

**“THERE’S NO WAY THEY’LL WANT TO PAY US BETTER—RAISING PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF LIBRARIES AND THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THEM, AND OTHER ALA ISSUES AFFECTING EVERYONE”**

***Maurice J. Freedman***

**Dr. Maurice J. Freedman**

Dr. Maurice J. (Mitch) Freedman is president of the 61,000-member American Library Association (ALA) and director of the Westchester County (NY) Library System. He has been the publisher and editor-in-chief of a periodical on practical library matters entitled *The U\*N\*A\*B\*A\*S\*H\*E\*D Librarian*<sup>TM</sup> and has been a consultant to libraries in North American, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

He has served as Adjunct Associate Professor, Pratt Institute, SLIS; Associate Professor, School of Library Service, Columbia University; Director of Technical Services at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota; and Coordinator of Technical Services of the Branch Libraries, New York Public Library.

Dr. Freedman has published primarily on technology, management, and technical services issues: *Connection Development: Web Lessons from Westchester...* in *Library Journal* (9/1/99); an invited paper, *Processing for the People*, in the Centenary Issue (1/1/76) of *Library Journal*; and three separate years, selected for the *Best of Library Literature*. He has edited *The Nature and Future of the Catalog*, and *Five Circulation System Case Studies*. He has served on the editorial board of *Public Library Quarterly* and *Advanced Technology—Libraries*.

Among his many awards are the **Medallion Award for Community Service** “For significant contributions to the quality of life in the Community,” presented by the Westchester Community College Foundation; the **Myron S. Isaacs Community Service Award** “For having displayed a consistent and outstanding courage and integrity in defense of the First Amendment,” presented by the Westchester Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union; Library and Technology Association of the American Library Association **Award for Achievement in Library and Information Technology**; Library of Congress, Outstanding Library School Graduate, Special Recruit Internship.

Dr. Freedman is particularly interested in issues of intellectual freedom, free access to information, diversity, and improved salaries for librarians and library workers. He holds a Ph. D. in Library and Information Studies from Rutgers University and an MLS from the University of California, Berkeley.

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Thanks for the lovely introduction—

Good evening!

I am delighted to be giving my first speech as the new president of the American Library Association, and I'm especially delighted to be speaking to the members of the Association of Jewish Librarians.

Together, I believe we can do great things for our profession.

I would not be here if a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away—

Berkeley, California—

after three uneven years as a graduate student in philosophy, I recognized three things about my life:

- I loved to read.
- I loved to be with people.
- And, I certainly didn't want to be a graduate student in philosophy any more.

That's when I realized—ta da!—I should become a librarian!

Incidentally I found out from relatives, my Mother, *oleha ha sholem*, actually had hopes of my being a rabbi. My spending a life devoted to libraries, the citadels of wisdom and learning—I hope—may have given her *n'shoma* some degree of satisfaction.

Thirty-eight years later—I'm surer than ever that I made the right decision.

Librarianship has given me a good life.

I've met interesting people, made wonderful friends, and, traveled more than I ever imagined possible—by the end of this year, all of the continents except Australia, and 17 countries. So far I have resisted invitations to Australia and Micronesia.

This profession has taught me a great deal—and I think that as a librarian I did some good along the way.

I ran for President of ALA—as a petition candidate who probably would never have been nominated officially—with a promise that as President I would try to do something about the pay of people who worked in libraries.

Based on numerous e-mails and comments I received, this promise contributed significantly to my election.

During my year as President-elect, I worked hard—along with many others—to plan a major new initiative—the ***Campaign for America's Librarians***, which we kicked off at the ALA Annual Conference last week.

This campaign is an intensive effort that will advocate better salaries and pay equity for *all* library workers in *all* types of libraries—school, university and special as well as public.

This does not mean we will ignore many other pressing issues:

- CIPA,
- John Ashcroft's civil liberty incursions,
- promoting recruitment and diversity,
- fighting UCITA, and
- the *copywrong* legacy of the late Congressman Sonny Bono, and several others.

It does mean that *now*—consistently and emphatically—that we at the American Library Association will seek to remind the public and decision-makers about the enduring role of librarians and libraries and their continuing need for support.

I am here tonight to enlist your support.

The *Campaign for America's Librarians* will emphasize what we already know:

*Libraries* don't just happen.

America's libraries are run by highly educated librarians and skilled library workers—unsung heroines and heroes who far too frequently are underpaid and under-recognized.

It is time—in fact, way past time—that we stand up and proclaim:

*Libraries are valuable and vital institutions, crucial to the existence of our democracy. And the librarians and library workers who sustain these libraries are on the front lines in defense of our democracy.*

*They give libraries their vitality and value and should damned well receive pay commensurate with their education, experience, and skills.*

We know that everyone loves libraries—and we have often said that libraries can't live on love alone.

Librarians are worthy of love, too, as well as respect, AND just and fair compensation, as well.

We also know from survey after survey that professions whose members are predominantly men consistently pay more.

