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Academic Librarians and Labor Unions: Attitudes and Experiences

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abstract: This research project investigates librarians' attitudes toward unions and collective bargaining through data collected from a nationwide survey of 359 academic librarians in the United States. We found that academic librarians have a generally positive view of unions and collective bargaining agreements, a notable result in a national political atmosphere that is demonstrably anti-union. Union membership is strongly bound to faculty status. Our research results imply that unionization and collective bargaining provide stronger job protections and higher wages than faculty status alone, and suggest that discussions of faculty status in academic libraries may not have provided best possible way to enhance the status of our profession.

Introduction

Librarians' work environments differ significantly based on the types of institutions where the librarians work: public libraries, academic libraries, private-sector businesses, or elementary and secondary schools. Labor union membership also varies significantly based on these divisions within the profession.[1] The work presented here seeks to add to the body of knowledge regarding librarians in higher education and professional unions in the United States. Union membership overall has declined in the United States since its apogee in the middle to late 1960s,[2] yet membership for librarians across workplace types has

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remained relatively strong.[3] This research addresses questions regarding the views and attitudes that United States academic librarians have toward union membership. Union membership is strongly associated with faculty status among academic librarians; thus, it carries a nexus of attitudes that can sometimes be difficult to parse from controversies and opinions about this related, but not identical, issue. More than half of academic librarians are considered faculty, but the specifics of that status vary widely.[4] We argue that unionization and collective bargaining offer academic librarians a distinct and possibly more effective context from which to promote the interests of librarians than a narrow focus on the perceived advantages or disadvantages of faculty status.

Literature Review

The research literature about librarians and union members has been produced in a regular flow from approximately the late 1930s through the early parts of this century. Research in the last 15 years has been conducted about, but not generally limited to, academic librarians, or was not intended to elicit attitudes or subjective judgements. The scholarship of librarians and professional unions of different types essentially begins in 1939 with Bernard Berelson's theoretical discussion of how librarians might integrate professional unionization into their contemporaneous labor movements, combined with a historical treatment of the then-current work of union organizing into the larger international history of labor.[5] The literature continued in a steady trickle to this day, with work focusing on public library unionization until the mid-1960s, when movements toward academic librarian unionization started in earnest.[6] The public library world has been the traditional site of union organizing, and much collective bargaining in these workplaces has taken place in civil service unions.[7]

There were two brief peaks of interest in academic librarian unionization in the United States coinciding with significant developments in U.S. labor history in the mid-1970s and the 1990s. In the 1970s, as public librarians in several municipalities formed unions, organizing efforts also grew at colleges and universities.[8] Gail Schlacter explored in depth the distinctions among professional societies, "quasi-unions: associations which add an employee orientation to their original professional base,"[9] and unions as we know them. Kathar Spang and William Kane investigated the overlapping and not always complementary goals of the professional groups and unions. Their work provided understanding as to how these entities may or may not fully represent librarian interests.[10] John Weatherford noted the entanglement of faculty status and unionization as far back as the mid-1970s,[11] an issue which this project also addresses. In the early 1970s, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the federal agency that enforces labor laws, first ruled that librarians shared a community of interest with faculty and should be included in their collective bargaining unit.[12] In the 1990s, a few scholars conducted case studies and other qualitative research, or described how unionization had affected the profession.[13]

In the past decade or so, research has centered on the issues most commonly associated with collective bargaining: salary and working conditions. Most of these studies have found that union membership yields a significant salary premium for professional librarians and nonlibrarian workers. Kathleen de la Peña McCook noted a premium as high

as 21 percent.[14] Rajinder Garcha and John Phillips found that "unionized librarians, on average, earn higher salaries than non-unionized librarians."[15] The most recent fact sheet of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations), the largest federation of unions in the United States, declares unequivocally that "unions are an important way for library professionals to negotiate collectively for better wages, hours, and working conditions." The fact sheet indicates a 25 percent premium for librarians in particular, and as much as 50 percent for other unionized library employees.[16] Deborah Lee found union starting salaries of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) librarians were from 2 to 13 percent higher between 1989 and 1998.[17] In mild contrast, David Hedrick, Steven Henson, John Krieg, and Charles Wassell found in 2011 that the overall salary premium for faculty union members may be smaller than previously claimed, noting methodological difficulties and measurement error in earlier work; but their study does not address faculty librarians specifically.[18]

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Stephanie Braunstein and Michael Russo noted at least three recent studies suggesting that the salary premium for United States librarians either declines after initial unionization efforts or does not actually exist.[19] Lee also explores whether librarians without tenure have higher wages compensating for their relative lack of job security, to inconclusive results.[20] The studies addressing the working conditions and collective bargaining of librarians have not been strongly conclusive. Librarian working conditions may not be improved by unionization. Union librarians sometimes have worse student ratios and may exhibit lower job satisfaction,[21] or they do not maintain salary premiums after initial unionization efforts.[22]

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Research on unions in the twenty-first century has featured case studies,[23] investigations of public libraries and union membership,[24] reviews of union activities,[25] and studies of collective bargaining and the contracts themselves.[26] Stephen Aby compares the content of several collective bargaining agreements for academic libraries and calls for further research, transparency, and librarian involvement in unions and the bargaining process.[27] The journal *Progressive Librarian* runs regular reports on union activity in the past year; much of this reportage centers on the public library milieu.[28] In the mid-2000s, Suzanne Milton wrote a short but engaging historical review and call to action for academic librarians to participate in faculty unions.[29] There is also substantial research into library unionization outside the United States, especially in Canada.[30] Marni Harrington and Natasha Gerolami have created a comprehensive study of collective bargaining agreements in Canada.[31] This research, along with the initial unanalyzed data from our survey, demonstrates that the labor conditions of librarians and other professionals in the United States differ in important ways from those in other countries.

