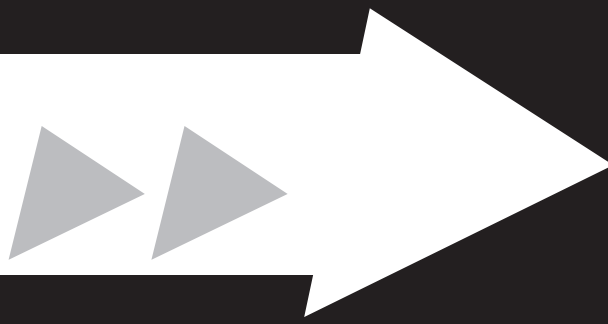


Low Pay?

Take

ACTION



What Are the Issues?

We librarians have a well-deserved reputation for being outspoken when it comes to intellectual freedom and other issues that affect library users. We have not been nearly as vocal on our own behalf. Statistics show that our profession, along with others that are predominantly female, are underpaid relative to the education required and the complexity of the service we provide.

For example, median salary data for 2000 from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov/oco/ocos) shows:

Librarians	\$41,700
Library technicians	\$23,170
Accountants and auditors	\$43,500
Architects	\$52,510
Civil engineers	\$55,740
Computer systems analysts	\$59,330
Computer and information systems managers.....	\$78,830
Paralegals	\$35,360
Postal service clerks	\$39,010

Our challenge is clear:

- ▶ We must overcome the stereotype of the librarian as the selfless, dedicated, and devoted worker, who is in the profession to do good and who will accept any pittance of pay.
- ▶ We must promote a better understanding of what the librarian does. No one will want to pay us more money if they have no idea what education, experience, judgment, and special skills it takes for us to do our jobs.

- ▶ We must contribute substantively to the fight for pay equity—it is our fight, too. Women have been discriminated against in a variety of ways, a primary one being compensation.

Campaign for America's Librarians

During the ALA presidency of Mitch Freedman, the ALA Better Salaries and Pay Equity for Library Workers Task Force:

- ▶ Developed the "Advocating for Better Salaries and Pay Equity Toolkit" (www.ala-apa.org/toolkit.pdf)
- ▶ Held training sessions and other programs at ALA conferences
- ▶ Organized the MoneyTalks discussion listserv
- ▶ Contributed to a task force Web site at www.mjfreedman.org
- ▶ Published "Putting Pay First" by Michele Leber in April 1, 2003 *Library Journal*
- ▶ Encouraged salary-related activities by ALA chapters and participation by members in public awareness activities during Equal Pay Day
- ▶ Coordinated working groups on advocacy training, unions, outreach and partnerships, resources/research, toolkit, support staff, programs, publicity, publications and grants

President Freedman and other members of the task force spoke to many state library associations and provided training to various groups to encourage local and state action on salary issues. Freedman also reached the general public through media appearances and written articles. The Task Force work will be continued through a new American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) Salaries and Status of Library Workers Committee. Check for future activities on www.ala-apa.org.

"Everyone loves libraries. Unfortunately, library workers CANNOT LIVE ON LOVE ALONE."

—Maurice (Mitch) J. Freedman, ALA president, 2002–2003

► Your Action Checklist

To get started:

- ▷ Learn more about the job classification system and salary setting process in your library.
- ▷ Check your job description to determine if it is accurate and up-to-date.
- ▷ Find out who the key officials and administrators are who make decisions on library worker salaries.
- ▷ Think more about how to articulate what you do and how this contributes to providing quality services.
- ▷ Explore with co-workers and library administration possible strategies for improving status and salaries.
- ▷ Volunteer for any reclassification or job evaluation committee.
- ▷ Review salary statistics that are relevant to your type of library and job and document inequities.
- ▷ Look for possible pay equity coalitions within the community and state.
- ▷ Become active in or help initiate state library association efforts to improve status and salaries.
- ▷ Check current and pending state legislation on fair pay/pay equity to determine how library workers fit.
- ▷ Contact your Congressional representative and senators for support of federal pay equity legislation.
- ▷ Get involved with ALA advocacy campaigns.
- ▷ Make certain support staff are included in pay equity efforts.

The ALA/APA is committed to advocating for better pay for librarians and other library workers. Its nationwide campaign can set the tone, provide tools and open doors for you, but ultimately, pay equity must be addressed at the institution or community level.

Action Steps

Strategies can be found in the “Advocating for Better Salaries and Pay Equity Toolkit,” 3rd edition (ALA-Allied Professional Association, June 2003); www.ala-apa.org/toolkit.pdf. The toolkit has information and resources for use by anyone—library staff, trustees, administrators, unions, state library associations—to help raise the salaries of librarians and support staff. The kit will help you get started, speak out, build your case, and work with other groups. It also provides examples of successful efforts, discusses related issues, and lists many other resources and contacts for additional information.

10 Reasons to Ask for Better Pay When Times Are Bad

1. Library use goes up when the economy goes down.
2. Library workers save users time and money.

3. Library workers are the ultimate search engines.
4. Libraries serve everyone, and library users deserve the best.
5. Libraries that give their users essential services can give their employees decent wages.
6. Better salaries = better staff = better service.
7. Everyone loves libraries, but library workers can't live on love alone.
8. A bad economy is no excuse for inequitable and inadequate salaries.
9. We can't profess to value libraries without valuing library workers.
10. Make the case for better salaries now to have momentum when times improve.

Source: Leber, Michele. “Putting Pay First,” *Library Journal* 128, no. 6 (Apr. 1, 2003): 46. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of *Library Journal*.

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“The most important asset of any library goes home at night—the library staff.”

—Father Timothy Healy, former president, New York Public Library