And so long as the pay equity issue—or should I say, *inequity*—continues to prevail, *our* advocacy must continue.

The U.S. Census Bureau tells us that men with advanced degrees earn almost 50 percent more than women with advanced degrees.

Women have a median pay of \$47,000, while the median pay for men with a master's degree is \$65,000.

In the U.S. and everywhere else, librarians know too well that they are not paid fairly because they work in a profession that is comprised primarily of women.

I am here tonight to tell you that once and for all, we must take a stand.

Personally and collectively, we must say—

***“No more!”***

Our goal is to extend and build on ALA's very successful *Campaign for America's Libraries* to

position libraries *and* librarians as vital to civil society and worthy of greater support, higher salaries, and pay equity.

All too many in our profession have been afraid to speak out on these issues—afraid of appearing “self-serving.”

The *Campaign for America's Librarians* is based on the premise that it *is* OK to speak out.

It is *not* OK to allow inequities to go unchallenged.

And we are not just talking about salaries—

- What about paid health insurance?
- Paid vacation and sick leave?
- Maternity leave for both the mother and the father?
- Financial support for continuing education, including attendance at conferences?

This Presidential initiative, along with ALA's newly established Allied Professional Association (the *APA*), is providing both leadership and substantial support for this effort.

I have appointed and funded a presidential Task Force on Better Salaries and Pay Equity.

Its mission: To empower library staff to better promote their worth by providing the tools, the training, and encouragement to help us work individually and collectively to improve their pay.

The pay equity issue has finally hit critical mass.

The California Library Association has launched a three-year initiative to collect data about library compensation and to train members in how to work for fair compensation.

The New Jersey Library Association has compiled a salary survey that should serve as a model for state associations around the country.

Initiatives are also underway in Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and other nations.

AJL led the way back in 1997 when it conducted a salary survey of its membership. Like their counterparts in other organizations, the survey found . . .

- AJL librarians are an aging breed . . . more than half are 60 or older. Almost all of them have been in the profession 15 years or more.
- They are highly educated. More than 80 percent hold some type of degree in Library or Information Science, with about half those holding a master's degree or higher.
- They are predominantly women.

- They are woefully undercompensated!

Most—60 percent—are part-time or volunteer employees.

Of those who work full-time, about a third reported earning less than \$40,000 a year—18 percent earn between \$50 and 60,000—and less than 10 percent earn more than \$60,000.

Less than half receive *any* kind of benefit other than salary—*no* dental, *no* life insurance. . .*no* disability!

Efforts like this to document and advocate our case are crucial.

I would encourage you to update your research *and* put it to good use—both for today's librarians and tomorrow's.

Also, please let us add these studies to the valuable *resources* page on my task force's website—along with all of the other studies and documentation concerning this issue.

In the next 12 years, nearly half of the 125,000 fully qualified librarians in the nation are expected to retire—whether they'll be able to afford it or not.

The growing shortage of librarians adds yet another incentive and urgency to our efforts—“survival of the species.”

Be assured this campaign is not some “roll-your-eyes”, “it's-the-right-thing-but-can-never-happen” scheme.

We are talking about fairness—NOW!

A columnist in a major daily newspaper recently applauded a New Hampshire librarian for loving her work so much that even after she retired, she came to work everyday to do her old job as a volunteer. Why? She did it to save enough money for her small town library to buy new books.

While I commend the dedication of this librarian, I cannot condone her sacrifice.

As working librarians, we can no longer afford to give complicit approval of the implicit statement: “Your lack of money is a valid reason to discriminate against me.” We *have* to stop the practice of routinely donating our work to our employers by accepting truncated paychecks. In that respect, we're just more subtle variations on the theme of that librarian from New Hampshire.

This especially seemed to be the case with even the paid librarians in the *AJL*—not to mention the others.

We must also, here and now, dispel the myth prevalent in the world, and perpetuated in many of our lives—that we chose librarianship *INSTEAD* of choosing to be fairly compensated.

My friends, we chose librarianship *AND* we want equitable compensation!

The stereotype of the poor but proud librarian is one that—individually and as a group—we need to dismantle and send to the Smithsonian.

Like most of you—I love being in a profession that I don't value just for the size of its paycheck.

But that does not mean that libraries should be forced to choose between paying seasoned and knowledgeable professionals the salaries they deserve ... *and* adding to their collections, hours, and online capacity.

Let me tell you about one true but extreme case of the latter ...

Last October, I gave a speech at the West Virginia Library Association Conference.

Nancy Moore, the head of the Parsons Public Library picked me up at the tiny Elkins airport.

On the way to the conference, Nancy told me her story.

Although a small library in a small town, the library tried diligently to meet the needs of the small community it served.

She proudly told me of the addition of two Internet access terminals.

But Nancy and her husband were trying to figure out how to pay the college tuition for their son.

She had two choices.

*One*: continue as the director of the Parsons Public Library.

Or, *Two*: take an entry-level job at Wal-Mart.

Why in the world would Nancy leave the library for Wal-Mart?

The store offered better pay and better benefits.

