

Winter 1975

## Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 47, no. 2

RILA

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*Bulletin of*

THE RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOC.



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Beginning now, the RILA Bulletin will appear on a quarterly basis in the third week of January, April, June and September. Articles and notes should be submitted no later than the first of each of these months.

Advertising rates are available upon request.

As a publication of the Rhode Island Library Association The *Bulletin's* articles are a voice for each of its members and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the Association nor of *The Bulletin*.

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Coming in April will be an article on NASIC at URI explaining the services and what it will mean to the state. Also coming in April will be the speech given by Dr. Parkes at URI on unions from the administrative view which he presented at the RILA Fall 1974 Conference.

SEE PAGE 7 FOR AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE RILA EXECUTIVE BOARD:

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**F.W. FAXON COMPANY, INC.**

Publishing Division

15 Southwest Park, Westwood, Mass. 02090

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND 02918

*Phillips Memorial Library*

November 22, 1974

Mr. James T. Giles  
Vice President  
Rhode Island Library Association  
c/o William Hall Library  
1825 Broad Street  
Cranston, Rhode Island 02905

Dear Mr. Giles:

It is with deep regret that I must resign as president of the Rhode Island Library Association. I will begin working on my doctorate in library administration at Simmons College in January, 1975. The work demanded by the program is such that I would not be able to devote to the presidency the time and energy that is required.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to have served the Association and am grateful for the outstanding support given to me by the Executive Board and the membership.

Yours truly,

  
Paul L. Bazin

PLB/mp

## LIBRARIES AND UNIONS 1974

### A Historical Overview

by Lee Flanagan  
Pawtucket Public Library

In American libraries, librarians and support staffs are forming labor unions. Provoked by poor salaries and limited authority, despite increasing education and ability, librarians and support staffs are taking advantage of recent federal and state laws that have extended their collective bargaining rights. Certain models have already developed for establishing effective unions in federal libraries, local public libraries, and state college libraries. In private academic libraries the situation is somewhat more chaotic. Nonetheless, the movement is snowballing. And contrary to popular tradition, there is no clear evidence that unions will damage either library administration or library service.

What happened ask the librarians? Why are the support staffs flocking to unions? Why are many of our own fellow librarians slipping into the rank and file? Where did these unions come from? They were not here yesterday. What will they mean to us tomorrow?

Well, they were here yesterday. While unions were first established in libraries as far back as 1914, they never achieved either numbers or significance until the mid 1960's. For example, the five library unions that existed in 1919 increased to only six in the following twenty years. From 1945 to 1965 virtually no articles about unions appear in library literature.

In 1974 dozens of articles have appeared, including long feature articles in each of the major library journals. Where Wilson Library Bulletin in February 1974 carried an article on unionization of "non-professionals," American Libraries featured an article in July 1974 on prospects for unions in terms of pending legislation. And Library Journal just this past October addressed itself to unionization of academic librarians.

For 50 years librarians and library staffs in general ignored unions. Apparently library personnel were disturbed by the union image in the period, and relied instead on merit systems, civil service and staff associations to protect themselves. Still these devices proved to be ineffective long before library personnel chose unions, and well after the union image began to change. Why the wait? Library staffs had to wait, because for many years the law of the land, or absence of it, made unionization very difficult.

Prior to 1935, collective bargaining, the establishment between employers and unions of formal rules governing the conditions of labor, could only be vaguely guaranteed by law. However, in 1935 the passage of the National Labor Relations Act altered the legal environment. By this act, the worker was insured the right to join a union of his choice, the election machinery was provided to establish a union if nonexistent but desired, and employers were compelled to recognize and bargain with legally founded unions. Earlier devices used by employers to weaken or destroy a union and intimidate its members were outlawed as unfair labor practices.

