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“No More Pay Inequity or Discrimination” Supported at University of California at Berkeley Library Pay Equity Forum

By **Norah Foster**

In early November 2005, the University of California at Berkeley labor unions: CUE, the Coalition of University Employees, the AFT (American Federation of Teachers), UPTE (University Professional and Technical Employees), and LAUC-B (Librarian's Association of UC-B) sponsored two well-attended and lively events with keynote speaker, Dr. Maurice J. Freedman, Past President of the American Library Association. The first forum event was a round table where Dr. Freedman addressed the issue of pay equity for library workers and noted the excellent [Advocating for Better Salaries & Pay Equity Toolkit](#) as being specifically designed with helpful sources to gaining pay equity. Dr. Freedman ran his campaign on the position of better pay in 2002 and helped to institute the Taskforce on Better Salaries for Library Workers when he won the election. He commented that supporting the ALA-APA (American Library Association-Allied Professional Association) is a great way to help support pay equity. He also lauded the work on this issue by Pamela Wilson who is at the [AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees](#). “The challenge is clear,” he said, “we must overcome the stereotype of the library worker who only wants to do good and who will accept any pittance of pay.”

Three other speakers at the noon forum were: Norah Foster, representing CUE (Library Assistants), Lincoln Cushing, AFT (Librarians), and Nadine Wilmot, UPTE (editors, conservationists, systems) They described the work they do and the challenges of negotiations at UC. These negotiations are often delayed or well-accepted solutions are simply ignored after the evidence has been made clear that we are underpaid.

Freedman stressed how important it is that we must all support each other to achieve pay equity.



After the noon speakers, some open forum questions were posed. One question concerned the meaning of the 33% pay inequity for library assistants and the methodologies used in the study that reported the inequity. In response, it was noted that this study compared the median salaries of the University of California system to California State Library Assistants and the 33% inequity was proven and upheld by a neutral arbitrator in that 2004 hearing. Other

questions were asked about inequities in an individual's current job situation in which the same job is also being performed by someone else but at a higher classification and pay level. Freedman responded we should not complain about those workers, but we should focus on getting our own positions raised to higher pay level(s). Lastly, a long comment was made about the problem of “outsourcing” cataloger's work in the East Asian Library. Freedman responded that indeed, care must be taken not to degrade library products and services for the cheaper costs and that this has been happening to other libraries. In summation, Freedman said, “We must contribute substantively to the fight for pay equity. Women have been discriminated against in a variety of ways, the primary one being compensation.”

In an “early bird” session held on Nov. 9th, Dr. Freedman had a longer address and clarified salient points including common goals for both the workers and the library administration. This session was videotaped and can be purchased by e-mailing nfoster@library.berkeley.edu. He spoke about the budget year problems with “no money for salaries” and how to overcome these obstacles. Indeed, library administrators must sometimes choose in cutting budgets, he said, between operations (salaries) or collections and online resources. He said that even in the “good” budget years library workers are left behind, but that there is no reason to accept this budget excuse. All administrators do have “discretionary” funds and he cited as a clear example when UC offered \$20 million in 2003/04, of which less than \$4 million would have brought the Library Assistants up to the other assistants’ salaries system wide. UC withdrew this offer when the state of California withdrew its portion, expected to be about \$10 million for a 6% raise across the board. Rather than go ahead and use the money that was available (the \$20 million for a reasonable 4% increase), they gave nothing for majority of the clericals (16,000), nothing for the library assistants, but gave a pittance increase to about 20 dispatcher clericals as a token gesture of cooperation. In response to this egregious dilemma, Freedman noted during the question and answer period that the press should be covering this topic and that notable faculty or legislators should also be called upon as advocates.

Library workers themselves have been afraid to speak out, but Freedman said it isn’t just our pay levels, but also our benefits—health care costs, pensions and assistance for continuing education, including attendance at conferences—that are at risk. Library workers have become the “unsung heroes and heroines who are highly educated, proud but often painfully poor.”