Recent survey or qualitative research about librarians and their experiences with professional unions, particularly academic unions, is largely lacking. In a white paper adapted from her 2010 *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* entry, McCook says, "The literature of academic library unionism is scant . . . Continued concern over faculty status has seemed to override discussion of collective bargaining."[32] Garcha and Phillips have surveyed academic involvement in, and attitudes toward, faculty unions. Though they studied a somewhat smaller sample group than ours, they found a salary premium for unionized librarians. They also noted that their respondents felt that unionization and collective bargaining provided a sense of job security.[33] In 1997, Spang and Kane examined both union-affiliated and nonaffiliated academic librarians regarding questions of perceived status, workplace issues, and equality with teaching faculty. They concluded specifically that lack of uniform representation leads ultimately to insecurity and inequality in the profession.[34] Braunstein and Russo conducted a smaller (by approximately one-third) survey of librarian attitudes toward unions in the state of Louisiana and addressed some possible explanations for the resistance to unionizing that their research revealed.[35]

Our research not only updates and expands upon these studies but also fills a notable gap in the recent literature of both unionization and academic librarianship. Our survey has a large sample size, is current, and asks questions about specific aspects of collective bargaining and union membership that, by and large, have not been addressed. The importance of unions in public and academic life is a changing issue demanding current information. We seek to provide a basis for understanding the attitudes we have as professionals toward union membership and collective bargaining. More ambitiously, we wish to add union membership and collective bargaining to the conversation about enhancing our professional status within our specific institutions, in higher education more generally, and in the industries that influence or surround us as working academic librarians.

Methodology

The researchers used Qualtrics, an online survey research platform, to investigate librarian attitudes toward unions in their profession. The survey included demographic, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions. (A copy of the survey questions appears in the Appendix.) The survey was approved as exempt from further review by the institutional review boards at both Robert Morris University in Moon Township, Pennsylvania, and the University of Akron in Ohio. Prior to dissemination, three librarians tested the survey to give feedback on the wording and construction of questions, to provide critique, and to ascertain that the survey could be taken in under 10 minutes; the longest tested survey was less than seven minutes.

Between July 29, 2015, and September 15, 2015, the authors distributed a request for respondents via numerous professional librarian e-mail lists of the American Library Association, including collib-l. uls-l, rusa-l, cjc-l, and ili-l, and through personal connections of the authors. Respondents were, as a result, diverse but self-selecting. For methodological ease, we chose to focus our analyses on responses from librarians in the United States; characteristics of professional unions outside the United States differ

significantly. For most questions, we chose not to force answers in the Qualtrics interface, so the number of responses to individual survey questions varies.

Results

The survey circulated widely and internationally, but methodological considerations prompted us to analyze only responses from the cohort of 359 academic librarians in the United States. A summary of demographic data from these academic librarians is presented in Table 1. Our sample had gender, age, and experience levels that mirror those of the profession as a whole.[36] The educational attainment question demonstrates that no respondent was unqualified.

Table 2 summarizes characteristics of the workplace and employment status of survey respondents. For the tenure question, we did not define or specify the term *tenure*; some respondents' self-evaluation of their status might not agree with that of outside observers. For institution size, there were only two responses of "up to 499," so those two were combined with the 42 responses of "500–1,999" to create the "up to 1,999" category shown.

The union background of survey respondents is shown in Table 3. A plurality of respondents (42.4 percent) indicated that they lived in "Right to Work" states. But the term was not defined by the survey authors, and many respondents (26.6 percent) did not know if they lived in one. "Right to Work" states are those that permit employees to be covered by a collective bargaining agreement without membership in a representing union or payment of any portion of union dues by nonmembers. Respondents reported current union membership at 39.0 percent—much higher than the 2016 national average of union coverage for both colleges and universities as an industry (15.7 percent) and librarians as a profession (21.3 percent).[37] Of the 206 respondents not currently in a labor union, 135 had no previous union experience.

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We found a strong correlation between faculty status, particularly tenure-track faculty status, and union membership, as shown in Table 4. Of the 135 respondents answering questions on faculty status who said they were in a union, 99 (73.3 percent) were tenure-track faculty, 12 (8.9 percent) were nontenure track, and 23 (17.0 percent) had no faculty status (one answered "don't know"). Among the 193 nonunion librarians, only 59 (30.6 percent) were tenure-track faculty, 50 (25.9 percent) were nontenure track, and 82 (42.5 percent) had no faculty status. Fully 61.5 percent of tenure-track faculty librarians are union members. Using the Qualtrics cross tabulation

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Table 1.