Unfortunately the National Labor Relations Board, created by the 1935 Act, was not empowered to protect all workers. Government employees were not covered by the NLRA, for example, because their work in the "public interest" made unionization and possible strikes unallowable. President Kennedy realized, however, that much work labeled a matter of "public interest" was only a matter of "public convenience." So the President issued Executive Order 10988, allowing all federal government workers the right to unionize and bargain collectively. Between 1962 and 1970, 54 percent did unionize. By 1968 all of the states with one exception had passed similar legislation. Federal secretaries and public school teachers were on the move toward new contracts, and the compensation of much higher salaries. But local and state regulations still forbid many

government employees the use of the union's most effective weapon, the strike. That more than anything has slowed the growth of large and strong unions of government workers.

Library personnel began to awaken to the potential of unions in the mid sixties. They are in fact the "knowledge workers" who will number a full 50 percent of the working population in 1980, according to George Berkley in the Administrative Revolution. They knew in fact they were important, yet they had unconscionably little money and repute. Looking outward they saw such was not the situation of the teachers, and allied school librarians who were quick to capitalize on the new bargaining laws, and the new spirit of activism in the sixties. With no real models, no paradigms, few guidelines, a very few leaders such as Lawrence Brandwein of the Brooklyn public libraries and Darryl Mleynek of the California public libraries, supporting staffs, and realistic librarians, began to unionize.

In some cases they chose the American Federation of Teachers, if their situation were in a private academic institution. If their positions were in public libraries or in public college libraries, they likely opted for the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Those in government circles could choose the American Federation of Government Employees. There are exceptions to these formulae, the many irregularities that frequently occur in pioneering new territory.

The new territory is fearful, the way is treacherous, and no library employee should consider unionization without considerable study of likely positive and negative consequences. What no employee need fear on becoming a union member are promotion freezes, dismissal, or other administrative reprisals. Reprisals constitute unfair labor practices, they are a violation of federal law, and both the union lawyer and the NLRB function to protect union members from such.

Library unions from Berkeley to Brooklyn spread across the country in just a year, from 1965 to 1966. By 1968 library workers were strong enough to use the union's ultimate weapon: in California, support staff and librarians together struck the Contra Costa County Library. The strike, the first in the history of American libraries, was successful. Now many libraries have been unionized. And while there are still no absolute models, some directions are beginning to emerge in public libraries and public academic (community, city, state college and university) libraries. The situation in private academic libraries is still rather chaotic.

In public library unions the guarantees of the NLRB seem to be most effective. There a support staff is frequently joined by a percentage of graduate librarians in a stronger AFSCME local. In public academic libraries there appear to be fewer great success stories. Where over 50 university and college faculties have unionized since 1968 through AFT, NEA or AAUP efforts, academic librarians have in most unionized institutions not benefited at all. That is simply because academic librarians have achieved full faculty status in only about 14 percent of American academic institutions. Where they haven't achieved it they frequently can't join the faculty union.

In private academic libraries support staffs appear to have had even smaller success than in public academic libraries. Perhaps the reason is that the NLRB did not really enter the picture of private college collective bargaining until 1970. At that time national economic problems were making great success at bargaining unusual. Perhaps private academic librarians might follow the Berkeley or Claremont example and join support staffs if they wish to build stronger unions.

Yet while it is generally advantageous for private academic library staffs to work hand in glove with librarians, and while it is also advantageous to belong to the "right" large library union, it is not essential to do either to achieve some measure of victory. A support

staff choosing an unusual union affiliation, and lacking the backing of "professional" librarians, is not necessarily pre-destined to failure. On the contrary, it may enjoy success similar to that of the library clerical local at Brown University or Columbia University.

There are no hard and fast rules. But in general, I think it can be reasonably asserted that librarians and support staffs will continue to unionize, in greater numbers and with more success. The union provides the single way for them to raise salaries, unconscionably low in many cases, to a decent level. (Syracuse University library workers struck just last March to raise full time salaries from \$4,000 to \$4,800 a year). The union alone provides job security in these unsettled times and tolerable, if not satisfying, working conditions. It alone satisfies the need to belong, to participate in the administration of one's own organization, to control one's own destiny. And it can provide the basis for experimentation in participative management. It alone provides protection from arbitrary management decisions. It alone guarantees expertise in organizing, a regular bargaining service, and full legal advice and backing in times of crisis. These are the obvious effective advantages of the union.