The library offered less pay and no benefits.

Even if this case is extreme, let's look at this in context.

ALA's own survey of librarians' salaries tells a sad story.

The average starting salaries for librarians with an MLS is a slim \$34,000.

Compare that with starting salaries for systems analysts or database administrators who also have master's degrees.

They command almost double!

This is a struggle we CAN win—but it will take resources and perseverance.

The *Campaign for America's Librarians* will take on new myths as well as old.

We have all heard the question:

Why should we pay more for librarians anyway?

Hasn't the Internet made libraries and librarians obsolete?

My answer:

*Absolutely not!*

*In fact, if we didn't already have libraries, we'd have to invent them.*

*Libraries are 21st century centers for information, education, literacy, and culture. And librarians are teachers, helping others to explore their riches.*

We save time and money (*not to mention aggravation*) by helping our users find the best, most accurate and complete information for their needs, whether in print, online, video or any other format.

I would interject that Judaica libraries should have less of a problem because of our tradition and history of love of learning, the value of education, and our identification with social concerns. Admittedly as the first immigrants who brought these values to America have all but disappeared—Lubetzky is 104—we find the succeeding generations have attenuated such social commitments and values. What else is new?

As the ALA president, I am committed to speaking out at every opportunity that I can.

But ultimately, pay equity must be pursued at the institution or community level.

And yes, that means that *we—all of us here tonight and the many who aren't*—must personally pursue this issue—in our state chapters, in our libraries, our towns, our schools, our corporations, and on our campuses, and in our synagogues.

There is no one proven strategy, but the ALA/APA's nationwide campaign will provide critical support for these efforts.

- The Campaign will set the tone.
- The Campaign will provide the tools and the training.
- The Campaign will help us open doors.
- The Campaign will demonstrate that librarians speak with one voice on this issue.

We will remind those who control the purse strings that. . .

Libraries work because library workers make them work. . .

You can't have good education without good libraries ...

And you can't have good libraries without good staff!!!

Today's librarian is the ultimate search engine, a well-trained, technology-savvy, information expert.

*Why then do computer/information scientists, who are mostly men, earn almost twice as much as librarians who have comparable education and responsibility???*

It's up to us to provide answers and seek solutions.

*What can you do?*

A hell of a lot!

- We need your elbow grease,
- Your creativity, and
- Your willingness to work.

Here are just 5 ways you can help:

1. Get the training you need to make the case. The Task Force on Better Salaries and Pay Equity has developed a toolkit, and trained almost 50 presenters from around the country to give local advocacy workshops on salary issues.

Invite one of our trainers to present a workshop at your next conference or meeting!

2. Communicate with us. Tell us about your local efforts to collect data and improve salaries, your successes and “lessons learned” so we can share them with others. Taking just a few minutes to share will make us all stronger.

3. Send us your “*librarian*” stories. We also need stories to help illustrate how we librarians can—and do—change people’s lives with our services. Please send them to my website,

My website is [www.mjfreedman.org](http://www.mjfreedman.org).<sup>1</sup>

Also send your requests for training, or speakers. –You already did, in my case. But bring me or others to your regional, state, or local meetings and conferences. We trained 55 people in Atlanta to do this training around the country, and we will train more in the next several conferences, extending beyond my presidency because Carla Hayden, the President-Elect of ALA is committed to continuing the Campaign for America’s Librarians.

4. *Use* the Campaign toolkit.

Adapt it for your local needs. It's full of facts, strategies, and ideas. We are also developing public awareness and *@your library* materials that focus on the people who work in libraries.

You can download the *Advocating for Better Salaries and Pay Equity Toolkit* at [www.ala.org/advocacy](http://www.ala.org/advocacy).

5. Most important of all, I ask each of you to join me in being an outspoken and passionate advocate for libraries and library workers—wherever and whenever you can.

Whether you're at a wedding, bar- or bat-mitzvah, party, or giving a formal speech, work in the message.

Tell the *librarian* story—who we are and what we do.

*Together*, we must demonstrate to our users and funders that our work has worth.

Unless they respect and understand the value of what we do, their ears will be deaf to our salary demands.

Our situation will not change unless we do.

Librarians SHOULD and MUST be paid 21st century salaries if Americans are to enjoy 21st century library and information services.

It won't be easy, but I am confident that by working together and using our collective power ...

We WILL succeed!!!

Thank you.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The web address for the task force website, which contains a wide variety of resources on salaries and pay equity, the "Better Salaries & Pay Equity Toolkit," and other valuable information concerning compensation for people who work in libraries is found at <http://www.mjfreedman.org/tfhome.html>.

<sup>2</sup> For further information, contact: Maurice J. (Mitch) Freedman, MLS, PhD, President of the American Library Association, Director, Westchester (NY) Library System, 410 Saw Mill River Road – Suite 1000, Ardsley, NY 10502-2605, Voice: 914-231-3223; Fax: 914-674-4193; Email: [freedman@wlsmail.org](mailto:freedman@wlsmail.org)