Characteristics of academic librarian survey respondents (n = 359)

Question and characteristic	Percentage (number)
Years as a librarian	
Less than 2 years	7.6% (27)
2–4 years	14.9% (53)
5–8 years	14.9% (53)
8–15 years	18.3% (65)
16–25 years	21.3% (76)
25+ years	23.0% (82)
Age	
20–29	9.3% (33)
30–39	25.6% (91)
40–49	21.3% (76)
50–59	19.9% (71)
60–69	20.8% (74)
70 and older	1.7% (6)
Gender	
Female	76.9% (257)
Male	22.5% (75)
Other response	0.6% (2)
Advanced degrees	
MLIS / MLS / MIS	98.3% (353)
PhD / DPhil	6.1% (22)
EdD	1.7% (6)
Others	12.6% (44)

Note: "Prefer not to answer" and blank responses were excluded from percentage calculations unless noted.

INSERT TABLE 2

Table 3.

Union environment (n = 354)

Question and characteristic	Percentage (number)
Do you live in a Right to Work state?	
Yes	31.1% (110)
No	42.4% (150)
Don't know	26.6% (94)
Are you in a union now?	
Yes	39.0% (138)
No	58.2% (206)
Don't know	2.8% (10)
Have you been in a different union before?	
Yes	39.3% (139)
No	60.7% (215)

Note: "Prefer not to answer" and blank responses were excluded from percentage calculations unless noted.

Table 4.
Union membership and faculty status

	At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?			
	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Do you have faculty status?				
No	23	82	4	109
Yes, tenure track	99	59	3	161
Yes, nontenure track	12	50	2	64
Don't know	1	2	0	3
Total	135	193	9	337

tool, the correlation between these two questions had a p value of < 0.001. p value is an estimate of the probability that the result has occurred by statistical accident; a low level of p indicates a high level of statistical significance.

Of the 138 respondents currently in a bargaining unit, only 9 were not full dues-paying members of their union. Results from our questions about reasons for choosing or not choosing full dues-paying union membership are given in Table 5. Of the 21 free-text "Other" responses on why to pay full dues, 13 reported that it was "mandatory" or that the savings were irrelevant. One respondent answered, for example, "No real choice; I figured I might as well supposedly get all the benefits by joining. Otherwise, they deduct money whether I want to be a part of it or not." Even in collective bargaining agreements with a union-security agreement, covered employees may choose not to be members and become "objectors" who pay dues that cover only maintenance of the contract.[38]

Respondents were asked about the degree of similarity between their workplace interests and the interests of two other groups—teaching faculty and nonprofessional library staff. The results of 333 responses are presented in Figure 1. Overall, librarians had remarkably similar responses for each group of campus colleagues. Union status had little effect on the results. Tenure-track faculty respondents had 15 of the 19 "exactly the same interests" answers regarding teaching faculty.

Figure 2 presents results to two questions on respondents' desire to change union affiliation. Of those not in unions, we asked, "Do you wish your position was part of a collective bargaining agreement?" and of union members we asked, "Do you wish your positions was NOT part of a collective bargaining agreement?" More than 50 percent of nonunion librarians reported at least sometimes wishing they were in a union, whereas less than 20 percent of union librarians at least sometimes wished they were not in a union.

Respondents were asked to rate possible advantages of union membership with the question "To what degree do you feel being in a labor union . . . " with various beneficial

Table 5.
Reasons for membership or nonmembership in a union

Why have you …	n
Chosen to be a full dues-paying member? (n = 127)	
I believe unions are generally a good idea.	95
The legal protections afforded by union membership.	85
I believe I should pay for the benefits of the collective bargaining process.	81
Unions bring higher pay/salaries.	79
I want to vote in contract ratification.	69
Solidarity with my other union colleagues.	68
Solidarity with my library colleagues.	62
I want to financially support the union's political activities.	45
I want to vote in union officer elections.	42
Other.	21
Chosen not to be a full dues-paying union member? (n = 9)	
I do not believe the union truly represents my interests.	4
I do not believe unions are appropriate for librarians.	3
Other.	3
I do not wish to pay dues.	2
I disagree with the political activities of my union.	2
I believe unions are generally not a good idea.	2
I am concerned that union membership might hurt my career.	2
I cannot afford to pay dues.	1
I do not believe unions help libraries.	1
Union membership violates my religious beliefs.	0

Note: N = 138, only asked of respondents currently covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

end statements. Figure 3 shows the results. Over 50 percent of respondents felt unions were either excellent or very good for the statements "provides members with 'good salary and benefits,'" "protects from administration," and "helps to provide job security." Statements that union membership clarifies job expectations, job description, and merit pay increases brought the least positive responses. Many respondents, at least 10 percent for each possible advantage of union membership, answered "Don't know/NA." This question was asked of all respondents regardless of past union experience, and those without any union experience accounted for 311 of 398 "Don't know/NA" responses.

