in Washington, D.C. These workshops utilized free Web sites that could be accessed by anyone, anywhere.

**The Catherwood Model: Background Information**

The ILR School, which was founded in 1945 as a statutory college of Cornell University, is dedicated to the study and teaching of workplace issues. Areas of study include collective bargaining, labor history and law, labor economics, human resources, and organizational behavior. The ILR School’s Martin P. Catherwood Library is one of the most comprehensive resources of its type in North America. Its collection of some 200,000 books, journals, pamphlets, and related materials supports education and research on nearly every aspect of the workplace.

The reference department of Catherwood Library has long been involved in training union members by working in partnership with the ILR School’s Extension Division. The Division has six offices throughout New York State and offers a wide array of classes for both students and practitioners. ILR Extension Division faculty conduct workshops and seminars, teach credit and noncredit courses, offer on-site technical assistance and consulting, organize and manage forums for shared learning, and engage in research that is founded in actual work practices. In total, Extension Division faculty interact with over 500,000 people annually. Extension Division classes vary in length (typically, from one-day to one-week sessions), and ILR School reference librarians initially assisted by teaching one-to-two hour segments on using either the Internet or traditional, paper-bound library research resources. During the course of these training sessions, union members repeatedly told ILR School reference librarians that additional training on the Internet would be beneficial. That feedback provided the impetus for what eventually became the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach program.

The library’s first workshops, which were designed by Catherwood Library reference librarians Deborah Joseph Schmidle and Suzanne Cohen, consisted of two full-day, hands-on sessions for union members in the central New York region. Unions attending included the Independent Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the United Auto Workers, the New York State Union of Teachers, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, the United Steel Workers of America, and the American Postal Workers Union.

The favorable response to these initial workshops resulted in a more formalized collaborative effort between the ILR School’s library and the Extension Division. The Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program was established in 1998, Deborah Joseph Schmidle was appointed to the newly created position of Outreach Services Librarian, and the Extension Division agreed to fund this position. Over the next two years, the Labor Out-
reach Program and the Extension Division worked together to provide expanded programming throughout New York State.6

Though the initial focus of the Labor Outreach Program was on providing introductory training, the program developed more extensive offerings as the computer literacy level of union members improved over time. Workshop presenters stayed current with the latest practitioner and research literature and with other developments regarding labor and the Internet. The curriculum of existing workshops was revised on an ongoing basis in order to address workshop participants’ changing needs, to include topics of particular interest to each individual class, and to incorporate the latest developments in content and content delivery. In conjunction with the ILR Extension Division, the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program offered additional programs such as Corporate Research, New Communication Technologies for Unions, and Designing Web Sites for Local Unions. Training was provided in New York City and in upstate New York (Albany, Buffalo, and Rochester). In all, over thirty workshops were taught to more than 500 participants. Many workshops sold out and waiting lists for future sessions were common. In addition, a series of workshops were taught in Washington, D.C., at the U.S. Department of Labor Library.

The Catherwood Model: Workshop Design

An Internet workshop for labor unions can be beneficial only if it addresses the specific needs and interests of union members. Before designing any workshops, the Labor Outreach Program solicited suggestions from labor unions concerning workshop content and other matters. A letter was mailed to local unions in the Central New York area outlining the Catherwood Library’s plan for Internet training and requesting feedback on a number of items including program content, price, length (all day versus half-day), and location of potential workshops. The survey responses influenced the design of the initial workshops. For example, based on the comments received, a full-day workshop was planned. The workshop was designed to provide basic Internet information in the morning, followed by hands-on experience in a computer lab in the afternoon. The workshop agenda was along the following lines:

Morning Session
8:30–9:00 Registration
9:00–9:30 What Is the Internet? /Why Is It Important to Labor?
9:30–10:00 Tech Talk
10:00–10:45 Web Basics
10:45–11:00 Break
11:00–12:00 Search Engines Made Simple
12:00–1:00 Lunch
Afternoon Session
1:00–2:00  Labor Resources on the Web
2:00–3:00  Hands-on Guide to the Web
3:00–3:15  Break
3:15–4:15  Questions and Answers/Wrap Up

The morning session provided a very comprehensive and detailed introduction to the Internet and included such topics as the history of the Internet, an introduction to Web browsers, a technical section addressing how the Internet works, and a section on using search engines. The afternoon session was devoted to providing hands-on experience that highlighted Web sites listed in the eighty-page workshop manual developed by the Labor Outreach Services staff. Particular emphasis was placed on utilizing the Internet as a research tool for collective bargaining, as well as on how to evaluate—and not just access—Web sites.