Less obvious advantages are as follows. Unions encourage specific accountability on the part of workers and administrators. A larger library union is a bloc of votes, and can provide considerable leverage in getting public library budgets and bond issues approved. And a union can help any library administrator in any kind of institution justify salaries to his city council of university administration. Better salaries tend to lead to higher levels of employee competence and motivation, and consequently, to higher production. For these reasons modern management scholarship approves unionization to a considerable degree. Unfortunately too many library administrators are not aware of that.

As for the most frequently raised objections to unions, there are two I would like to consider here. First, it is charged that traditional union attitudes, especially the political conservatism of the large unions, would interfere with socially liberal library goals. Well, it is true that the larger unions in general are quite conservative, politically and socially. But no union is required to adopt the attitude, say, of the Teamsters. A union is what its members choose to make of it, and that is especially true at the local level. A local library union is the library staff itself and the values they wish to impose on their union. There is not likely to be any outside interference. Libraries, after all, are not so important that the great national unions have rushed in to organize them and to impose their values. The union comes to a library only when the staff invites it. The local chapter becomes what the staff is, as intelligent, sophisticated, humanistic and liberal as the staff is.

Secondly, it is charged that the growth of unions is incompatible with effective library administration, especially since they would diminish a director's authority. This is an especially serious charge in view of Nelson Associates' observation, that the single decisive factor in the success of a library system appears to be the competence of its director. Now the Nelson finding must be allowed. And it must be allowed that unions do diminish the authority of a director, particularly in matters of hiring, promotion, and dismissal. Neither of these admissions mean that the administration of a library must suffer. Competent direction is completely necessary. But only an absolute monarchist believes that competent direction can only be had when all authority resides in a single person. Nelson, in speaking of the single director, was only describing a historical condition and not advocating a theory of administration. There is nothing to suggest that a sharing of some administrative duties, a cooperative effort by a director and a union, can not provide competent library direction. There is much, on the other hand, in proverbs and modern personnel management theory to suggest that such a sharing will actually improve library direction. Two heads, or three, or more are better than one, says the advocate of participatory management practice. A glance at Douglas McGregor's

## RILA TO HOLD A MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

RILA will hold a Mid-Winter Conference on February 20, 1975. The conference will consist of workshops on the seven recommendations made by the Long-Range Planning Committee. The place: Providence College's Slavin Center I, and the Long-Range Planning Committee's report will be distributed to the membership.

In the meantime, we're including below the recommendations of the Long-Range Planning Committee.

1. That a publicist be engaged to promote, using the media and the best professional techniques, ~~in~~ the public, school, academic, and special libraries of Rhode Island.

2. That there be introduced in Rhode Island a state-wide public library borrowers card.

3. That the Rhode Island Library Association cooperate with the Graduate Library School and the Division of University Extension (soon to be called the College of Continuing Education) at the University of Rhode Island in the development of a sound program of continuing library education.

4. That there be established in the Graduate Library School at the University of Rhode Island a Bureau of Consultation and Research designed to serve the libraries and information services, the librarians and information workers, of Rhode Island and New England.

5. That the Rhode Island Library Association provide a forum within which the advantages and disadvantages of the unionization of library employees, professional and non-professional alike, can be thoroughly discussed.

6. That there be established in Rhode Island a comprehensive system by which the bibliographic data made available to the New England Library Information Network from the Library of Congress via the Ohio College Library Center can be rapidly disseminated to any interested public, school, academic, or special library in the state.

7. That the Rhode Island Library Association actively promote the appointment of a School Library Specialist in the State Department of Education.

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Lucille Sibulkin, Adams Library, Rhode Island College has complete ALA membership information and applications. Call her at 831-6600, ext. 285.



The Human Side of Enterprise and dozens of other management books and articles in the last fifteen years will provide considerable evidence for that assertion. In short, union members do not deny the need for intelligent and vigorous direction of libraries. They just want to help to provide that direction, since it affects their work, and their lives. Not an unfair request, I think.

