

Progressive Library Organizations Update

2018-2023

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ABSTRACT: This is the second update article for my book, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015). The first update article was for 2013-2017 and was published in this journal in volume 4 (2018). This second update includes all the organizations, or their successor organizations covered in the book except for Library and Information Workers Organization of South Africa (LIWO) which folded in 2000. The organizations covered are: Bibliotek i Samhälle (BiS) of Sweden (functioning at reduced capacity), AK Kritische Bibliothek (Kribiblio) of Germany (disbanded in 2022), Verein kritischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare (KRIBIBI) of Austria (disbanded in 2022), Information for Social Change of the United Kingdom (in hiatus), Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (SRRT) of the United States (functioning as usual), and Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) of the United States (in hiatus). This description and analysis is based on research done in 2024, and includes new interviews in Sweden, documents from websites, email correspondence, and much personal experience. I used Google Translate for documents in Swedish and German.

Keywords: library history, progressive librarianship



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Introduction

In the preface of my book, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History*,¹ I wrote that I hoped to update the book every few years. Although the book was published in 2015, the information was up-to-date only to 2012 and part of 2013 in some cases. The first update, for 2013-2017 was published in the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, vol. 4 (2018), pages 20-52, which is freely accessible online. This is the second update covering 2018 to 2023 and part of 2024.

Research for this article was undertaken in 2024, and in-person interviews were done with key people in June of that year in Sweden. I have again used Google Translate extensively to read documents in Swedish and German. I have also had some productive email exchanges with activists over the years. I did not do interviews in the US, UK, Germany or Austria. US interviews were unnecessary because I am still heavily involved in the two US organizations, and the Progressive Librarians Guild is on hiatus. Interviews in the UK were unnecessary because Information for Social Change has evolved into only a journal and website and the journal has not been published since 2021. Unfortunately, both the organizations in Germany and Austria have fallen apart. And as noted in my previous update, the South African organization stopped its activities in 1998 and was officially disbanded in 2000.

Sweden, Bibliotek i Samhälle (BiS) [Libraries in Society]

Bibliotek i Samhälle (BiS) is an independent explicitly socialist and democratic anti-racist library organization founded in 1969 during a period of great social change. It publishes a journal, also titled *bis*. Its activities are governed by an eight-member board (with one alternate), and the journal is published by a six- to eight-member editorial group. There are also two auditors. There are contact persons throughout the country, in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Umeå. There was also a contact person in Söderhamn in 2018. Men and women have been about equally represented.

BiS activity has significantly slowed down from previous years. For this update, I interviewed five very active public librarians (Richard Andersson, Madelene Wallinder, Paula Bueno from Stockholm and Emma Karlsson and Johan Björk from southern Sweden in Malmö), one still very active retired public librarian in Stockholm (Lena Lundgren) and one no longer active retired school librarian from Karlstad in western central Sweden (Lennart Wettmark).² Richard, Madelene, and Paula are not BiS members. Lena Lundgren and Johan Björk are on the current board and editorial group. Lena has been an active member of the organization since the beginning of the organization in 1969, and she has been on the board for a long time. Lennart Wettmark was a long-time activist and board member from 1972 until his retirement in 2011, and he was the editor of the BiS journal during that time. Emma Karlsson was on the board and in the editorial group from 2022 to June 2024 and was a principal editor of the journal during that time.

Compared to past years, there are fewer activists who are motivated to put their energies into producing the journal (also titled *bis*), organizing seminars and demonstrations, and recruiting new members. Producing the printed version of the journal has taken up a lot of time, and the hope is that now that they have stopped printing and gone to online only, there will be more time

and energy for other activities. Besides loss of energy, the politically motivated loss of funding from the Swedish Arts Council made further printing impossible. Sweden's government has dramatically shifted to the right in recent years, as further discussed below. They plan on continuous publication of relevant and current articles instead of a journal format. But there is great concern that BiS will not be as visible as before, and that fewer people may read the articles. And will members be ready to pay their dues if they don't get a tangible product? On the other hand, some think that this presents a new opportunity to reach out to younger librarians who are more comfortable in reading online, and to perhaps enhance their website, newsletter, and blog.

Although BiS has had some success in influencing the Swedish Library Association (Svensk Biblioteksförening – SB) and therefore the national government in the past, it has not been successful in recent years. It is “almost impossible” to influence the SB's annual plan because the level of member engagement is so low. With a membership of 3000, only about 30 SB members attended their last annual meeting. Lena Lundgren is one of two elected auditors, and therefore has a direct voice with the SB board and a cordial relationship with the powerful general secretary. They must listen to the auditors, but they don't have to act on any recommendations. In effect, Lena is the voice of BiS. She said “I'm BiS” in that context.

Probably the biggest issue now before their library community is the proposed disclosure law that would mandate all public employees to report undocumented people to the authorities. BiS published a statement against this law. There is a group of librarians in Stockholm organizing against this legislation who are distributing buttons which read “Biblioteket Anger Inte,” which translates to Librarians Don't Snitch. (The three Stockholm public librarians noted above are members of this group.) Although the group has been interviewed in the BiS journal, they are not BiS members. However, the BiS Umeå group (northeast Sweden) participated in a demonstration against the proposed law and did a presentation at Umeå University. In the third issue for 2019, the BiS journal's theme was “Racism & Decolonization,” which stressed overcoming cultural colonization within Sweden's libraries. Since I interviewed members of the Librarians Don't Snitch group together with BiS members, it seemed that the meeting formed a closer connection, which might possibly lead to a BiS revitalization and further enhance the movement.

The library union, teachers, health care workers, and others have formed a coalition to work against the proposed disclosure law. This legislation is one aspect of the consequences of the rise of the right in Sweden, particularly the rise of the Sweden Democrats (SD) political party, which is now the second largest party in the Riksdag (parliament), and a partner in the center-right coalition government. The SD was isolated in the Riksdag until the late 2010s but was legitimized after a reform process which included expelling the most radical extremists including neo-Nazis. The SD ran as part of a coalition in the 2022 elections, receiving 20.6% of the votes.

The last printed issue (2024, no. 1-2) of their journal, *bis*, was published during the time of my visit in early June this year, and there was a small party to celebrate but mourn the passing of the journal in-print. There are several articles there that lament the rise of the right, and how it has totally transformed Swedish society. Kristian Schultz enumerates the following neo-liberal policies: abolition of the welfare, inheritance, wealth, and property taxes, and reduction of the

capital gains tax. He states that the employment tax deductions along with the increased value of housing has worsened the distribution of wealth. This results in more racialization, social exclusion, poverty and criminality. And this fuels the culture war, including dehumanization of Muslims and locking up asylum seekers.³

There are several more articles in this last issue that address the rise of the right and the need to counter it. Longtime BiS stalwart, Ingrid Atlestam, writes that “Everything seems to be back to where we started in the early seventies,” and “...most are silent.” “Everything must be counted, measured and weighed. But education, democracy, imagination, solidarity, equality and empathy cannot be measured. Dialogue has been replaced by one-way communication, rules and decrees from above.” And “Now the zeitgeist is different, competition, individualism, neoliberalism and doomsday prophecies have taken over at an increasingly rapid pace.”⁴

The genocide in Gaza did come up in my conversations. There were on-going protests throughout the country when I was there, and I was able to visit an encampment in the center of Stockholm,⁵ and even participate in one of the marches with one of the librarians. Malmö had one of its biggest demonstrations in history recently (20,000 people) around the demand to boycott the Israeli entry at the Eurovision song competition taking place there. BiS supports the protests but has not initiated any actions as an organization, except publishing in the journal. Fifty librarians signed an open letter on Gaza, but this was not a BiS project. Police have detained people and have been quite rough in some places. One of the librarians talked about the hypocrisy of his library administration, how they support programs on Ukraine, but Palestine programs are very controversial. That library has sponsored poetry for Palestine, and a program featuring Together Sweden, an organization of young Muslims and Jews.

In both Malmö and Stockholm, people talked about how with the rise of the Sweden Democrats (SD), library administrations are now concerned that librarians are too activist. This is politicalization of things that were not controversial ten years ago. For example, drag queen story hours and the collecting of LGBTQ materials or books in other languages are denounced by the Sweden Democrats. Some librarians have even been threatened by neo-Nazis, and some programs have been cancelled. The SD are trying to influence book selection, and they have succeeded in one small town, Sølvesborg, the hometown of the SD party leader. Their librarian had to resign, and then the next one was bought out. BiS did an interview with the director who was forced to resign.

Although the SD are trying to change it, the law is still on the librarians’ side regarding removing books. Library administrators have authority over book selection, and they can and often do ignore requests to remove books. There is a special library for banned books in Malmö, and a banned books and banned cultures week. Of course, there may be self-censorship, but resistance to this interference is broad-based.

BiS member Sebastian Lönnlöf could not attend my interview, but later sent a message about his Queerlit database which contains a large variety of fiction, autobiographies, letters, and diaries. The project is based at Gothenburg University with support from Kvinnsam (National Library for Gender Research), the National Library of Sweden, and Södertörn University, and is integrated in the national library catalogue, LIBRIS.⁶

The creation and implementation of a new National Library Strategy has been of great interest to BiS for some years. BiS was asked to review the draft and has held meetings to put together statements in August 2016 and September 2018, and has issued statements in 2017, 2018, and 2019 forwarded to the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga biblioteket) and the Ministry of Culture. The statements are too long and involved to be discussed in detail here, but interviewees said that the final 2022 strategy has been a great disappointment. They said that it doesn't mean anything, and that the new Minister of Culture is not interested in culture! For the record, the three focus areas of the policy are: "A library sector that is accessible and relevant for all," "A library sector that contributes to and follows the development in society," and "A well-functioning national infrastructure for the library sector."⁷ There was very good cooperation between libraries for interlibrary loan in the past, but this has now broken down. Rule changes have generally weakened networking.