Of 354 respondents, 38 manage librarians who are part of a collective bargaining agreement. These supervisors of union librarians tended to be older, have more experience, and work in larger public institutions. They were also more likely to have

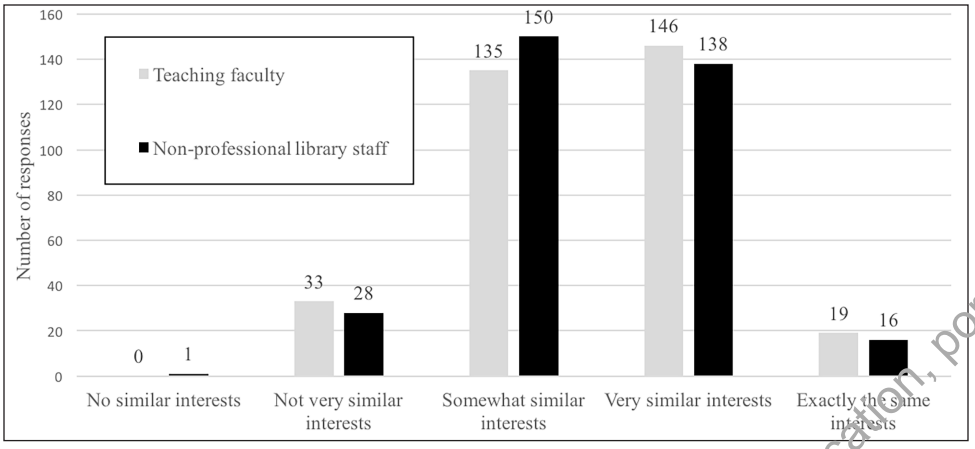

Figure 1. Responses to the question "To what degree do you feel that librarians and (teaching faculty OR nonprofessional library staff) have similar interests with regard to workplace matters (e.g., working conditions, salary, explicitness of job evaluation)?"

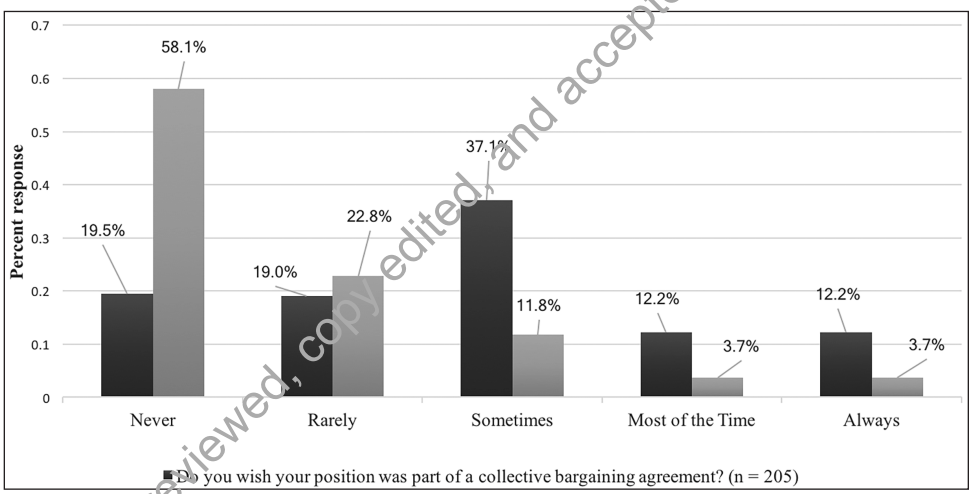

Figure 2. Responses to two questions about participants' desire to change their union affiliation. Those not in unions were asked, "Do you wish your position was part of a collective bargaining agreement?" Union members were asked "Do you wish your positions was NOT part of a collective bargaining agreement?"

a doctoral degree than other respondents. Of the 35 managers indicating their gender, 30 were female (85.7 percent). Using the Qualtrics cross tabulation tool, we looked for statistically significant differences between this cohort of managers and the total survey pool. The two strong statistically significant answers not explained by other managerial cohort characteristics were "To what degree do you feel being in a labor union clarifies requirements for promotion, tenure, retention, and permanent status for librarians?" and