What does the future hold for unionization of libraries? Some state laws will change to allow "professional" librarians to join "non-professionals" in a union, or to allow "professional" librarians to join other "professional" public employees, like teachers, in a given locality. That just occurred in Massachusetts. Possible mergers of public and school library functions under a single state agency could draw public librarians into teachers' unions. Law suits, such as one just filed in California by librarians, for pay and vacations equal to teachers where credentials are equal, could produce a drifting of public librarians into teacher unions where permissible. None of these efforts, however, would produce the dramatic and sweeping results that either of two new pieces of federal legislation would. While current laws allow library unions to exist everywhere, either of the proposed federal laws would also give public (local, regional, or state) librarians' unions some real clout for the first time, for either proposed federal law provides the right to strike to all government employees at all levels regardless of present local or state laws to the contrary. It is the right to strike that makes an effective union, and it is that right granted to government employees that would make possible the rapid spread of large and effective library unions. The chances of passage of this new legislation in 1975 or 1976 in the new heavily Democratic Congress are good. Should passage occur library staffs must avoid "independence" in forming unions. A union of public librarians alone could strike for a very long time without inconveniencing much of the public. Affiliation with teachers in a strike would move the public more quickly. But care must be taken also in the matter of affiliation, lest library staffs be dominated in a union by others with alien interests.

A few last general observations may suggest the complexity, and the value, of the journey.

- Librarians' qualifications must equal those of teachers. Their hours must exceed those of teachers. Their salaries almost never equal those of teachers.

- Unions are not to be found in Rhode Island where they are most needed. Nor is it likely they can be soon expected in areas of greatest need.

- Unions do not always improve a situation - sometimes they can only stabilize it.

- It is no fun to form a union. No one chooses to do so without extreme provocation.

- A labor organizer does not start a union. The impetus comes from the irrational action of an irascible administrator, supervisor, or trustee. Those who most loath unions tend to be the very people whose actions cause them to be formed.

- Library unions are not founded for money alone, but to correct an intolerable atmosphere, in which low salaries are only one symbol of inept administration.

- The danger of unionization comes not from the well run but from the badly run organization. Once unionization takes hold however it can spread to the well run organization.

- The union is a human organization. It can be fallible, unsatisfactory, even corrupt. It is, whatever else it may be, however, the one organization that stands for job security and decent salaries for all.

Many other conditions of the age are encouraging rapid union development. Higher degrees of education and competence are creating a desire on the part of library employees to have a say about their governance. The growing number of hierarchical bureaucratic fail-

ures to control the environment, the government, foreign relations, war, and industry have convinced all intelligent workers that they must take more matters into their own hands. And the likelihood of current economic instability and anxiety lasting the rest of the decade makes it essential that employees demand some authority over their salaries and employment security.

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## UNIONIZATION - A HOW-TO OUTLINE

by James Bunn  
Brown Universities

It is unfortunate for those in librarianship that the sound philosophy of unionism has been slow in coming to the field. Firemen, policemen, social workers, university professors, nurses, and school teachers have enjoyed the advantages of unions for years.

Why do people organize? For better salaries, benefits, and working conditions. Obviously, salaries need little explanation. It is a generally recognized fact that unionized workers make significantly higher wages than non-unionized workers doing comparable work. In libraries---both public and private---the administrations have justified lower salaries by fostering the belief that the worker was doing an educational job in a prestige institution. You cannot eat prestige.

Benefits are an important area for any worker. Institutions have recognized the need for benefits such as health coverage, sick pay, and vacations. Generally speaking, however, the coverage provided is not the best available. A successful union can negotiate to improve benefits. With the cost of health coverage these days, this is not a minor item.

Working conditions cover a wide range of topics. There are specific, tangible areas, such as hours of work. There is another area, less tangible, but just as important---the rights of a worker. The need to protect these rights is most obvious in institutions with autocratic, arbitrary management. However, even in the most "enlightened" institutions, unionized workers are better protected in the long run than workers who depend on management to "take care of" them. Even the most "enlightened" trustee in the public library system cannot know every worker personally, nor like them equally. The likelihood of unequal treatment is immense. Another reason. this is true has to do with the way decisions are made in a large institution.