The privatization of libraries and/or library services has also been a concern. BiS had a role in stopping further privatization after the six Nacka libraries, part of the city of Stockholm, were privatized in 2010.⁸ Public library directors are generally against it, and no other libraries have met that fate. The SB has not taken any position. However, some library services have been privatized, especially for digitization projects. And there are privacy concerns in dealing with technology corporations. After Elon Musk took over Twitter, BiS decided to switch their social media to Mastodon.

The rise of the right has resulted in a severe restriction of labor union rights through a 2018 law, especially the right to strike. BiS made a firm statement against the capitulation of DIK Association, the union for culture and communication workers, when the union described the law as a "union success," because it would avoid conflict.⁹ Unfortunately, nothing has changed since 2018.

BiS has not been very successful in influencing library science education in the last years. There was some major resistance by right-winger Johan Sundeen, one of the professors at the University of Borås library school. He even targeted one of the most prominent BiS members, Ingrid Atlestam. There was some hope that the new library science school at Södertörn University would attract immigrant students to provide the necessary diversification of librarians in the country. This would help provide services to immigrants however little has been accomplished. As opposed to the past, BiS has few members in library science schools, but there has been some outreach to students.

Although BiS was very active with projects in South Africa, Palestine, and Western Sahara in the past, little international work has been undertaken in recent years, apart from a 2018 project to work with Roma children in Bucharest and in Rinkeby, an immigrant district in Stockholm. There are continuing personal contacts in Norway and Finland, and they have published articles on Norway, Palestine, Ireland, Romania, Greece, and Lebanon. The only partnership with a non-library organization has been with Together Sweden, a group of young Muslims and Jews who support Palestinian rights.

Over the period 2018-2023, the journal *bis* has published ten special issues on the following themes: Working Wheel [mobilization], Racism & Decolonization, BiS at 50, School Libraries, Election Year, Democratic Space, Children's Rights in Libraries, Empowerment, Source

Criticism in Depth, and Library World. The most numerous article themes were in descending order: public library role and mission; information technology and inequality; services during the Covid virus crisis; library and individual profiles; social exclusion, racism, LGBTQ rights, and services to immigrants; children's services and rights; privatization and neo-liberal management; literature and poetry; libraries, democracy, and fascist threats; and international solidarity.

BiS started a popular online newsletter in June 2018, which continues to this day. In descending order, the most numerous articles were on: BiS' role in the profession; libraries' mission, democracy, and fascist threats; anti-racism, LGBTQ rights, and services to immigrants; national library policies, networking, and laws; international solidarity and affairs (Norway-3 articles, Palestine-3 articles, Romania-1, Greece-1, Lebanon-1); privatization and neo-liberal management; and library and individual profiles.

BiS membership was highest at its founding in the 1970s when it reached about 500. It has remained about the same during this period, 165 in 2023. There was a decrease in number of subscribers to the journal, from 164 in 2018 to 149 in 2023. One success is readership of the free newsletter, which debuted in 2018 with 210 readers and in 2023 had 584 readers. Visits to the BiS website have also gone up steadily, from 20,956 in 2018 to 23,069 in 2023. Facebook users have also increased from 1461 in 2018 to 1797 in 2023. Twitter users have remained steady from 2899 in 2018 to 2947 in 2023.

To conclude, BiS continues as a relevant alternative to the Swedish Library Association, but it has greatly diminished capacity when compared with its past successes. Especially the longtime members are concerned that the just announced demise of the printed journal will hinder the possibilities for future outreach, development, and influence in society. On the other hand, some younger members are more optimistic that all the time and energy used to produce the printed journal will free up people to push on in new directions. One of my interviews concluded with the thought that people currently want to work in small groups on particular issues and that people's personal connections in informal networks have become much more important than in the past. But they noted that networks are not as strong as organizations. We can only hope that BiS will find new ways to grow and develop in the future.

Highlights by Year¹⁰

2018

BiS began the year with 164 members, slightly more than the previous year. The annual meeting discussion was "Library and Law after the JO [Parliamentary Ombudsman] Decisions [restricting the right to strike]." The discussion was led by Lena Lundgren and the panelists were Nick Jones and Johan Hirschfeldt. This program led to a formal statement (see footnote 9). BiS used its Solidarity Fund for a SEK 5000 project to work with Roma children in Bucharest and in Rinkeby, an immigrant district of Stockholm. For the first time, the Swedish Cultural Council did not approve a production grant for the journal. (Since no further funding has since materialized, the journal ended production of the print edition in 2024.) BiS again articulated its demands for a national library strategy. The magazine continues to be the "most important part" of the work and has 164 subscribers in addition to the BiS membership. BiS started a free newsletter as of June which has proved to be very successful. It had 210 subscribers by the end of the year. BiS was a member of Swedish Library Association, Library Museum, and the Association of Swedish

Cultural Journals. And BiS continued its participation in the Gothenburg Book Fair and had a table at the Umeå anarchist book fair.

The four issues of the journal titled *bis* included various articles on current library issues, including the national library strategy, how libraries can be sanctuaries for undocumented people, the Sweden Democrats political party's efforts to institute a rightwing cultural revolution, and the initiatives to privatize libraries.

2019

BiS celebrated its 50th year with an expanded issue of its journal including forward and backward-looking articles. There were 173 members, slightly more than last year, with an additional 180 subscribers to the journal. The newsletter ended the year with 331 subscribers. The annual meeting discussion was titled, "Libraries and Racism." It was moderated by Karin Råghall, and the speakers were Lena Bezawork Grönlund and Johan Palme. BiS participated in the Gothenburg Book Fair and the annual Library Days in Helsingborg. Lena Lundgren spoke on behalf of BiS at the Book Fair on the topic, "Librarian--Activist or Official." Lena Lundgren published an article for the BiS Working Group for a National Library Strategy giving its recommendations.¹¹ BiS sent the article to Amanda Lind, Minister for Culture and Democracy. And the BiS group in Umeå (called BiS Västerbotten), participated in a demonstration for the right to strike. The organization continued its previous memberships. There were no international solidarity projects.

The first issue of the journal included more articles on the national library strategy and privatization, as well as hopes to diversify the library student population at Södertörn University. The second issue included an article on cuts to the Stockholm City Library and various other topics. "Racism and Decolonization" was the theme for the third issue of the year. This included cultural colonization with special reference to the Sweden Democrats efforts to shut out minority populations. The final issue celebrated BiS' fiftieth year with retrospective and forward-looking articles.

2020

BiS membership fell to 149 members, possibly related to the Covid pandemic, which cancelled the annual meeting and other usual events. There were also 179 subscribers to the journal. However, the board initiated digital meetings this year. The annual book fair took place online. BiS took a stand against the privatization of libraries (see footnote 8). BiS publicized the Matloub project, which supports Palestinian libraries, but did not do any other solidarity work with the project.

The first issue of the journal had three themes: the recent debate around the role of public librarians as public servants vs activists, the life and work of stalwart librarian Barbro Bolonassos who had recently passed,¹² and the role of libraries in the development of public education. The focus of the second, third and fourth issues were the profound effects of the Covid pandemic which caused thousands of deaths, an economic crash, increased social inequality, and a vast speedup in the digitization of society.

2021

Even through the pandemic continued, BiS membership went back up to 164 members, and there were 176 other subscribers to the journal. The number of subscribers for the newsletter reached 438 by the end of the year. Martin Persson and Charlotte Högberg discussed artificial intelligence at the BiS annual meeting. The annual “Library Days” changed its name to “Industry Days,” but BiS did not participate. Lena Lundgren criticized the Swedish Library Association’s position on outsourced libraries at the Association’s annual meeting. And the annual Gothenburg Book Fair again took place only online.

With the publication of the long-awaited report investigating school libraries, the first two issues of the journal focused on whether the report will make any difference in the allocation of resources. Only forty-five percent of the country’s primary and secondary schools have at least a half-time librarian. The second issue of the year also again tackled the issue of librarian activism. The third issue asked what will happen now that the pandemic is waning, and society is starting up again? The final issue of the year addressed library security, and what library bans mean in a time of increased inequality and discrimination against minority groups.

2022

Membership increased slightly to 171, and there were 180 subscribers to the journal. There were 538 subscribers to the free newsletter. The BiS annual meeting took place on the premises of the Swedish Library Association in Stockholm just before the Parliamentary elections. In connection with the annual meeting, Lena Lundgren led a public discussion on library policy with Lawen Reder from the Social Democrats and Torun Boucher from the Left Party. BiS co-sponsored a shadow conference with the World Library and Biblioteket tar saka in connection with the UN conference titled, “Stockholm+50.” This “People’s Forum for Environment and Global Justice” was titled, “The Library—A Bright Spot?” BiS also held a hybrid seminar on libraries and social responsibility with the president-elect of the American Library Association, Emily Drabinski; Lars Ilshammar, Deputy National Librarian; Elisabet Rundqvist, administrator of the National Library of Sweden, and Nick Jones, Director of Art and Libraries in the Huddinge municipality. BiS published a statement against the proposed government policy mandating public employees report undocumented people.