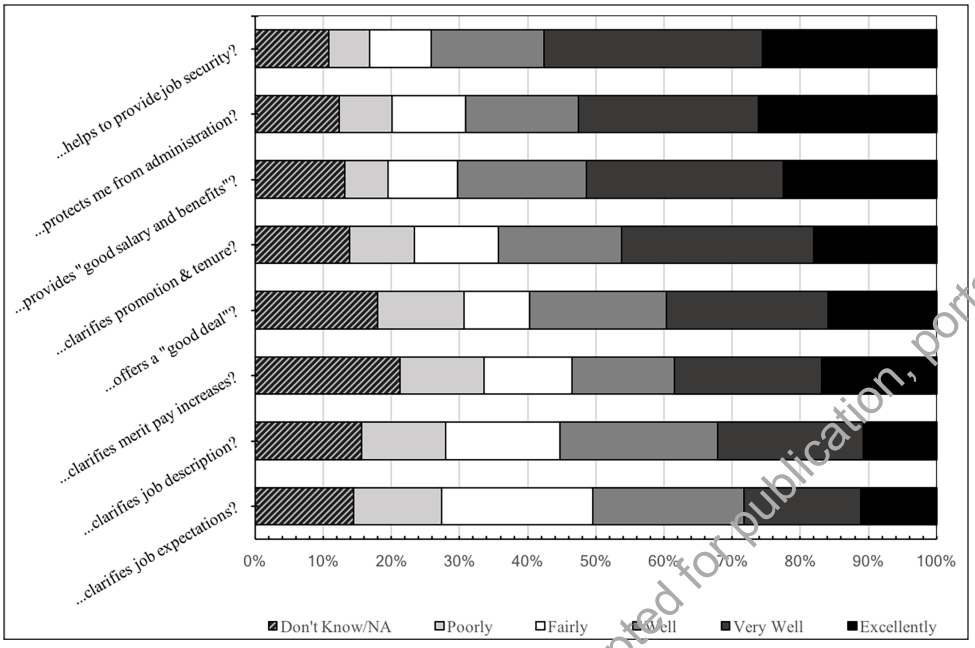

Figure 3. Participants' ratings of the possible advantages of union membership.

"To what degree do you feel that librarians and teaching faculty have similar interests with respect to workplace matters (e.g., working conditions, salary, explicitness of job evaluation)?" These results are summarized in Table 6. Managers of unionized librarians seemed to think that unions were less effective at clarifying requirements surrounding the tenure process than the overall responses would indicate. Also, managers of unionized librarians seemed to think librarians and teaching faculty had less similar workplace interests than the general survey results. Respondents from academic leadership (that is, managers, not bargaining unit members) revealed less regard for the activities and professional usefulness of unions than did faculty librarians as a whole.

Nontenure status may be worse than no faculty status in terms of salary. However, tenure-track librarians show a large and persistent premium in their salary.

Union member librarians had higher salaries, even when accounting for tenure status as shown in Table 7. Although there was a small sample size for certain categories (for example, nontenure-track union members), we still saw a significant salary benefit to union membership. The salary figures for nontenure-track library faculty are particularly startling because they show lower salaries than librarians with no faculty status. Nontenure status may be worse than no faculty status in terms of salary. However, tenure-track librarians show a large and persistent premium in their salary.

Table 6.

Selected attitudes of managers of unionized librarians

		Do you manage librarians who are part of a collective bargaining agreement? Percentage (number)				
		Yes (n = 35)	No (n = 298)	χ2	d	p
To what degree do you feel that librarians and teaching faculty have similar interests with respect to work place matters (e.g. working conditions, salary, explicitness of job evaluation)?	Not similar . . .	0% (0)	0% (0)			
	Not very similar . . .	22.9% (8)	8.4% (25)			
	Somewhat similar . . .	20% (7)	42.9% (128)			
	Very similar . . .	57.1% (20)	42.2% (126)			
	Exactly the same . . .	0% (0)	6.4% (19)			
		-	-	14.495	4	0.006
To what degree do you feel being in a labor union . . . clarifies requirements for promotion, tenure, retention, and permanent status for librarians?	Poorly	8.6% (3)	9.7% (29)			
	Fairly	17.1% (6)	11.7%			(35)
	Well	40% (14)	15.4%			(46)
	Very well	17.1% (6)	29.5% (88)			
	Excellently	14.3% (5)	18.5% (55)			
	Don't know/NA	2.8% (1)	15.1% (45)			
		-	-	16.678	5	0.005

Note: N = 333; χ2 is chi squared, a statistic employed to compare observed data with the results expected and to confirm association between two variables; *df* is degrees of freedom, the number of values in the study that are free to vary; and *p* is an estimate of the probability that the result has occurred by statistical accident. (A low level of *p* indicates a high level of statistical significance.)

Table 7.

Wages based on faculty and union status

Union status	Wages (number) Faculty status			
	Tenure track	Nontenure track	No faculty status	All statuses
Union	$71,944 (65)	$60,800 (10)	$66,682 (11)	$70,056 (87)
Nonunion	$65,385 (35)	$52,962 (29)	$54,596 (49)	$57,440 (115)
All statuses	$69,033 (103)	$54,307 (42)	$56,535 (63)	$62,256 (211)

Note: All managers and administrators removed from wage calculations. Wage calculations include those who answered "Don't know" to faculty status, union status, or in one case both.

Limitations

A general concern with the survey is that the authors tended to rely upon the respondent's understanding of various terms used in the questions, some of which may have caused confusion or may unintentionally have been less inclusive than they should have been. In particular, the wording of our gender question—"I define my gender as . . ."—is widely considered insensitive in the transgender community. This question was entirely by self-identification. Although some respondents added their sexual orientation (for example, straight) or gender role (for example, femme), the clear majority were female or male with two alternate responses ("penguin" and "nonbinary"). However, the reported results were close to other reported statistics, despite showing a slightly higher proportion of women in academic libraries, an outcome which could merely be due to random sampling variation. Not defining the concept of "Right to Work" state no doubt influenced the answers to this question, and 26.6 percent indicated "Don't know" when asked if their state belonged to this category. We cannot be sure whether these librarians knew the definition but did not know their state's status, or vice versa. This lack of knowledge could also indicate a general population lacking a clear understanding of what union membership entails.