Running a library is a business, whether it is a private or state university, or a public library system. There is a limited amount of money, although you may not be privy to the amount. Those in charge of allocating the money must make decisions based upon the "greatest need." Now, the priority of the "greatest need" is determined by what sections of the system supply the most convincing evidence/pressure. This pressure can be applied in many different ways. Two of the most obvious ways are community pressure for improved libraries, which may indirectly improve library salaries; and organized library workers, who will negotiate directly for themselves. Librarians are being forgotten because they have no effective lobby/pressure group.

Once a group of workers has decided to organize, how do they go about selecting a union? Of course, each group is going to have unique problems, which will lead to certain questions they will want answered, and should have answered, before they choose a specific union. In addition, there are several questions which any

group should ask of a union business agent:

1. Is the union financially sound? Get a general idea of the membership of the union, the budget, and financial statement.
2. Will the union finance the organizing campaign? Is the union prepared to provide money for first class mail, leaflets, legal counsel, phone calls to gather information from other libraries in the country, etc.
3. What are the monthly dues?
4. Does the union have competent legal counsel?
5. Will the business agent agree to leave the tactics and organizing up to the members of the library? Of course, you want someone with knowledge, who will be able to tell you if you are proceeding legally, and someone who will have creative suggestions for tactics. But, will the business agent be guided by the group's desires? (This question is relevant if the group wants to control the organizing campaign. In some library groups, the members may prefer to remain anonymous.)

What are the specific steps in organizing? Once a union has been selected, the library organizers must convince the rest of the library workers of the need for a union. The signatures of 30 percent of the workers must be collected before anything else can be done. These signatures are confidential. The union then petitions the National Labor Relations Board to conduct an election. In the election a majority of those voting determine the outcome of the election.

After winning the election, the workers meet to prepare their contract proposals and to elect a negotiating team. The negotiating team is charged with obtaining the best contract possible.

This is a very brief outline of the steps involved in obtaining a contract. Many problems can be expected. Of course the institution---"enlightened" or not---will make every effort to defeat the organizing process. Many workers will be easily intimidated by the administration's "concern for our family community," but a good union can protect the workers. Federal law protects workers in exercising their right to organize.

To defeat the organizing campaign, the administration may even suddenly discover that its limited amount of money was not quite as limited as they previously thought. Unexpected increases in salaries and benefits, although illegal under the National Labor Relations Act, are frequently used to defeat an organizing drive. However, if an organizing drive can goad an administration into giving larger increases, wouldn't you imagine a unionized library dealing directly and legally with persons responsible for allocating the money could gain even greater and more secure benefits?

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#### THE OTHER SIDE

by James S. Healey

Associate Professor of Library Science, GLS-URI

My objective in this talk is to indicate that there is another side to the union question. In my administration classes, or in the literature, there is little indication from either pro- or anti-union camp that any other side exists. And since we librarians are great talkers about intellectual freedom, perhaps it might be possible for me to take the anti-union side without incurring too much rancor.

Perhaps, the words 'anti-union' are really stronger than I intend. For I am well aware of the growth of the union movement in the

United States. I am also well aware that the movement was the only thing that could have freed the working man from economic bondage. And I am also well aware that librarians have recently turned to the union ideal to gain economic and spiritual freedom from library administrators who know nothing about administration, who know nothing about personnel development and other such arcane matters. The speaker from Brown University gave all of us a graphic example of this.

How then, in good conscience, as a 'liberal' can I take the other side? I do so because, as in so many other movements, claims have been made for unions that could not possibly be met in this world or in any other, for that matter. By this, I mean that too often those who speak in favor of unions speak of them as something they are not. Those persons will tell you that many lacks exist within their libraries, and then say that the same lacks do not exist within unions. This almost ironic ignorance has many forms, and I would like to state a few of them as I see them.