The BiS Umeå group conducted a spring study circle about the book, *Paradoxes of Media and Information Literacy: The Crisis of Information* by Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin. And in the autumn, they did outreach to students and recruited some new members at Umeå University in connection with a labor market day there. Umeå BiS held two anti-racism conversations after the Swedish elections because representatives of repressive and racist parties won many more votes than in the past. They discussed the article “‘It feels like I’m just sitting and waiting for it to explode’: political pressure on the activities of municipal public libraries in six southern Swedish regions.”

The treatment of refugees was the focus of the first issue of the journal this year. Many were betrayed when a new law made it possible to deport them. The forthcoming election was the theme of the second issue, including the debate described above. And the national library strategy was also further discussed. The theme for the third issue was the library’s democratic mission which is now in crisis. A panel discussed the crisis regarding national minorities, youth,

and empowerment. The fourth issue continued the theme of the crisis in democracy, with attention to “... the threat of nationalism ... rising as fast as the earth’s temperature.”

2023

Membership slightly decreased to 165 members, and there was also a decrease in other subscribers of the journal to 149. The BiS board began the year with a discussion on participation in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) because its management is “acting badly.” This relates to the awarding of the 2024 IFLA annual conference to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where human rights are not protected and where LGBTQ rights are wholly lacking. The IFLA national organizing committee specifically said that discussion around LGBTQ rights would be banned from the conference. As a result, the Stockholm City Library left IFLA, but not the Swedish Library Association which decided to remain and work in a positive direction. BiS has never been an IFLA member but has sometimes engaged with IFLA conferences. BiS considers IFLA to be the single most important international actor in librarianship, and thinks it is important to be part of the discussions. The 2024 conference was eventually cancelled due to intensive pressure against the IFLA leadership.

The annual meeting discussion led by Emma Karlsson was “Six Months after the Election--What is the Situation in Library and Cultural Policy Right Now?” But most of the annual meeting was taken up with a discussion about the *bis* journal. Since it was losing SEK 25,000/year (about US\$2300), the board decided to end the publication in-print and go to only digital format with continuous publication of articles instead of a journal format. According to the minutes, this needs to be seen as an investment, not just something regrettable. Regarding outreach to students, board members Lena Lundgren and Lovisa Sagnell represented BiS at the January industry day for librarianship students at Södertörn University. The theme was “Libraries and Sustainable Development.” About sixty people participated and seven students registered with BiS. BiS participated in many of the demonstrations in Umeå, Malmö, and Stockholm against the proposed disclosure law.

Reflecting the rise of the rightwing, increasing racism, class divisions, and increasing repression, the journal’s first issue of the year concentrated on children’s rights and the role of libraries as more children are coming to school hungry. The theme of the second issue of the year was empowerment, the answer to the question, “What does the democratic mission mean to you?” This includes defending LGBTQ rights including drag queen story hours. The theme of the year’s third issue was source criticism in depth, including the library’s role in combating misinformation. The theme for the last issue of the year was international librarianship, including a report on the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, book banning in the US, and more on the crisis within IFLA. The print run was about 500 copies

¹ Alfred Kagan, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015.

² The old-timers still get together every summer, an indication of the close bonds that were formed since they started BiS in 1969.

³ Kristian Schultz, “Biblioteken måste vågra att gå högerns ärenden,” [Libraries must refuse to do the right’s business], *bis* 2004, no. 1-2:13.

⁴ Ingrid Atlestam, “Kampen går vidare” [The fight goes on], *bis* 2004, no. 1-2: 46-47.

⁵ I also saw an encampment in Copenhagen, Denmark.

⁶ Queerlit database, <https://queerlit.dh.gu.se/>

⁷ “Yttrande till den Nationella biblioteksstrategins omvärldsrappport 2017” [Statement to the National Library Strategy Environment Report 2017]; “BiS synpunkter på utkast till nationell biblioteksstrategi 2018” [BiS views on draft national library strategy 2018], <https://bibliotekisamhalle.com/arkiv/nationell-biblioteksstrategi-forslag-till-synpunkter-fran-foreningen-bis/>; “Remissvar Demokratins skattkammare – Förslag till en nationell biblioteksstrategi 2019” [Referral response democracy's treasury -- Proposal for a national library strategy 2019], <https://bibliotekisamhalle.com/remissvar-demokratins-skattkammare-forslag-till-en-nationell-biblioteksstrategi-2019/>; “The national library strategy for Sweden,” <https://www.kb.se/in-english/about-us/the-national-library-strategy-for-sweden.html>

⁸ Tobias Willstedt, “Nackabiblioteken på entreprenad” [Nacka Libraries Outsourced], *bis*, 2017, no. 3:18-20. The updated BiS policy is not online. The printed document is *Varför är privatiserade folkbibliotek en så dålig idé? – BiS samlade argument mot bibliotek på entreprenad* [Why are privatized libraries such a bad idea? BiS collected arguments against private libraries], April 12, 2021.

⁹ *Bibliotekssektorn behöver stridbara och solidariska fackförbund. Acceptera inte Sacos eftergift till arbetsköparna, DIK! 2018* [The library sector needs combative and solidary trade unions. Don't accept Saco's concession to the labor buyers, DIK! 2018], <https://bibliotekisamhalle.com/arkiv/bibliotekssektorn-behoover-stridbara-och-solidariska-fackforbund-acceptera-inte-sacos-eftergift-till-arbetskoparna-dik-2018/>

¹⁰ This section was developed mainly from BiS annual reports and the minutes of the 2023 annual meeting and board minutes, available on the website <https://bibliotekisamhalle.com/foreningenbis/arsmotesprotokoll/>

¹¹ Lena Lundgren, “Nationell biblioteksstrategi?” [National library strategy?], *BiS* 2019, no.1: 12.

¹² I would like to note here the kindness and hospitality that Barbro showed me on my research trip in 2017.

Germany, AK Kritische Bibliothek (Kribiblio) [Working Group Critical Library]

The long-standing German progressive library groups have sadly disbanded. Here is the recent history. As described in my first book update, the long-standing group, Arbeitskreis kritischer BibliothekarInnen (Akriebie) disbanded in 2012. At that time, several people decided to form a new group, called AK Kritische Bibliothek, which was later known as Kribiblio. There were about 50 people on the email list in May 2017. This was a much smaller and weaker group than Akriebie, but they did hold programs at the national library congresses every year. And they worked with the Berliner Stadtteilbibliotheken [Berlin Working Group on District Libraries] and i.d.a-Dachverband [German-Speaking Network of Women/Lesbian Libraries and Archives]. The key people were Frauke Mahrt-Thomsen and Peter Delin.

Kribiblio continued to work on development goals and standards for public libraries in Berlin in 2018 and 2019 with a project called *Bürgerinitiative Berliner Stadtbibliotheken* [Citizens Initiative for Berlin Public Libraries]. They held a meeting in August 2018 titled, Bibliotheken für Alle! [Libraries for Everyone]. Here is what was on the meeting announcement [from Google Translate]:

“We demand an improvement in the material and personnel conditions in the district libraries, the abolition of the neoliberal, inequality-increasing cost-performance calculation, a comprehensive renovation and expansion program and the orientation towards quality rather than quantity criteria in media acquisition and inventory maintenance as well as in the development of new services, including in the digital area.

The professional service quality of all Berlin library employees and the extraordinary rank of the Central and State Library Berlin (ZLB), must not be jeopardized by the transfer of core library competencies to external book department stores such as ekz bibliotheksservice and Hugendubel/Munich. The trusting collaboration between Berlin libraries and their local

bookstores, which has grown over decades, is increasingly being replaced by mainstream offerings. This is a serious threat to Berlin's book culture!"

That initiative fell apart in the face of Covid19 and some differences within the group from 2020 to 2022. In an email message from February 2024, Frauke Mahrt-Thomsen wrote that she had recently deleted the website due to lack of activities.

Austria, Verein kritischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare (KRIBIBI) [Association of Critical Librarians]

KRIBIBI as a progressive association existed from November 2017 to December 2021. It was dissolved in 2022 and reverted to its previous status as a loose working group without memberships. It was open to members from public, academic and school libraries. It had a close relationship with the librarians in Kribiblio in Germany (now also disbanded).

KRIBIBI was originally established as an “open circle” or “working group,” with no formal membership. It was called Arbeitskreis kritischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare. And it was supported from its inception in 1983 until 2017 by the Karl Renner Institute, the think-tank of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ). The loss of the Renner funding necessitated a change in structure and conception if the group was going to continue to exist. At the first night of its November 2017 conference, KRIBIBI decided to become a formal membership association (Verein). They dropped continuing education meetings, established a dues structure, and began the work of recruiting members. Nikolaus Hamann was elected chair, Ulrike Retschizegger was elected treasurer, and Regina Jank was elected secretary. At the end of 2017, KRIBIBI had 33 personal and three institutional members from across the country, 130 followers on Facebook and 64 followers on Twitter. The mailing list had 77 subscribers as of March 1, 2018. The old website from this time still exists at www.kribibi.at.

The first conference as an association (Verein) in May 2018 in Vienna had the theme, “Your Data, My Data --> Their Data?” There was a discussion on “A Library Law for Everyone? Possibilities and Limits,” moderated by Barbara Schleihagen from Germany. 90-95% of participants were in favor of the establishment of a library law for Austria, a long-standing goal of Niki Hamann and KRIBIBI. They also held a discussion on the current state of digitization in all areas of society, and a talk by Peter Postmann on countermeasures to take against large corporations for privacy protection. There was also a talk by lawyer Andrea Neidhart from the University Library of the University of Vienna on the key terms and facts from the more than 100-page European General Data Protection Regulation and their significance for bookstores.