Another question that did not deliver the information that was intended regards the specific unions that respondents had experienced. Because the question was worded "What union, or unions, have you been in?" it did not elicit firm information regarding which of the unions mentioned had librarians as members versus other union experiences. For example, 18 academic librarians named the Service Employees International Union (SEIU)—a union most associated with the service industry but currently making successful unionization efforts in higher education, especially for part-time faculty. However, looking only at the 73 current union members who had never been in a union, we found 12 belong to the National Education Alliance, 21 to the American Federation of Teachers, and 25 to the American Association of University Professors. Of the 24 "other" responses, 17 belonged to other faculty unions: the Association of Pennsylvania State

Colleges & University Faculties; California Faculty Association; New York State United Teachers; Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York; United Faculty of Florida; or United University Professions. Therefore, total faculty unionization measures 57.5 percent (42 of 73).

The wage data have a few different issues: we could not account for cost of living for respondents based on area of the country or level of urbanization, and we did not consider years of experience, degree status, or type of library work, recognizing that different specialties have different salary scales. Nevertheless, the bulk data, once managers and administers were removed, show a startling premium for unionization and tenure-track faculty status that deserved reporting. This finding also merits further and more thorough research. The wage data do, however, provide moderate confirmation of prior research results.

Respondents reported that union membership did not produce clarification regarding merit pay. The lack of clarification could be due to several factors. Many institutions may not offer it, it may not be included specifically in collective bargaining agreements, and different types of librarians may or may not qualify. The question itself also did not describe or define *merit pay*, so there may have been confusion or disagreement as to what was intended.

Discussion

Despite the irregularities of some questions, certain results bear investigation. The study by Garcha and Phillips addresses questions of the extent of involvement of librarians in unions; our study expands upon this research in several ways.[39] Significantly, we have over three times as many respondents, no doubt in part because of the ease of electronic dissemination and data collection. In addition, the previous research is 17 years old at the time of this publication. In addition, while both surveys approach the question of librarian involvement in unions, our questions are more specific and geared toward eliciting richer information about attitudes and perceptions. Our research does not contradict Garcha and Phillips's results but rather enhances them.

Membership in unions strongly implies a positive attitude toward unions, as one might expect. Less than 10 percent of those covered by a collective bargaining agreement indicate any desire to get out of it, and nearly 81 percent of current union members "never" or "rarely" wish to alter their choice. Some of the most strongly positive views of union membership come from people who have once been in unions but now are not, though the correlation was not statistically significant when measured. When one considers that people covered by collective bargaining agreements often pay directly for this privilege and are thus voting with their wallets, this is a remarkable statistic indeed. Lack of union membership produces a notable degree of desire to be

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in a union, with over three-quarters of these respondents indicating that they "always," "most of the time," or "sometimes" desire a change in union status.

This survey reveals clearly that librarians are not fully decided upon the similarity of their professional duties to faculty. Figure 1 shows that the professionals are nearly evenly divided between whether their "interests with respect to workplace matters" are more like those of nonprofessional staff or those of faculty. We librarians are, to our own minds, betwixt and between. Our results also indicate, however, that union membership is intimately connected to faculty status, especially tenure-track faculty status. Academic librarians will likely achieve the generally accepted benefits of collective bargaining, including higher wages, better benefits, and more security, through faculty unions as opposed to staff unions, even as they question where their "natural" workplace alignment should be. Aby has shown forcefully, however, that the work environment of library faculty is often not fully covered by collective bargaining agreements, noting issues with the 40-hour workweek, difficulties for librarians of receiving research time, and the delineation of distinct or departmentally appropriate retention, tenure, and promotion criteria.[40] These workplace issues appear to exist in the academy whether librarians have tenure or not and may be better addressed through contractual solutions.

Context

In the last decade, unions and tenure have come under political attack. Anti-union legislation and the abolition of tenure in Wisconsin are accomplished facts. Union membership has declined precipitously nationwide since its heyday and even more rapidly since the 1980s, even while membership has grown in higher education.[41] More recently, some traditional trade unions, such as SEIU and the United Steelworkers, have had successful unionization drives on campuses, especially among part-time faculty. It is here that academic librarianship offers a view of the future. Thus far, while there may be fewer academic librarians than other teaching faculty, our profession has generally resisted the part-time casualization of academic labor that is happening all over higher education.[42]

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Collective bargaining agreements are legally binding contracts, with a history of labor law behind them. Since procedures for grievance are described explicitly, they can provide librarians with more consistent and specific guidelines for receiving tenure and promotion than individual or no-contract work descriptions can. Tenure is not the whole story, and, outside of the presence of a collective bargaining agreement, it can be revoked or restricted as, for example, in the state universities of Wisconsin, Indiana, and Virginia,[43] and as proposed recently in both Iowa and Missouri.[44] In this regard, unionization and involvement in collective bargaining may in fact be a better way for academic librarians to address workplace issues than the achievement, and endless debating of, faculty status, despite that these matters have been intertwined over the years. Collective bargaining agreements are far more robust documents than individual

job descriptions. As we noted in Figure 3, the four most positive elements of unions to our respondents were the perceived salary premium, clarification and delineation of the tenure and promotion process, protection from administration, and a sense that unions provide job security. These matters are not always addressable by tenure and promotion alone; librarians themselves indicate that clarification of the tenure process is a significant advantage of unions. Collective bargaining agreements and union protections address these issues directly, generally with specific benchmarks and processes. As unions and tenure have both come under assault nationally, collective action has the power to protect individuals. The focus on questions about tenure that has generally dominated discussions of status for academic librarians is an unnecessarily restrictive lens through which to see matters associated with advantageous work environments.