In the afternoon session, workshop participants were first introduced to some basic starting points such as Web sites that link to other labor sites. This introduction was followed with presentations on general topics (i.e., government information, statistics, and corporate research) and on specific issues (i.e., how to obtain cost-of-living data or contractual clauses in collective bargaining agreements). Sufficient time was also provided for workshop participants to freely investigate the Internet on their own. Search engine exercises written by the ILR reference librarians were available for those who wanted some formal structure to follow during this period, but participants were also encouraged to search online for information that interested them and to ask questions about these areas of interest. During this part of the workshop, both workshop instructors circulated around the computer lab to offer assistance.

At the end of the day, participants were given a workshop evaluation to complete before they left. Evaluation questions included the content of the program, the usefulness of information learned, the ability of the presenters, and suggestions for improving the workshop. The evaluation responses were tabulated, given to Catherwood Library and Extension Division administrators, and used to revise subsequent workshops.

One challenge in designing a workshop of this type was how to ensure that the level of information regarding the Internet was neither too simplistic nor too complex. In order to determine the level of computer literacy among registered participants prior to the actual workshop, a short questionnaire was drafted and included in the registration brochures. Participants were queried as to whether they owned a computer, had access to the Internet at home and/or the work site, and used e-mail. Participants were also asked to provide a self-rating as to the level of their computer skills and were asked to describe themselves as: beginner, intermediate, or advanced computer users.
This self-assessment proved to be the most problematic part of the survey, in part because many computer users who identified themselves as being at the intermediate level actually appeared, during the course of the workshop, to be beginners. On the other hand, many users who rated themselves as beginners were often quite advanced in their computer ability. As such, this question became a loose marker at best, and the issue of evaluating competency levels prior to workshops was subject to ongoing assessment.7

The short questionnaire also asked workshop registrants to list the three most important questions or concerns they had about the Internet. These questions helped "customize" the workshops in order to address the special concerns of participants in any particular workshop session. The union affiliation of registrants was also taken into consideration in order to further tailor the workshop to the needs and interests of the participants. All of these activities were undertaken in an effort to make the workshops of relevance and of immediate, practical use to participants. Admittedly, there is a "core set" of skills and information that needed to be presented in any Internet training session; however, "individualizing" the workshops helped to engage the interest of participants and furthered their learning experience.

The Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program also concluded that, for full-day workshops, it was beneficial for both the participants and the trainers if more than one instructor was present in the classroom. The Labor Outreach Program thus used two reference librarians, who shared teaching responsibilities for workshops. While one librarian presented the training material, the other moved around the room to assist participants when needed.

Learning was also facilitated by the distribution to all workshop participants of Labor Unions and the Internet, an eighty-page manual written by the Labor Outreach Program. The manual consisted in large part of an extensive, annotated listing of Web sites, with detailed descriptions of each site. This material was categorized by subject areas of potential interest to labor unions. Among the topics covered were: collective bargaining (wages, benefits, cost of living, labor market); arbitration; labor and employment law; international labor; organizing; safety and health; strikes; government sites; statistical sites; company information; union directories; and labor studies and labor libraries. The manual also included a checklist on how to evaluate Web sites, a glossary of Internet terms, and technical information.

The Labor Outreach Program also ensured that the manual remained current and was readily accessible: it was updated quarterly and posted on the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program Web site. This Web site provided additional online training materials, as well as information on workshops.

During the latter part of its existence, the Labor Outreach Program was gravitating toward providing tutorials online and was exploring other aspects of distance learning, in addition to continuing to present workshops.
One lesson learned from the first set of workshops was the importance of keeping information practical and to the point. Initial evaluations by workshop participants indicated a lack of interest in a comprehensive history of the Internet or in other basic, background information about the Internet. Information in and about Web sites that was of immediate use to workshop participants was regarded as beneficial; less-applied information (such as an overview of the Internet itself) received less favorable ratings.

This feedback led to a redesigned workshop program, in which some of the basic information regarded as superfluous by workshop participants was dropped, and more time was allocated to discussion of additional Web sites and to hands-on activities. In the revamped program, the basic introduction lasted only one-half hour and was followed by a presentation of specific Web sites on a subject-by-subject basis. The “free” period was retained; during this time, workshop participants could search and explore the Internet for research topics of particular interest to them. Informal quizzes, which were written by the Labor Outreach Program and revised for each workshop, were also used. These exercises allowed participants to evaluate Web sites and were also intended to increase learning retention.

The Catherwood Model: Marketing and Promotion

Curriculum design was not the only consideration when the Labor Outreach Program was created. Another obvious factor was identifying possible participants for the Unions and the Internet workshops.