About the same time as the conference, a joint statement was issued by the boards of the Austrian Library Association [Büchereiverband Österreichs (BVÖ)] and the Association of Austrian Librarians [Vereinigung Österreichischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare (VÖB)] in support of the establishment of a library law.

Catastrophe hit the association on June 29, 2018, with the death of Nikolaus Hamann, the chair and main KRIBIBI organizer. However, the general conference did go on in July in Kapfenberg with about 60 participants. KRIBIBI agreed to cooperate with Theater-Baum-Schere, Bibliothek

der Sinne [Library of the Senses], represented by Sabine Aigner and Helmut Schlatzer at that meeting. Ulrike Retschitzegger agreed to be the interim chair of the organization until September 2020. (Hamann and Retschitzegger were a couple.)

An extraordinary meeting took place in September 2019, with only nine people out of forty members present. By unanimous vote, Regina Jank agreed to be chair for a period of 2 to 5 years starting at the end of October or beginning of November 2019. Ulrike Retschitzegger agreed to continue as treasurer and club organizer. Sabine Aigner and Helmut Schlatzer presented the research project, “Civil Society Learning and Libraries,” in collaboration with Alexandra Schwarzenbacher and Angela Pilch-Ortega Hernandez from the University of Graz with the framework concept of the social impact of libraries developed by Nikolaus Hamann over the years. The researchers were invited to present at two other conferences: the 2019 “The Dark Side of Adult Education Conference,” and the 2020, the “DeGrowth Vienna 2020 Conference: Strategies for Social-Ecological Transformation.”

The last big conference was in May 2019. There were 90 subscribers to the mailing list as of October 2019. An invitation for the next regular meeting went out scheduled for November 8, 2019, but it did not happen. Then the Covid19 epidemic stopped everything in 2020. The participants voted to dissolve the organization at the end of the year at a meeting in September 2021. Regina Jank was elected to be the chair for the remaining period and the liquidator. A statement entitled, “Who We Are” is still on the old website. It describes quite nicely how the association thought about itself and what they were trying to accomplish. I have included the full translated statement below. It is presumably KRIBIBI’s final document.

Who We Are

The Association of Critical Librarians existed from November 2017 to December 2021 and, after being dissolved in 2022, is once again a loose working group without memberships. The association was founded on November 3, 2017 by people and institutions interested in library work and library policy. Our members are libraries or library service institutions, but above all people with progressive political aspirations. They come from public libraries, academic libraries and school libraries. We keep in touch with colleagues from all over Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, especially the “Critical Library” group (www.kribiblio.de). We are also loosely linked to organizations of the “Progressive Librarians Around the World.”¹

In our society, which is based on neoliberal principles, more and more public institutions and goods are being privatized or subordinated to market principles. In contrast, KRIBIBI advocates equality and accessibility in access to information, knowledge, education and culture. We are firmly convinced that, in the interests of a fairer society, publicly accessible and socially necessary facilities that should be equally available to all people must be expanded by the public sector, developed further according to democratic principles and provided with sufficient financial resources.

We are independent in our library activities - we do not ask about party affiliation, but see ourselves as a forum for people with socially critical and emancipatory aspirations with the willingness to always reflect on the social impact of their activities. We therefore see libraries as centers of social integration and communication as well as intercultural encounters. As

guarantors of equal opportunities in access to information and knowledge, they are a decisive indicator of the functionality of democracy.

This equality of opportunity does not currently exist in Austria (→ library system), because there is an extreme urban-rural divide. 55% of communities have no library at all (and very probably no bookstore either) in the town, the high proportion of libraries run by volunteers with a low budget means that they have small stocks and are only open for a few hours. As a result, Austria lags far behind most European countries in terms of providing the population with information and literature. KRIBIBI is convinced that a major political initiative is needed to remedy these shortcomings. Small-scale attempts at repair, which are unfortunately common in Austria, will not be able to solve the problems permanently.

KRIBIBI is the only library group in Austria that has the entire library landscape in its sights. We are therefore committed to understanding the Austrian library system, which is strictly divided into public libraries, academic libraries and school libraries, as a whole and to taking all measures that are suitable to abolish this separation. An Austrian library law that covers all parts, that sets out clear job descriptions, responsibilities and the permeability of the system and is designed according to international best practice examples, is an absolute necessity. On this basis, a common library development concept should be drawn up and a central library institute set up. KRIBIBI is interested and willing to participate in these tasks and has also introduced its ideas into the SPÖ library program adopted in 2006.

¹ The Progressive Librarians Around the World was a very loose network of progressive library organizations, those treated in my book, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015). The organizations were: the Library and Information Workers Organization (LIWO) of South Africa (disbanded in 2000), Bibliotek i Samhälle (BiS) of Sweden (functioning at reduced capacity), Arbeitskreis kritischer BibliothekarInnen (Akribie) of Germany (disbanded in 2012), KRIBIBI, Information for Social Change from the United Kingdom (in hiatus), the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (SRRT) of the United States (functioning as usual), and the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) of the United States (in hiatus).

United Kingdom, Information for Social Change (ISC)

In my first book update article for 2013-2017, I concluded that Information for Social Change is doing important work in advocating for progressive librarianship by publishing its journal but at this point it is hard to call it an organization. The situation remains much the same for 2018 to 2021, but no journal issues have been published since then. ISC still has a presence on Facebook and Twitter but the latest Facebook news is from January 2023. There is one blog post from 2020 and seven more from 2021. The 2020 posting just notes that they are relaunching activities. The 2021 posts just bringing notice to various relevant news stories and announce the call for papers for the journal. The only one “Statements and Petitions” from this period is archived on the Wayback Machine website. It is a 2019 statement for a candidate for the election for CILIP Trustees. (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals – CILIP, now calls itself CILIP: the Library and Information Association.)

Three issues of their journal (also titled *Information for Social Change*) were published during this period: no. 37 (Summer/Autumn 2018), no. 38 (June 2019), and no. 39 (Winter 2020/21). Although ISC likes to call itself an international organization, the contents of the journal shows

that it is primarily UK-based with very occasional articles from elsewhere, Finland and the US during this period. There are 38 articles for the three issues, and they vary in length from very short announcements to substantial writings. There is also a bit of poetry, and a few small clusters of articles, but the themes are very wide-ranging. The small clusters are: how libraries are dealing with Covid, open access to materials, information literacy, and decolonization of public libraries. It is telling that 30 of the 38 articles are written solely or with a co-author by two of the members of the ISC Board, Paul Catherall (19 articles) and Martyn Lowe (11 articles).

United States, Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (SRRT)

As a member of the Action Council, SRRT's governing body, this author played a major role in many of the activities described in this report. He has been chair or co-chair of SRRT's International Responsibilities Task Force and Chair of its Membership Committee during this time period.

Of all the organizations described in this update article, the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT)¹ is currently the most active, and it has had a significant effect on its parent body, the American Library Association (ALA), and therefore the profession. During this period, SRRT has presented many important programs, and it has changed ALA policies through its resolutions in the ALA Council. In turn, these resolutions sometimes have influenced national debates, including through the ALA Washington Office (recently changed to Public Policy and Advocacy Office, PPA), ALA's lobbying mechanism.

Its major activities have been initiated in its four task forces and approved in the SRRT Action Council. Until 2020 with the spread of Covid, SRRT met twice per year at the American Library Association Midwinter Meetings (since 2022 called LibLearnX) and ALA Annual Conferences in various cities. SRRT began meeting more often virtually in the second half of 2020, and from 2021 meets virtually almost every month as well as at the Annual Conferences.

As of 2023, the task forces were: Feminist;² Hunger, Homeless, and Poverty;³ International Responsibilities;⁴ and Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Task Force.⁵ The task forces hold programs and do projects, as well as initiate resolutions that are voted in the Action Council. In recent years, the resolutions usually have been designed to be debated and passed in the ALA Membership Meetings and ALA Council, and therefore become ALA policy.⁶ ALA policy serves as guidelines for local, state, and regional libraries, LIS schools, and other library organizations. And it also serves at the basis for lobbying Congress through the ALA PPA Office, as well as lobbying by state associations in their respective legislatures. Unfortunately, even when ALA Council approves a SRRT resolution, the Public Policy and Advocacy (PPA) Office will often not do more than issue a press release to advance this policy, and this has been particularly true for international issues. The Office has shied away from anything that they think might impact their effectiveness on bread-and-butter concerns.

As reported in my book,⁷ SRRT's charter membership in 1969 was 1050, making it ALA's largest round table. At its peak, membership was 2421 in 2007. SRRT was the largest ALA round table in June 2018 with 1775 members. The most recent high point was 2069 in March 2021, but

membership then began to fall, and by February 2024, it was only 1516, a decrease of 14% from the previous year. Membership continues its decline in 2024. Formerly free for students, the recently mandated standardized dues structure for all round tables has resulted in a major loss of student SRRT members, even though it is still possible for them to discover a coupon to access free membership.

SRRT programs at ALA conferences are normally sponsored by the SRRT Task Forces, sometimes in partnership with other ALA units or sometimes non-ALA organizations. Over the period 2018-2023, SRRT presented 31 programs, including speakers, panel discussions and films. With the implementation of ALA virtual software, SRRT has presented an online Afternoon of Social Justice every year since 2020 which typically includes several speakers or panels. Attendance has been very good, bringing in many people who do not attend in-person ALA conferences.