As other scholars have noted, there is a call for academic librarians to become involved in union activity and collective bargaining, despite the difficulties of doing so.[45] Our research answers some of the questions raised by Spang and Kane's 1997 work, in which they conclude that unequal representation and clarity within their institutions leave the representation of librarian interests ultimately in the hands of administrators.[46] Recent political developments and changes in higher education indicate a need for protections and clarifications beyond the question of tenure. Unionism in our profession has grown in the background, even while it has diminished in other workplaces, and yet the tenure question has not significantly changed. Although both unions and tenure are under assault, we suggest that the power of a contract is stronger than the "gentleman's agreement" that tenure has shown itself to be.

In this regard, unionization and involvement in collective bargaining may in fact be a better way for academic librarians to address workplace issues than the achievement, and endless debating of, faculty status . . .

Conclusion

This research project represents an expansion in terms of survey respondent numbers and an updating of a valuable, but currently understudied, aspect of academic librarianship. Coverage by a collective bargaining agreement is strongly associated with faculty status. Few librarians without faculty status are currently covered by any kind of collective bargaining agreement, though there is no reason, a priori, that librarians could not join staff unions. Results generally confirm previous claims that collective bargaining coverage provides a salary premium, or at least is perceived to provide one. The attitudes gathered represent a strongly positive view among academic librarians toward the benefits of union membership; the group as a

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whole seems more likely to participate in unions and more likely to think positively about them than other Americans. As such, continued involvement in unions and collective bargaining has the power to enhance and expand the positive achievements of academic librarians in the United States. A significant portion of the librarians surveyed in this research reveal their inclinations to support collective bargaining. Perhaps we need to see progress that has been made for academic librarians as a part of the efforts of professional unions, and less as a result of the attainment of faculty status.

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Appendix

Survey Instrument

1. Which best describes your position?
   - Academic librarian (1)
   - Public librarian (2)
   - Special librarian (e.g., corporate, legal, solo) (3)
   - School librarian (grades K–12) (5)
   - Other (please explain) (4) _____
2. Please indicate your educational/professional degree(s) (you may choose more than one):
   - MLIS/MLS/MIS (master's-level library or information science degree) (1)
   - PhD/DPhil (2)
   - EdD (3)
   - Other(s) (enter all others below) (4) _____
3. What is your employment status? (full time is an average of 30 or more hours per week)
   - Full time (1)
   - Part-time (2)
   - Unemployed (3)
4. My principal area of work is: _____

Display this question: If "Which best describes your position?" = Academic librarian

5. Do you have faculty status?
   - No (1)
   - Yes, tenure track (2)
   - Yes, non-tenure track (3)
   - Don't know (4)

Display this question: If "Which best describes your position?" = Academic librarian

6. Which best describes your academic institution?
   - Private (1)
   - Public (2)

Display this question: If "Which best describes your position?" = Academic librarian

7. How many students are at your institution?
   - up to 499 (1)
   - 500–1,999 (2)
   - 2,000–4,999 (3)
   - 5,000–9,999 (4)
   - 10,000+ (5)
   - Don't know (6)

Display this question: If "Which best describes your position?" = Academic librarian

8. Highest degree offered?
   - Associate (1)
   - Bachelor (2)
   - Master (3)
   - Doctorate (4)

9. How long have you been (or were) a librarian?
   - Less than 2 years (1)
   - 2–4 years (2)
   - 5–8 years (3)
   - 8–15 years (4)
   - 16–25 years (5)
   - 25+ years (6)

10. Gender
    - I define my gender as . . . (1) _____
    - Prefer not to answer (2)

11. Age
    - 20–29 (1)
    - 30–39 (2)
    - 40–49 (3)
    - 50–59 (4)
    - 60–69 (5)
    - 70 and older (6)
    - Prefer not to answer (7)

12. Salary
    - My annual salary is . . . (please use numerals only) (1) _____
    - Prefer not to answer (2)

13. Do you live in a "Right to Work" state?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)
    - Don't know (3)

14. At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)
    - Don't know (3)

15. Do you manage librarians who are part of a collective bargaining agreement?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)

Display this question: If "Do you manage librarians who are part of a collective bargaining agreement"? = Yes, and "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" != Yes

16. Does your managerial position keep you out of the collective bargaining agreement?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)

17. Have you ever been covered by a different collective bargaining agreement (have you been in a different labor union)?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = Yes

18. Are you a full dues-paying union member?
    - I am a full dues-paying union member. (1)
    - I do not pay dues, or only pay the minimum dues required (but have not joined the union). (2)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = Yes, or "Have you ever been covered by a different collective bargaining agreement (have you been in a different labor union)?" = Yes

19. What union, or unions, have you been in?
    - NEA (National Education Association (1)
    - AFT (American Federation of Teachers) (2)
    - AAUP (American Association of University Professors) (3)
    - Other? Please list below. (4) _____
    - Don't know (5)

Display this question: If "Are you a full dues-paying union member?" = I am a full dues-paying union member.