A brochure was drafted that included an outline of the workshop; registration information; a preworkshop needs-assessment questionnaire for registrants; information on the workshop presenters; and an overview of the Labor Outreach Program. Catherwood Library hired a graphic designer to produce a final version of the brochure.

The brochure was first sent to a mailing list provided by an ILR School Extension Division instructor with extensive union contacts and subsequently distributed to those on the ILR School’s mailing lists. Information on the Labor Outreach Program was also provided by announcements sent to labor Web sites and listservs; ILR School alumni association material; postings on the Catherwood Library Web site; and word-of-mouth from prior workshop participants. In 2001, a revised brochure was designed with the aim of marketing the program via mass mailings.

An important component in marketing, promoting, and otherwise identifying potential audiences for the Labor Outreach Program’s training was the development of partnerships. Building strong partnerships was vital for several reasons. Working with other parties allowed costs to be shared. Since the Labor Outreach Program workshops were often “on the road,” there was a constant need to find suitable computer laboratory space. In New York City, the program established a partnership with the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). This allowed the
Labor Outreach Program to use computer facilities at a reduced rate. In exchange, the library presented, free of charge, an Internet training program for UNITE members in March of 1999. Partnerships also resulted in reaching new audiences. Over the years, the Catherwood Library developed a working relationship with the U.S. Department of Labor library in Washington, D.C. As part of the latter’s open house celebration in October 1999, Catherwood Library’s Labor Outreach Program presented three Labor Unions and the Internet workshops. By taking part in this open house, the library strengthened its ongoing relationship with the Department of Labor, reached new union member audiences, and fostered potential new partnerships with unions having national headquarters in the District of Columbia.

The Catherwood Model: Financing and Cost Recovery

In addition to program content and publicity, the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program also had to consider fiscal issues. The program operated as a nonprofit venture, and thus attempted to keep workshop costs to a minimum. The Catherwood Library Outreach Services Librarian was a reference librarian, but the ILR School’s Extension Division funded this position.

While the program operated as a nonprofit venture, it still needed to cover its expenses. These expenses included direct training costs (such as renting the computer lab; food and refreshments for workshop participants; printing the eighty-page workshop manual; and lodging, meals, and other travel expenses of the workshop instructors); publicizing the program; and other overhead costs. By forming partnerships with other organizations and institutions, the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program was often able to share workshop expenses, and thus keep registration fees relatively low for workshop participants.

The Catherwood Model: A Program in Abeyance

Despite its demonstrable success in the three years of its existence, the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program was suspended in the fall of 2001. In July 2001, the Labor Outreach Program’s Outreach Services Librarian left Cornell University. The search for a replacement was still underway when the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center occurred. The resultant fiscal impact on the budget of the ILR School’s Extension Division, which funded the Outreach Services Librarian position, resulted in a decision to temporarily suspend the Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program.

At the time of its suspension, the program was on the verge of partnering with e-Cornell (a distance learning unit of Cornell University) to provide distance learning opportunities to unionists. Both the ILR School and Catherwood Library are dedicated to providing outreach services to union members; as such, the Labor Outreach Services program was temporarily suspended rather than eliminated.
CONCLUSION

Increasingly, labor unions are utilizing the Internet to communicate among members; disseminate information to members and the general public; conduct more effective union organizing campaigns, strikes, and other union activities; and conduct research on myriad topics. While approximately 100 universities offer classes on industrial and labor relations, most libraries connected to these programs have done little to address the training needs of labor. There are a variety of possible reasons for this tepid response, including the fact that union members may be a "nontraditional" patron group not directly affiliated with—and thus not serviced by—academic libraries. Library staff and funding constraints may also have precluded more active involvement by library reference departments in this area, though several libraries have also expressed a willingness to train union members if asked.

However, the statistical data that indicates a drop in reference queries at many academic reference desks does give one pause. Through its involvement with both the John Sessions Memorial Award and the ALA/AFL-CIO Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, organized labor has acknowledged the importance of libraries to labor and demonstrated a willingness to partner with library groups to provide union members with the library services they need. Libraries would be well served by responding to labor in equal fashion through a proactive approach to meeting the needs of this constituency. The partnership between libraries and labor can be a mutually beneficial one, as exemplified by the following quotation of Elizabeth Perry of the Centre for Industrial Relations, University of Toronto: "We feel that outreach to the unions is invaluable for our library as it makes it much easier for us to obtain union documents for our collection, as well as makes us aware of the concerns and issues of unionists. For our Centre as a whole, the ongoing contact with the unions opens informal doors for our students when/if they choose the labour movement as a career path" (E. Perry, personal communication, December 4, 2001).