The Feminist Task Force had 2 programs, the International Responsibilities Task Force had 11 programs including a film, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Task Force had 8 programs, and the Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force had 3 panels. The other programs were part of the virtual Afternoons of Social Justice or co-sponsored with other ALA units.

During this period, SRRT worked on 4 major sets of issues that it brought to the ALA Council in order to create new policies for the profession, and to have an impact on wider national debates. These were: freedom of speech and the press, human rights, international solidarity (especially Gaza), and socially responsible investments and sustainability in partnership with the Sustainability Round Table. This partnership was especially aimed at divestment of the ALA Endowment Fund of fossil fuel corporations. SRRT also worked hard in opposing major anti-democratic ALA restructuring proposals, a sad commentary on how trends in the larger society affect ALA.

SRRT resolutions⁸ are often developed from SRRT programs. Over this period, SRRT introduced 16 resolutions in the ALA Council or in council committees and endorsed 9 more from other ALA bodies. Of the 16 SRRT resolutions, 6 were passed as submitted or slightly changed, and one was defeated but resulted in the desired outcome by committee action, that is, divestment of fossil fuel corporations from the ALA Endowment.

The successful resolutions were:

- 2019, Resolution on the Renaming of the Melville Dewey Award (now ALA Medal of Excellence).
- 2020, Resolution Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Peacefully Assemble at ALA Conferences and Meetings.
- 2021-2024, Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries and Other Cultural Institutions in Gaza. (First proposed in 2021 and passed in January 2024.)
- 2022, Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries, Schools, and Other Cultural Institutions in Ukraine.
- 2022, Resolution Calling for Student Loan Cancellation.
- 2023, Resolution on Maintaining Equitable In-Person Participation for All at ALA Membership Meetings.

The unsuccessful resolutions were:

- 2018, Resolution on Socially Responsible Investments for the ALA Endowment Fund.
- 2018, Resolution on the Education Requirement for the ALA Executive Director.
- 2019, Resolution in Support of the Right to Publish Leaked Documents and the Dismissal of Charges against Julian Assange.
- 2019, Resolution on the Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights.
- 2019, Resolution on CIA Recruitment at ALA Meetings.
- 2022, Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange.
- 2022, Resolution in Defense of the Right to Engage in Political Boycotts.
- 2022, Resolution on Continuing Virtual Access to ALA Membership Meetings.
- 2023, Resolution Against the “New Cold War.”
- 2023-2024, Resolution Calling for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza.

SRRT also passed 2 memorial resolutions for outstanding SRRT activists: Herb Biblo (2018), Ginny Moore (2022), and a tribute to Mary Biblo (2020) who will be 100 years old on December 31, 2024. SRRT held a traditional New Orleans send off for Herb Biblo at the 2018 Midwinter Meeting. SRRT also honored the life of Daniel Ellsberg with a memorial resolution at the ALA Council at the 2023 Annual Conference. SRRT brought Ellsberg to speak and show his film, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*, at the 2011 Annual Conference.

And SRRT issued 11 policy statements:

- 2018, Statement on Hate Speech and Libraries.
- 2019, Statement on Fossil Fuel Divestment (with Sustainability Round Table).
- 2019, Statement on Racist Aggression at ALA Conferences.
- 2019, Open Letter to SCOE Opposing the Elimination of ALA Council.
- 2020, Statement on Police Brutality and People of Color.
- 2021, Statement Against Meeting in Texas.
- 2021, Statement Against Anti-Asian Violence.
- 2021, Statement Against Racism.
- 2022, Statement on the Buffalo Shootings and White Supremacy.
- 2022, Statement Remembering Virginia "Ginny" Bradley Moore.
- 2023, Statement on the ALA Bylaws Referendum.

SRRT's Four Major Issues

Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press

The ALA Council's Intellectual Freedom Committee is charged with developing statements explaining various matters related to free speech, which are published in ALA's *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. In 2018, unfortunately one of these interpretations slipped by under the radar of the ALA Council, the policy on “Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*.” The document specifically noted that “hate groups” should be allowed the use of meeting rooms. A “SRRT Action Council Statement on Hate Speech and Libraries” was issued at that meeting. At the 2019 Midwinter Meeting, the ALA Council rescinded that interpretation and approved a new version leaving out the words “hate groups.” The SRRT Action Council

supported that change but decided to abstain from approving the entire document.

Developed by SRRT's International Responsibilities Task Force at the 2019 Annual Conference, a "Resolution on the Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights," was approved at the ALA Membership Meeting by 63-62. The ALA Council then referred it to three of its committees, on Intellectual Freedom (IFC), on Legislation (COL), and on International Relations (IRC). A working group was formed from these committees with SRRT participation. A revised resolution was then put forward at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting, "Resolution Opposing the Free Speech and Intellectual Freedom Restrictions in the Combatting BDS Act, Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, and Related Legislation." But none of these Council committees actually wanted to approve this new version. The IRC voiced support but said it does not feel it is within its purview. The resolution was not even discussed at the Council meeting and failed without even a vote!

A "Resolution in Support of the Right to Publish Leaked Documents and the Dismissal of Charges against Julian Assange" was presented but failed at the 2019 ALA Membership Meeting. Some wild statements were made about Assange undermining national security, and even accusing him of being a foreign agent. SRRT got feedback that we should rewrite it on a broader basis, not just focusing on Julian Assange, but to protect whistleblowers and the right to publish leaked documents. New resolved clauses were added by the Council which then referred it to the IFC for consideration at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting, but nothing came of this. Assange was again in focus at the 2022 LibLearnX Meeting. But SRRT's "Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop Espionage Act Charges Against Julian Assange," was not discussed at the ALA Council for lack of time. After the meeting, the IFC responded to SRRT that ALA does "not make statements on individuals," which is very obviously untrue. At a March meeting, the ALA Council rejected the resolution by a vote of 13-119-9. It is heartening that Assange was finally released from prison recently after pleading guilty to a minor crime. He recently stated that he "pleaded guilty to journalism."

There was a protest against the CIA's presence in the exhibit hall at the 2019 Annual Conference. It was organized by Alison Macrina of the Library Freedom Project with participation of some SRRT members. But the conference staff quickly prohibited the demonstration around the booth, even though access was not blocked. Those leafletting (including this author) were shunted aside to an area some distance away from the booth. Most of the demonstrators then proceeded to march around the exhibit hall with their banners and leaflets. As a result, SRRT put forward a "Resolution on CIA Recruitment at ALA Meetings," but it was defeated at the ALA Membership Meeting. The upshot was that the conference organizers of the 2020 Midwinter Meeting established a "Free Speech Zone" in a corner of the exhibit hall. SRRT then brought a successful "Resolution Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Peacefully Assemble at ALA Conferences and Meetings." That abolished the so-called free-speech zones.

SRRT endorsed three other successful resolutions from other ALA bodies in 2020: "Resolution in Opposition to Charging Prisoners to Read;" "Resolution Condemning Police Violence Against Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Protesters and Journalists;" and "Resolution Condemning U.S. Media Corporations' Abridgement of Free Speech."

SRRT brought to the January 2022 LibLearnX meeting a “Resolution in Defense of the Right to Engage in Political Boycotts.” Tom Twiss and this author met with the ALA Executive Board to try to get their endorsement, but the Board deferred it to the Council. Although it was endorsed by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table and passed the 2022 ALA Membership Meeting (with deletions), it was defeated in Council by a vote of 51-83-9.

The SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF) program at the 2022 Annual Conference was on “Libraries, Free Speech, and Anti-Boycott Laws.” Speakers were Alan Leveritt, publisher of the *Arkansas Times* and Luna Martinez from the Center for Constitutional Rights. There was also a statement from ACLU by Brian Hauss, and SRRT showed a trailer for the forthcoming film, *Boycott*, which depicts Alan Leveritt and two other state contractors’ fight to overturn a few of the 34 state laws that prohibit state contractors from endorsing a boycott of Israel. SRRT also asked the Freedom to Read Foundation to join or write amicus briefs against anti-boycott laws, especially in the *Arkansas Times* case, but without result. SRRT did show the film at the 2023 ALA Annual Conference, but attendance was very low. And SRRT held a Zoom panel on “Intellectual Freedom, Social Responsibility, and Praxis in Librarianship and Education” in November 2023. The panelists were Nicole Cooke from the University of South Carolina, Carolyn Foote who was co-founder of FReadom Fighters, Johannah Genett from the Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, and Robin D.G. Kelley from UCLA.

Human Rights

2018 was the 20th Anniversary of SRRT’s Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force. The MLK Jr. Sunrise Celebration is a highpoint of each Midwinter/LibLearnX Meeting in January. This year’s keynote speaker was Anthony Graves, a Texas citizen who was wrongly convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. Graves was completely exonerated and is now using his platform to advocate for criminal justice reform.

SRRT endorsed two resolutions at the 2018 Annual Conference that passed the ALA Council by unanimous vote: “Resolution to Honor African Americans Who Fought Library Segregation” and “Resolution on Cessation of Family Separations for Refugees Arriving at the United States Borders” (due to President’s Trump’s immigration policies). SRRT provided input on a successful resolution at the 2019 Midwinter Meeting, “Resolution on Monetary Library Fines as a Form of Social Inequity.” And SRRT endorsed the successful “Resolution in Support of Civil Rights Protections for People for Diverse Gender Identities.” And because of several incidents of racist behavior and exclusion at a Council Forum, SRRT joined many other ALA groups in releasing a “SRRT Statement on Racist Aggression at ALA Conferences.”