Nationwide a median salary for a woman with a master’s degree is about \$47,000 compared to \$65,000 for a comparable degree for men. As a result of Freedman’s ALA campaign for better salaries, many library associations are now embarking on studies and initiatives to bring library workers’ salaries to parity. The California Library Association has asked to begin a 3-year initiative for salaries studies. We must “stop donating our salaries.” The noted writer, Barbara Ehrenreich, calls this “involuntary philanthropy.” It is up to us to tell the people who control the purse strings that, “Your seeming lack of money is not a reason to discriminate against us.”

Are library jobs now obsolete because of the Internet and ubiquitous laptop/computer access? Is the nature of librarianship changing for the worse? On the contrary, said Freedman, the Internet gives us the new and changing role of obtaining the best, most valuable information which can be trusted. Anyone can find information with Google searches, but it takes an information literate staff to cull the data for trustworthy and valuable information. This role as the guardians of the most trustworthy resources is invaluable to the mission of the University. If library usage statistics are showing a drop, we should be checking to see if the statistical counts adequately include the training and use of our electronic resources! Dr. Freedman asserted that the academic life of the university and its mission are dependent on the library. He said, the “single most valuable resource to the University, aside from the faculty, is the library.” Therefore, pay equity must be pursued at the institutional level.

If the budget “**canard**” is given, Freedman suggests three approaches to winning pay equity. First, you must have your overall institution adopt a policy of pay equity. Second, get the institution to pay for a study (ies) of comparable salaries or do it on your own, and third, but not least, lay out a plan to solve the problems, if necessary, within a longer framework (even 3–8 years). In the words he directly overheard Mario Savio say during the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley which helps to motivate us: “Knowledge without consequences isn’t of any value.” He said, in conclusion, that we are all on the same side with common goals within the library (management, unions and workers). “Your agenda ...working in concert with others... is to find immediate and long-term solutions to inequities in pay and benefits and to advocate with all the fervor you can muster, for better salaries and pay equity for all library workers.”

Does a “First Class Education” Include School Librarians?

There is a movement, called “**First Class Education**” that is asking state policymakers to mandate that 65% of all school spending be used only for classroom-related activities. The argument is that the quality of education will increase with this dedicated funding ratio. Proponents, led by President and Chairman of

Overstock.com Patrick Byrne, feel that there is a link between classroom spending and the education delivered. Critics say that it will eliminate or shrink services that are important but not provided in the classroom. School library media specialists and library support staff are in the latter category because they are defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as “non-instructional,” a category which also hosts nurses, counselors, and food service. Art, music and athletics are considered to be in the classroom.

There are several states that already fund classroom spending at 65% or above, and others that are joining the campaign. Lawmakers in Missouri are pushing the legislation, and National Public Radio covered the story: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5011330>. School library media specialists across the country are discussing the proposals in their states and deciding where their energies should be expended. Should they lobby lawmakers to reject the 65% philosophy or should they petition NCES to change their designation to “instructional?” To find out more about NCES Data Collection see: www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aaslproftools/toolkits/schoollibrary.htm. This is not an either/or situation but one that is leading librarians to action on both fronts. The [American Association for School Librarians](#) is raising awareness of this issue and asking for comments.

First Class Education, <http://www.firstclasseducation.org>. Goal: “By the end of 2008, pass a law in all 50 States and the District of Columbia requiring every Schools District to spend at least 65% of its education operational budgets in classrooms for the benefit of teachers & kids.”

Recommended Article: Supply and Demand for Catalogers: Present and Future.

This is a survey of Association for Research Libraries members, looking at MLIS graduates in cataloging, available jobs and the impact of retirements.

Leysen, Joan M., and Jeanne M.K. Boydston. *Supply and Demand for Catalogers: Present and Future*. *LRTS* 49 (2005): 250–65.

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