The Catherwood Library Labor Outreach Program has been one of the few examples in which such library-labor partnerships were actually undertaken. The approach used by the Program differed from that undertaken by many academic institutions whose classes for union members are held in academic settings and typically have not emphasized the Internet directly. Catherwood's Labor Outreach Program workshops focused exclusively on Internet training, were taught in off-campus settings at locations most convenient for union members in different parts of New York State, and evolved over time to reflect the changing needs of unions and the specific interests of individual unions. Catherwood Library reference librarians and workshop participants (union members) learned from one another, and it is hoped that the knowledge thus gained enhanced the work of everyone and fostered the development of additional partnerships with groups that up to this point had been relative strangers.
APPENDIX: LIBRARIES SURVEYED
Athabasca University, Alberta, Canada
Brock University, St. Catherine’s, Ontario, Canada
Capilano College, North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, California
Community College of Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland
Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti
Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington
Florida International University, Miami
Florida State University, Tallahassee
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
Indiana University, Indiana, Pennsylvania
Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Michigan State University, East Lansing
Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro
New York University, New York City
North Arizona University, Flagstaff
Pennsylvania State University, University Park
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
Queens College, City University of New York, Flushing
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey
San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California
San Jose State University, San Jose, California
Simon Fraser, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada
University of Alabama, Birmingham
University of Arkansas, Little Rock
University of California at Berkeley
University of California at Los Angeles
University of Connecticut, Storrs
University of Hawaii, West O’ahu, Pearl City
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
University of Iowa, Iowa City
University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky
University of Maine, Orono
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
University of Massachusetts, Boston
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
University of Missouri, Columbia
University of Nebraska, Omaha
University of North Texas, Denton
University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Rhode Island, Kingston
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
University of Washington, Seattle
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond
Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
West Virginia University, Morgantown

NOTES
1. "Labor ONLINE Conference Internet Usage Survey Results," as published on http://www.laboronline.org/survey/survey_webmaster_results.htm. This document states (at page 1): "As part of its first international conference held in New York City in January of 1999, Labor ONLINE surveyed Webmasters [of an unspecified number] of unions across the country to determine the ways in which Internet technology is being used by unions. The statistics listed below are the results of the survey." The latter sentence contained the following endnote: "Survey designed by Professor Manny Ness, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and Nick Unger, UNITE. Statistical analysis provided by Assistant Professor Manual Tirado, Brooklyn College, City University of New York."
2. ICANN is a nonprofit corporation that was formed to assume responsibility for the IP address space allocation, protocol parameter assignment, domain name system management, and root server system management functions previously performed under U.S. government contract by Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) and other entities (http://www.icann.org/).
3. Communication from Duncan Pruett, Information and Information Technology Coordinator, ICFTU to tld-interest@icann.org, July 13, 2000.
4. Though the primary focus of the program was on labor unions in New York State, union members from other jurisdictions also attended the workshops.
5. Catherwood Library assistance was limited, at this point, to Extension Division classes offered on the Cornell campus.
6. In addition to funding the Outreach Services Librarian position, the Extension Division handled the administration of the workshops, including registration and—initially—publicity. Labor Outreach staff developed the curriculum and taught the actual workshops. Donna Schulman, Director of the Lenz Library at the II R Extension Metropolitan Office in New York City, collaborated with the Outreach Services Librarian to teach workshops in New York City.
7. The discrepancies between the self-assessments and the actual level of computer skills also meant that workshop content, both prior to and during the workshop, had to address an array of computer competencies. It was not possible to provide, in a very short survey, common baseline measures that workshop registrants could use in rating themselves.
8. Though it established partnerships, the Labor Outreach Program retained sole control over curriculum design and all other components of the training. None of its partners ever sought to exert influence over these matters.
9. Though it is no longer updated as often or as thoroughly, the Labor Unions and the Internet manual is still posted on the Catherwood Library Web site at http://www.library.cornell.edu/library/reference/guides/show_guide/default.html?guide_number=11.
10. It should be pointed out that librarians associated with these programs do support the degree programs and, to a lesser extent, noncredit programs. In this instance, labor refers to the labor community at large.
REFERENCES


Davis, S. www.dispute.net. People Management (September 17, 1998), 53.


Top level Internet domain for unions could be considered by Web regulators. (2000, August 3). Labor Relations Week, 14(31), 880.


Virtual Organizing Facilities Bookstore Unionization, Bulletin to Management 48, (December 4, 1997), 386.