The 2019 MLK Jr. Sunrise Celebration speaker was Jeanne Theoharis, activist, author, and Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College. She is particularly noted for her biography, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*, which was turned into a documentary film. She talked about her current book, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*.

Sherre Harrington, SRRT’s Feminist Task Force Coordinator, was the driving force in passing at the 2019 Annual Conference, “Resolution on the Renaming of the Melville Dewey Award.” Dewey was notorious for his abusive behavior towards female subordinates, and because his

Lake Placid Club prohibited admission to Jewish people and people of color. The award was renamed the ALA Medal of Excellence at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting.

And SRRT co-sponsored with the Government Documents Round Table a program on “Counting on Trust, Trusting the Count: Census 2020” at the 2019 Annual Conference. The topic focused on how undocumented people have a well-founded fear of the wrongful use of census data that might endanger their lives.

The 2020 MLK Jr. Sunrise Celebration speaker was Imani Perry, Professor of Studies of Women, Gender and Sexuality, and of African and African American Studies at Harvard Radcliffe Institute. She talked on the Civil Rights Movement.

The SRRT Coordinator’s Program at the virtual 2020 Annual Conference was “Herstory through Activism: Women, Libraries, and Activism.” In honor of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage and the 50th anniversary of ALA’s Feminist Task Force. It was repeated online for SRRT’s Afternoon of Social Justice. Speakers were Emily Drabinski, Interim Chief Librarian at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; Dalena Hunter, Librarian/Archivist for the Los Angeles Communities and Cultures Division in the UCLA Library Special Collections; and Teresa Y. Neely, Professor of Librarianship and Assessment Librarian at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

And SRRT co-sponsored a program with APALA and REFORMA at that conference titled, “Behind the Wires: American Concentration Camps Then and Now.” It addressed migrant concentration camps experienced by refugees today and the Japanese American Concentration Camps experienced by people of Japanese ancestry during World War II. SRRT endorsed two successful resolutions at the 2020 Annual Conference. “Resolution on Developing Library Security Policies in Keeping with ALA Policy,” and “Resolution on Protecting Privacy and Safety in Coronavirus-Related Library Policy.” And SRRT’s Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Task Force issued a “Statement on Police Brutality and People of Color.”

The suppression of voting rights for minorities was the focus of a 2020 Afternoon of Social Justice panel, titled “Democracy in the Time of Covid.” Speakers were Carol Anderson, Chair of African American Studies at Emory University and author of *One Person, No Vote*; David Daley, author of *Unrigged: How Americans Are Battling Back to Save Democracy*; Mac Heller, Executive Producer of the documentary film *Rigged: The Voter Suppression Playbook*; and Tomas Lopez, Executive Director of Democracy North Carolina.

SRRT endorsed the successful 2021 Midwinter Meeting “Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work.” And SRRT endorsed the 2021 Annual Conference “Resolution on Replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading “Illegal Aliens,” which had first been introduced at the 2016 Midwinter Meeting. The Library of Congress subsequently replaced the heading in November with “Illegal Immigration.”

The 2021 virtual MLK Jr. Sunrise Celebration keynote speaker was V.P. Franklin, author of *The Young Crusaders: The Untold Story of the Children and Teenagers Who Galvanized the Civil Rights Movement*. The Task Force also had a virtual program titled “Martin Luther King Jr.

Holiday Multi-Cultural Idea Exchange,” and it was repeated at the SRRT Afternoon of Social Justice. This is a sporadic continuing program that provides a forum for ideas in local libraries. Panelists were Carla J. Davis from the Akron-Summit County Public Library, Ranti Junus from Michigan State Libraries, Erik Ponder, also from Michigan State, and Brett Rohlwing from the Milwaukee Public Library.

The 2021 Afternoon of Social Justice had programs titled, “Racial Justice/Social Responsibilities,” and “Focusing on Youth Homelessness: Lived Experiences and Insights.” The first panel included Nicole A. Cooke from the University of South Carolina School of Information Science and Marna M. Clowney-Robinson from the University of Michigan. The second panel’s speakers were Julia Terry from Choosing Our Roots, youth advocate Naomi Danford, and UCLA Ph.D. student Earl Edwards.

The keynote speaker at the 2022 virtual MLK Jr. Celebration was Keisha N. Blain, Associate Professor of History at University of Pittsburgh, and the meeting’s theme was “Give Us the Ballot: Equality for All People! The Struggle for Voting Rights, Then and Now.” And SRRT issued a 2022 “Statement on the Buffalo Shootings and White Supremacy.”

The 2022 Afternoon of Social Justice featured programs on “Neurodiversity & Neurodivergence in the Library,” and “Paying Better Attention to Indigenous Communities.” The first panel included Kate Thompson and Rachel Bussan both from the West Des Moines Public Library. The second panel included Karleen Delaurier-Lyle from the Xwi7xwa Library at the University of British Columbia and Kael Moffat from Saint Martin’s University.

The keynote speaker at the 2023 MLK Jr. Celebration was Sheryll Cashin, Professor of Law, Civil Rights, and Justice at Georgetown University. She spoke on “Housing: The Chicago Chapter in Dr. Martin Luther King’s Freedom Movement.”

The 2023 Afternoon of Social Justice featured a program titled, “Disability is Not a Bad Word.” The panelists were Katelyn Quirin Manwiller, Education Librarian, West Chester University and Brea McQueen, Student Success Librarian, Miami University Hamilton. Other 2023 Zoom sessions were SRRT’s first book talk on Michael Desmond’s *Poverty by America*, a talk on “Abortion and Reproductive Justice,” and a discussion on “Gun Violence in the U.S.”

The 2024 MLK Jr. Sunrise Celebration marked its 25th anniversary, with a theme of “The Three Evils of Society,” from King’s 1967 speech linking racism, materialism, and war. The keynote speaker was David Delmar Senties, the founder of Resilient Coders, a nonprofit boot camp that trains people of color from low-income backgrounds for careers as software engineers.

International Solidarity

One aspect of ALA’s reorganization during this period, was that round table programs (other than the chair’s program) had to be vetted beginning in 2018. So, the SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force (IRTF) proposed 2019 Midwinter program on hate speech was not accepted by a jury, and it became a discussion session instead titled, “Assisting Palestinian Libraries.” Nevertheless, it came off well. Speakers were John Cassel, Co-chair and Treasurer of the Seraj Library Project, Melissa Morrone from Librarians and Activists for Palestine, and

SRRT's Tom Twiss from the University of Pennsylvania Library.

The SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force sponsored a talk by celebrated Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha at the 2018 Annual Conference. It was titled, "Libraries in Gaza: Between Despair and Hope." Taha had recently travelled out of Gaza for the first time and he gave a poignant presentation on just how hard it was to live there.

SRRT celebrated its 50th Anniversary in a big way at the 2019 Annual Conference in Washington, DC, at Busboys and Poets bookstore with a keynote by renowned author Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies. Her talk was on "War Dangers Rising: Trump Foreign Policy & Lack Thereof." The event was cosponsored by the *Alternative Press Index*.

The SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force featured a talk by noted author Stephen Kinser at the 2019 Annual Conference, titled "Subverting Other People's Elections." He detailed the long involvement of the US government in subverting elections all over the globe. This was a counterpoint to persistent press coverage of Russia and China's involvement in manipulating social media concerning elections in various countries.

The SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force presented a virtual program at the 2020 Afternoon of Social Justice on "Native American Treaty Rights in the Time of Covid-19," with the best known Native American activist, economist, and author Winona La Duke, Tadd Johnson who directs American Nation Relations at the University of Minnesota, and Dallin Maybee from the Native American Rights Fund.

SRRT put forward at the 2022 Annual Conference a "Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries, Schools, and Other Cultural Institutions in Ukraine." It was updated at the ALA Membership Meeting and passed the ALA Council unanimously. The SRRT Programming Committee also presented an October virtual program on Ukraine.

On the recommendation of the IRTF, and after two postponements due to Covid, Iranian American award-winning author Trita Parsi, co-founder and Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, finally addressed the 2023 Annual Conference. His talk was on "US—Iran Relations in the Biden Era."

And SRRT sent a "Resolution Against the 'New Cold War'" to the ALA Council's International Relations Committee but got no response. SRRT's tribute, "A Resolution Honoring the Life of Daniel Ellsberg," who died June 16th passed unanimously.

The 2023 Afternoon of Social Justice featured a program titled, "What Can U.S. Librarians Learn from Feminist Struggles in Ukraine, Sudan, and Iran?" with SRRT's Frieda Afary who is a public librarian in Los Angeles, Tetiana Granchak from the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine and member of the Board of the Ukrainian Library Association, and Israa Abbas who is a founder of the Sudanese Poetics Archive and the Sudanese Literature Archive. There were also two web programs in 2023, "Discussion on Israel and Palestine War," and "War in Ukraine" as part of the Current World Events Discussion Series."

A “Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries and Other Cultural Institutions in Gaza” was first proposed in 2021 and finally passed in January 2024 by a vote of 143-2-3. “Resolution Calling for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza” was passed by the Action Council in November 2023 and shared with a number of ALA bodies to try to gain support for action at the 2024 LibLearnX meeting. Although the Action Council decided to send it to the IRC for discussion and not directly to the ALA Council agenda, it was brought forward by ALA councilors Mandi Nasr and Majed Khaled. Nasr’s husband is Palestinian and has family there, and Khaled is a Palestinian American. The IRC did not respond, and unsurprisingly, the resolution failed by a vote of 28-114-6.