#### IRONY I. LIBRARIES ARE HIERARCHICAL AND AUTOCRATIC.

Well of course they are. But can one say that unions are not, too? Every organization -- library, union, business -- is hierarchical. It is in the very essence of the organization. There is a boss, there are workers and there are levels in-between. The larger your union, the greater the hierarchy. The larger your union, the less direct say you have in the final decisions that are made. As for autocratic, I agree that some librarians look upon their libraries as private fiefs, but would any of you want to tell me that Jimmy Hoffa or George Meany are the great democrats of our day? In an editorial not so long ago, John Berry, who is well known for his advocacy of unions (one wonders whether John in his fine office has had to contend with the typographical and printers unions?) made a strong argument against Albert Shanker and his union for their attitude towards librarians. While John's points were well taken, it was ironic in the extreme to read John's words.

#### IRONY II. THE LIBRARY GIVES ME NO PART IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

You're probably right again. But how much input and impact do you have in your union? Again, as it gets larger, and has to accommodate more points of view, your say gets smaller and smaller, just as in any other organization. A good example of this occurred prior to the last election. The union to which one of us belongs sent us a brochure, informing us that its executive committee had endorsed a candidate. However, no one had bothered to even so much as ask us if we wanted to endorse that particular candidate. And if we did not chose to endorse him, what opportunity was there for us to endorse someone else on a minority basis? There wasn't even a straw ballot taken. Further, who gave the union officials the right to spend our money for this purpose when it did not agree with our point of view? Nobody did, but that obviously was no deterrent to the union executives, for they decided what would be good for us. One would have thought by now that we are a little tired of our executives thinking of us as children and deciding what is and is not good for us.

#### IRONY III. THE LIBRARY DOES NOT ALLOW ME TO DO MY THING, TO GROW AND DEVELOP TO MY FULLEST EXTENT.

Again, likely, that's true. But does your union? Union as a word means in concert, as a group, to-getherness. It does not mean single, individual or any other non-plural word. One of the union's historical problems is that they have protected too many incompetents. Do you really feel that a union is going to let you stand out? How will that contribute to the protection of all workers, when some of the workers are excelling at their jobs, and producing creatively? How can the union justify excellence in some, and not in others? Simply, it cannot. The result, of course, is a leveling off. Even those with a great commitment to their jobs get tired of seeing others get the same pay and benefits, regardless of

how little they produce. All are lumped to-gether, the clods and the creators, and little or no provision is made for excellence. Have you ever heard of the good apples curing the bad one? And any reading about people in organizations will tell you a great deal about the social pressures to conform that exist all around.

**IRONY IV. LIBRARIES MILITATE AGAINST SOCIAL CHANGE, SUBJUGATE MINORITIES, AND ARE RACIST AND SEXIST.**

Sure, in many cases there is no question that that is true. Yet, our libraries, and the people who run them spring from our society, and unfortunately, much of our society is that way. One may not like this unpleasant fact, but it exists, nonetheless. On the other hand, would you tell me that unions do not spring out of the same society and that they are not subject to the same ills that the society has? I challenge you to name one union where the higher echelons are replete with women and minority group members. Perhaps one of you can tell me the name of a woman union president? In fact, I would ask you into what unions, ( except library and teacher unions, and we all know that those are women's jobs anyway ) I would ask you what major union has welcomed women into the ranks? I challenge you to show me the Blacks or Chicanos, except for the Railway Porters or the Farmworkers, who stand high in the union councils of this land. I suggest that those of you who are so enamored of unions ask Cesar Chavez about how helpful the Teamsters have been to the Chicanos, and also bother to find out why we had a 'Philadelphia Plan'.

Saddest of all of the ironies is what happens to those who work so hard to bring unions into an organization. Often, it is the new young worker, who tires of the beauracracy, who tires of the antediluvian behavior of the administrator, and turns to the union. When it comes time to lay people off, particularly in an economic crisis as presently exists, the old union motto comes into play, "Last in, first out." For isn't seniority a prime union underpinning? Are you not aware that the union must protect the old-timer, rather than the newcomer who brought so much strength and vigor to the organization? Well, it does little good to re-state the obvious. But as a closing statement, let me invoke the book/song title, "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden". I do so to caution you that the next time someone starts to sell you a bill of goods about how the union will bring heaven on earth, or a new Eden, that in a garden of earthly delights, even the lovely rose has thorns.