20. Please choose the reason(s) which best describe why you have chosen to be a full dues-paying union member (you may choose more than one):
    - Solidarity with my library colleagues (1)
    - Solidarity with my other union colleagues (2)
    - I believe unions are generally a good idea (3)
    - The legal protections afforded by union membership (4)
    - I want to vote in union officer elections (5)
    - I want to vote in contract ratification (6)
    - I want to financially support the union's political activities (7)
    - I believe I should pay for the benefits of the collective bargaining process (8)
    - Unions bring higher pay / salaries (9)
    - Other (please explain): (10) _____

Display this question: If "Are you a full dues-paying union member?" = I do not pay dues, or only pay the minimum dues required (but have not joined the union).

21. Please choose the reason(s) which best describe why you have chosen not to be a full dues-paying union member (you may choose more than one):
    - I do not believe unions are appropriate for librarians (1)
    - I do not wish to pay dues (2)
    - I cannot afford to pay dues (3)
    - I do not believe unions help libraries (4)
    - I do not believe the union truly represent my interests (5)
    - I disagree with the political activities of my union (6)
    - I believe unions are generally not a good idea (7)
    - Union membership violates my religious beliefs (8)
    - I am concerned that union membership might hurt my career (9)
    - Other (please explain): (10) _____

Display this question: If "Have you ever been covered by a different collective bargaining agreement (have you been in a different labor union)?" = Yes

22. Have you ever been a full dues-paying member of any other union?
    - Yes (1)
    - No (2)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = Yes

23. Do you wish your position was **NOT** part of a collective bargaining agreement?
    - Never (1)
    - Rarely (2)
    - Sometimes (3)
    - Most of the time (4)
    - Always (5)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = No

24. Do you wish your position was part of a collective bargaining agreement?
    - Never (1)
    - Rarely (2)
    - Sometimes (3)
    - Most of the time (4)
    - Always (5)

Display this question: If "Which best describes your position?" = Academic librarian, and "Which best describes your position?" ! = Other (please explain), and "Which best describes your position?" ! = Special librarian (e.g., corporate, legal, solo), and "Which best describes your position?" ! = Public librarian

25. To what degree do you feel that librarians and teaching faculty have similar interests with respect to workplace matters (e.g., working conditions, salary, explicitness of job evaluation)?
    - No similar interests (1)
    - Not very similar interests (2)
    - Somewhat similar interests (3)
    - Very similar interests (4)
    - Exactly the same interests (5)

26. To what degree do you feel that librarians and nonprofessional library staff have similar interests with respect to workplace matters (e.g., working conditions, salary, explicitness of job evaluation)?
    - No similar interests (1)
    - Not very similar interests (2)
    - Somewhat similar interests (3)
    - Very similar interests (4)
    - Exactly the same interests (5)

27. To what degree do you feel being in a labor union . . . (rated on the following scale) Poorly (1) Fairly (2) Well (3) Very well (4) Excellently (5) Don't know / NA (6)
    . . . clarifies job expectations? (1)
    . . . clarifies requirements for promotion, tenure, retention, and permanent status for librarians? (2)
    . . . clarifies merit pay increases for librarians? (3)
    . . . offers librarians a "good deal"? (4)
    . . . provides members with "good salary and benefits"? (5)
    . . . helps protect me from capricious/unfair treatment from administration? (6)
    . . . clarifies requirements for a job description? (8)
    . . . helps to provide job security (8)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = Yes

28. To what degree have you felt pressure from anyone in your current workplace to join the union?
    - No pressure at all (1)
    - A little bit of pressure (2)
    - Moderate pressure (3)
    - Strong pressure (4)
    - Overbearing pressure (5)

Display this question: If "At your institution, is your position in a labor union (or covered by a collective bargaining agreement)?" = Yes

29. To what degree have you felt pressure from anyone in your current workplace **NOT** to join the union?
    - No pressure at all (1)
    - A little bit of pressure (2)
    - Moderate pressure (3)
    - Strong pressure (4)
    - Overbearing pressure (5)

30. Have you ever investigated unionizing your current or any previous workplace?
    - Yes, and took action (e.g., contacted a union, signed authorization card) (1)
    - Yes, but only thought about it (2)
    - No (3)
    - Don't know or not applicable (4)

31. Have you ever investigated decertifying a union at your current or any previous workplace?
    - Yes, and took action (e.g., contacted NLRB, signed decertification card) (1)
    - Yes, but only thought about it (2)
    - No (3)
    - Don't know or not applicable (4)

32. Is there anything else you would like to say about libraries and labor unions?

(Optional) If you would be willing to be interviewed regarding your experiences with professional unions please indicate your contact information here:
Name (1) _____
E-mail address (2) _____

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