The ceasefire resolution provoked panic within the ALA leadership because it went against the US foreign policy of unconditional support for Israel’s war against Gaza. They were afraid that it would discredit ALA in the corridors of power in Washington. The resolution had been duly posted to the SRRT Resolution Archive after the November meeting, but it mysteriously kept disappearing. SRRT Action Council eventually learned from a December 6th ALA Executive Board memo that there was a new until then secret policy that round table resolutions not yet considered by the ALA Council would be put under a paywall so that only ALA members could see them. At the time of writing, it is still behind a paywall, but the Nasr and Khaled resolution is in the SRRT Resolutions Archive.

Socially Responsible Investments and Sustainability

SRRT has worked on getting ALA to adopt a socially responsible investment policy for its Endowment Fund since at least 1986, when it advocated for divestment of companies involved in apartheid South Africa. The ALA Council passed support for the South African freedom struggle that year, but it did not act on divestment. However, the ALA Executive Board directed the endowment trustees to begin divestment anyway. Taking a broader view, SRRT proposed a socially responsible investment policy in a 2000 resolution which was defeated. Nevertheless, the endowment had 1% of its portfolio in socially responsible funds in 2005. The issue came back to the ALA Council in 2013 when SRRT working with the new Sustainability Round Table brought a resolution to divest from fossil fuel corporations but was soundly defeated. In 2014, SRRT brought a resolution for divestment from three corporations doing business in the West Bank for collaborating with Israel’s occupation and repression of the Palestinian people. However, that resolution had to be withdrawn because ALA was no longer investing in individual stocks.

Building on more than thirty years of history, SRRT and the Sustainability Round Table again pushed for divestment of fossil fuels at the 2018 Midwinter Meeting. The “Resolution on Socially Responsible Investments for the ALA Endowment Fund” was approved in principle at the ALA Council but because it had financial implications, it was sent to the Council’s Budget Analysis and Review Committee. That committee did not support the resolution at the Annual Conference, and it was therefore defeated by the Council. However, as a result, the Endowment Trustees began to change their policies and invested 24.3% of the portfolio in Environment, Social, and Government (ESG) investments that year. At the 2019 Midwinter Meeting, SRRT and the Sustainability Round Table issued a joint statement on “Recommendation to Explore a New Direction for the ALA Endowment Fund.” A “Resolution for the Adoption of Sustainability as a Core Value of Librarianship” passed the Council, with the proviso that the Council was not

comfortable with the definition of “economically feasible.” The two round tables presented a massive report advocating divestment of fossil fuel corporations for the February 2019 meeting of the ALA Endowment Trustees. The author was Jenny Rockwell from the Sonoma County Library in California.

At the 2019 Annual Conference, it was reported that ESG funds now totaled 34% of investments, with less than 1.7% still in fossil fuels. A “Resolution to Embed a Carbon Offset Fee in Registration Fees for all ALA and Divisions Event Attendance” was drafted by the Sustainability Round Table with SRRT support at the 2020 Annual Conference, but it was not brought forward until the 2021 Midwinter Meeting. However, it was withdrawn to instead develop a broader resolution. A “Resolution to Achieve Carbon Neutrality for ALA Conferences” passed the Council at the 2021 Midwinter Meeting, by which time 52% of the endowment was in ESG funds. The percentage rose to 62.3% by October 2023. Finally, readers should be aware that there are widely different definitions of ESG, and that not all ESG funds are as socially responsible as one would wish. It would take a financial expert to seriously evaluate ALA’s holdings to see just how trustworthy they are.

Other SRRT Initiatives

In 2019, SRRT inaugurated its annual travel grants to help finance attendance at ALA Annual Conferences to engage new members in the Round Table’s activities. Up to two \$1000 grants are given every year. It was initially named in honor of Herb Biblo, but that name was dropped when the Herb Biblo leadership award described below was inaugurated in 2021. Also in 2019, SRRT began funding one ALA “Emerging Leader” each year with a grant of \$1000 to attend an ALA meeting.

After the passing of stalwart SRRT member Herb Biblo in 2018, Al Kagan and Howard Besser began a process of establishing an endowed ALA award which was finally realized in 2021, the Herb Biblo Outstanding Leadership Award for Social Justice and Equality. The award of \$4000 is now equally funded by the SRRT endowment and Library Juice Academy. The first award went to Elaine Harger in 2022, now retired who was a school librarian in Washington State, a SRRT Action Councilor and SRRT Coordinator, ALA Councilor, and one of the founders of the Progressive Librarians Guild. The second award went to Michelle Villagran in 2023. She is Assistant Professor at the San Jose State University School of Information. Her research focuses on diversity and cultural intelligence, and she works with undergraduate BIPOC students introducing them to careers in library and information Science. And the 2024 award went to Ann Sparanese, now retired who was a public librarian in New Jersey, SRRT Action Councilor, and union organizer. Ann is best known for organizing against the withdrawal and expected pulping of Michael Moore’s best-selling book, *Stupid White Men*. She was also a brilliant organizer defending the gains of the Cuban revolution against the CIA’s disinformation campaign within ALA to destabilize the Cuban government.

April Shepard, SRRT Coordinator, developed the successful “Resolution Calling for Student Loan Cancellation” at the ALA Virtual Membership Meeting and then ALA Council at the 2022 Annual Conference.

ALA Internal Policies

In 2017, SRRT opposed a resolution that would eliminate the requirement that the ALA Executive Director have a library science degree, but the Council approved the measure. So at the 2018 Annual Conference, SRRT introduced a “Resolution on the Education Requirement for the ALA Executive Director,” however it failed to pass at the ALA Membership Meeting. SRRT endorsed the successful “Resolution on Gender Inclusive Bathrooms” at the 2018 Annual Conference.

The drive to completely reorganize ALA heated up in 2019 under the rubric, Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness--SCOE (and later through a new committee called Forward Together). SRRT considered the consultant’s proposals anti-democratic, with the centralization of power in a small Executive Board without any meaningful oversight, a neo-liberal management model. SRRT issued an “Open Letter Opposing the Elimination of ALA Council” at the 2019 Midwinter Meeting. It also opposed any structure that would deny round table representation and decision-making powers, as well as an imposed standardization of round table governance. Seven round tables signed on. At the 2022 Annual Conference, SRRT advocated the “Resolution on Continuing Virtual Access to ALA Membership Meetings.” It was passed unanimously at the ALA Membership meeting but then defeated in Council. The new bylaws state that they “may hold meetings virtually” but it is not required. In 2023, SRRT and others were able to beat back the elimination of the Council as ALA’s governing body, but the Council voted to reduce the At-Large Council membership from 100 down to 36, substantially tightening control to a much smaller and less diverse group. And the ALA Executive Board went ahead with the standardization of round table governance and dues in 2023. As noted earlier, the elimination of free student memberships without discovering a coupon has resulted in severely reducing SRRT membership.

Another aspect of this reorganization was changing the nature of the Midwinter Meetings and renaming it LibLearnX as of 2022. The ALA leadership decided to make it a much smaller meeting concentrating on continuing education, and eliminating all division, round table, and committee meetings. The only meetings allowed were for the ALA Council and Executive Board. This was justified in a bogus way by saying they were losing money on these meetings, but in fact, the revenue was decreasing but they were still making a surplus. So the meetings became much smaller, especially because of the myriad of meetings that were cancelled. For example, SRRT Action Council meetings used to get a good representation at Midwinter/LibLearnX, but very few if any Action Council members except the SRRT Councilor now go to these meetings. Because of this drastic reduction in the numbers of people attending, these meetings now do lose money, and the Executive Board decided to cancel the LibLearnX meetings entirely after 2025.

Another consequence of ALA adopting a neo-liberal management model was destroying the progressive core values adopted at the 2004 Annual Conference. The core values were reduced from 12 down to 5. The 2022 Core Values Committee asserted that there were too many core values and that other professional associations had a smaller number. The committee said that the core values were “aspirational,” and “supplement” other ALA statements. The 2004 Core Values Committee was chaired by Pat Schuman, a former ALA President who came up as a SRRT activist. That committee of 18 members included 5 SRRT activists and one of the founders of the Black Caucus of ALA, Betty Blackman. The other SRRT people were Michael Malinconico,

Kathleen de la Pena McCook, Melissa Riley, and Mark Rosenzweig. Those 2004 11 core values were Access, Confidentiality/Privacy, Democracy, Diversity, Education and Lifelong Learning, Intellectual Freedom, Preservation, The Public Good, Professionalism, Service, and Social Responsibility. One more core value was added in 2019, which not surprisingly was Sustainability considering the work described above.

The 2022 Core Values Committee's report was adopted in January 2024. That committee had 22 members, but only one was a member of the SRRT Action Council, Melissa Cardenas-Dow. The new core values are Access, Equity, Intellectual Freedom, Public Good, and Sustainability. Working groups have been established to further define each value. That means that Democracy and Social Responsibility as well as Confidentiality/Privacy, Education and Lifelong Learning, and Preservation were eliminated. Equity seems to have been substituted for Diversity. Although the SRRT Councilor had mentioned the new report at a meeting, it flew under SRRT's radar. It only became a topic of discussion after it was a done deal. Evidently there was some communication with SRRT that fell through the cracks.