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TO THE EDITOR,

I was both fascinated and appalled by your last issue of R.I.L.A. Bulletin on the subject of trustees and head librarians. I was fascinated because of the varied views and opinions which resulted from the questions asked; and I was appalled to find so many discrepancies in the answers for each section of questions.

I have always wondered what trustees and librarians felt their philosophies and priorities were, and to my chagrin I have wrongly speculated. Although I realize for obvious reasons why names and libraries were not included to document each quote, I feel it would have been helpful in realizing the rationale behind each comment to know the size of the library and the criteria for becoming a trustee and a head librarian. It would probably be an unruly task but perhaps a compilation should be made including all libraries in Rhode Island which includes this sort of information (i.e., criteria for becoming a trustee--city appointment, elected, etc.; and the job description for each head librarian). This information could be used in better understanding what situation each library is in. Perhaps this would make a good project for a student of library science.

I for one felt and hoped that none of the trustees and head librarians quoted could have been connected with the library which employs me.

Thank you for this inspiring issue of R.I.L.A. Bulletin.

Sincerely, Elliott Lincoln Green

## NEW ENGLAND LIBRARY BOARD

The New England Library Board (NELB) and its Panel of Counsellors held a joint policy meeting at the Osgood Hill Conference Center, North Andover, Mass., on December 5-6 to consider proposals for coordinating regional library activities and initiating new programs. The Panel unanimously endorsed the development of a set of cohesive goals which would effectively contribute to a national network.

In the keynote address, Bennett D. Katz, Maine State Senator and Chairman of the New England Board of Higher Education, looked at "Regionalism: On Trial in New England." He told participants that geographically New England is ideally suited for regional cooperation and challenged them to overcome financial and political obstacles to achieve it.

In the next month, NELB will review a number of proposals coming from the North Andover meeting and from a fall "Idea Conference," in which representatives of various interstate library groups took part. Action on one or more short-term projects could begin as early as January.

Created in 1972 under the Interstate Library Compact to promote cooperation among all types of libraries in the area, NELB is made up of the heads of the six state library agencies in New England. Its 41-member Panel of Counsellors, chaired by Edward V. Chenevert, Jr., of Portland, Maine, represents public, academic, school, and special libraries, trustees, the lay public, and regional associations.

The headquarters office, headed by Mary McKenzie as executive director, is in Middletown, Conn. Operational funding for NELB has thus far come primarily from state and federal sources.

NELB is the governing board of the highly successful New England Document Conservation Center, also in North Andover. For further information, call Mary McKenzie at (203) 347-7473. Her office is at the Library Service Center, 786 South Main St., Middletown, Connecticut 06457.



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## THE ETIQUETTE OF A MEETING

(an anonymous plea for awareness)

A meeting as described by Webster is "an act of coming together, an assembly of persons for a specific purpose". The dictionary goes on to say in third and fourth definitions "the body of persons present at an assembly" or "a hostile encounter or even an assembly for religious worship, or a junction or union". One encounters all these facets of a meeting in the daily round of one's work in Rhode Island. Fall is a busy time and meetings proliferate now and all through the winter and into the spring. Perhaps it is this first impact after the sluggishness of summer, but, the meetings of late have been a pretty poor assortment, rather sloppily planned and in many cases downright boring.

If a "meeting, junction, or union" is anticipated and is the cause of the meeting, then why not do everything humanly possible to make rapport and compromise possible. Why not carefully plan the elements of the meeting contrasting serious and humorous, critical and praiseworthy? Why not time speakers or better yet give them a time slot and make them adhere to it?

Too many meetings of late have been little ego trips or "this is how we did it good" demonstrations. If guests are invited as speakers to a meeting and are the main reason for the meeting, then why do we wallow around in insignificant trivia and keep the expectant guest speakers champing at the bit? For that matter why should any meeting begin in the late late afternoon, or having corralled people from all over the state for an evening meeting why should it last less than forty minutes?

In summary: Meetings should have a specific purpose for bringing people together, speakers and participants should be articulate, well prepared and mindful of that most deadly bore at any meeting—the clock. Let's really plan and give our future meetings in this busy year some zip, some input and some character. Only this can guarantee "junction or union".

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