In May 2024, 10 ALA past-presidents signed an open statement voicing their strong disapproval, but nothing came of this. There was very little communication about it on the ALA Members Connect site. One of the past-presidents who was upset was Michael Gorman who had written the seminal book on the topic, *Our Enduring Values Revisited: Librarianship in an Ever-Changing World* (ALA, first edition 2000, *Revisited* 2015). In the book, Gorman defined values as "...beliefs and ideals that are major, significant, lasting, and shared by members of a group." The recent statement noted that "As opposed to the current version of ALA core values, which are touted as "aspirational," and as a "supplement" to other ALA documents, the agreed values are the bedrock of our profession and are readable and comprehensive. At a time when we are experiencing the worst right-wing attack on our core values since the McCarthy era, we advise that we take a step back, and re-evaluate the recent replacement of "our enduring values." It is deeply disturbing that there was so little pushback to the new formulation, and this bodes ill for ALA's future.

The Library Freedom Project (not ALA-affiliated) organized a 2019 protest, with the encouragement of some SRRT members, when they noticed that the CIA would have a booth in the exhibit hall. Protestors were prohibited from standing near the booth and were only allowed to leaflet some distance away. A group including SRRT members then marched around the exhibit hall with their signs. And the conference organizers tried to implement a free speech zone in a corner. SRRT responded with a "Resolution on CIA Recruitment at ALA Meetings," but it failed at the 2019 ALA Membership Meeting. Subsequently, the ALA Council did pass a "Resolution Ensuring Intellectual Freedom and the Right to Peacefully Assemble at ALA Conferences and Meetings" at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting.

In 2020 during the Covid crisis, Texas was busy passing laws restricting abortion and voting rights, disregarding racial and social justice, and restricting democracy. Since the 2021 LibLearnX conference was scheduled for San Antonio, SRRT advocated canceling the San Antonio meeting for all the above reasons. The ALA Executive Board did cancel the in-person meeting and held it virtually, but they only cited Covid as the reason. A year later, SRRT endorsed a successful resolution on including racial and social justice in the ALA Code of Ethics.

SRRT Task Forces

Feminist Task Force

The Women's Issues in ALA Discussion Group is held at every annual conference. It is an opportunity for people to discuss issues and learn about how to get involved with the women's groups in ALA: the SRRT Feminist Task Force (FTF), the ACRL Women & Gender Studies Section (WGSS), and the Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (COSWL). It was FTF's turn to organize the discussion in 2019.

The task force motivated the passing of the "Resolution on the Renaming of the Melville Dewey Award" at the 2019 Annual Conference. Dewey was notorious for his abusive behavior towards female subordinates, and because his Lake Placid Club prohibited admission to Jewish people and people of color. The award was renamed the ALA Medal of Excellence at the 2020 Midwinter Meeting. Along with the Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship, and the ACRL Women & Gender Studies Section, the task force co-presented a webinar on harassment intervention in the library in December 2021.

The FTF newsletter, *Women in Libraries*, which began in 1970, ceased publication in 2020, but the task force celebrated its 50th anniversary at the 2020 Annual Conference at the Women & Children First Bookstore in Chicago. Its program that year, "Herstory through Activism: Women, Libraries, and Activism" is described above in the Human Rights section. First published in 2002, the Amelia Bloomer Project's *Annual List of Notable Feminist Literature for People from Birth to Eighteen Years* changed its name to *Rise: A Feminist Book Project for Ages 0-18* in 2020. The Project held a 20th anniversary webinar in 2022 reflecting on their work. Their ongoing Women of Library History project profiles trailblazing women in the profession, including blog entries and by adding profiles to *Wikipedia*. They also hold "Feminist Night Out at the Movies" at annual conferences. Every third year, it is the task force's turn to organize the Introduction to Women's Issues discussion group. The most prominent task force members were Katelyn Browne, Diedre Conkling, Jane Cothron, and Sherre Harrington.

Hunger, Homelessness & Poverty Task Force

HHPTF Co-Coordinator Julie Winkelstein began teaching a new online synchronous class in 2018, "The Role of Libraries in Addressing Homelessness and Poverty" through the School of Library and Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The class was then discussed by Julie and three of her students at the 2019 Midwinter meeting. Winkelstein also began co-teaching a course with Vikki Terrile at the University of Washington I-School in 2021 titled, "Youth and Children Homelessness: The Role of Libraries."

The task force worked on updating its toolkit, *Extending Our Reach: Reducing Homelessness through Library Engagement*, and on reviewing ALA's policy on "Library Services to the Poor." In 2020, the task force surveyed libraries on what they were doing to address unhoused users in the time of Covid19 and received more than 400 responses. The most prominent task force members were co-coordinators Julie Ann Winkelstein and Lisa Gieskes.

International Responsibilities Task Force

Most of the task force's work has been hosting programs and writing resolutions which are described in the International Solidarity and Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press

sections above. Programs were on Palestine, Iran, Native American treaty rights, subverting elections, and state anti-boycott laws regarding Israel with a film showing of the new film titled, *Boycott*. The task force's only successful resolutions were on the damage and destruction of libraries and other cultural institutions in Ukraine and another similar one for Gaza, and a memorial for Daniel Ellsberg. Failed resolutions were on free speech for supporters of Palestinian rights, the right to publish leaked documents and support for Julian Assange, against CIA recruitment at ALA conferences, and against the new Cold War. The most prominent task force members were co-coordinators Al Kagan and Tom Twiss.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Task Force

The Task Force coordinates the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration with the Black Caucus of ALA and the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services every Midwinter (now LibLearnX) meeting with prominent speakers discussing issues relevant to the life's work of Martin Luther King. 2019 marked the 20th year. There are participants from all the ethnic caucuses and various ALA units. A high point is always ending the event with singing "We Shall Overcome" holding hands in a great circle. This event is always the most inspiring event for this author at every January meeting! These events are described in detail in the Human Rights section above. The most prominent task force members were Ginny Moore (now deceased) and LaJuan Pringle.

¹ <https://www.ala.org/srrt>

² <https://www.ala.org/srrt/feminist-task-force>

³ <https://www.ala.org/srrt/hunger-homelessness-and-poverty-task-force-hhptf>

⁴ <https://www.ala.org/srrt/irtf>

⁵ <https://www.ala.org/srrt/martin-luther-king-jr-holiday-task-force-mlktf>

⁶ However, the ALA Membership Meetings are only held at the Annual Conferences, so resolutions brought at the Midwinter Meeting (now LibLearnX) go directly to the Council. Resolutions approved by ALA Membership Meetings automatically go to the ALA Council agendas, and nothing precludes a failed membership resolution from also being introduced again at the ALA Council. As one of the largest round tables, SRRT is entitled to a representative in the ALA Council, and this SRRT Councilor is elected by the SRRT membership.

⁷ Alfred Kagan, *Progressive Library Organizations: A Worldwide History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015). A discussion of membership is on page 202.

⁸ More details and resolutions texts can be found in the SRRT Resolutions Archive, <https://www.ala.org/srrt/resolutionsarchive>, in the SRRT Action Council minutes, <https://www.ala.org/srrt/minutes>, on the SRRT Newsletter Archives, <https://www.ala.org/srrt/newsletter-archive>, through the ALA website, <http://www.ala.org>, and very often by just doing a web search.

Acronyms

ACRL. Association of College and Research Libraries (an ALA division)

APALA. Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association

COL. Committee on Legislation (of the ALA Council)

COSWL. Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship (of ALA)

FTF. Feminist Task Force (of SRRT)

HHPTF. Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force (of SRRT)

IFC. Intellectual Freedom Committee (of the ALA Council)

IRC. International Relations Committee (of the ALA Council)

IRTF. International Responsibilities Task Force (of SRRT)

MLK. Martin Luther King

PPA. Public Policy and Advocacy Office (of ALA)

REFORMA. National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking

United States, Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG)

In a message from April 2022, the four-person coordinating committee of the Progressive Librarians Guild informed the membership that the organization was going on indefinite hiatus, following the publication of the last issue of their journal, *Progressive Librarian*, no. 48. The message stated that dues would fall from \$25 to \$5/year, the website¹ and bank account would be maintained, the listserv and Facebook page would be retained as well as the Library Worker blog, and that the Braverman Award would be given in 2022 and 2023. In fact, the Facebook page (with 605 members) and the listserv, PLGNET-L, is still maintained. The Library Worker blog seems to be functioning, but it was taken over by The Allied Professional Association of the American Library Association (ALA-APA), and the last posting was June 2024. The membership has not surprisingly fallen from 212 at the end of 2017 to 84 at the time of writing.

Those who signed the message were Elaine Harger, Nathaniel Moore, Gary Colmenar, and Mark Hudson. They wrote that the "...suspension of the journal, sporadic organizational activity in recent years, and high turnover on the Coordinating Committee (CC) necessitate new energy and leadership to sustain PLG." As an active member of PLG since its inception in 1990, this author has been in on the discussions that led to this hiatus. PLG activities have declined gradually over the years. There was extensive discussion over email and a few Zoom meetings in 2020 and 2021 to try to figure out how to revitalize the organization, but without much result.

PLG was still active from 2018 to 2020 with meetings at both Midwinter and Annual ALA Conferences and PLG dinners open to all. Meetings discussed the nature and value of the organization, and the winning Braverman Award authors presented their papers. PLG had a jointly sponsored workshop with Seattle CritLit at the Seattle Public Library during the 2019 Annual ALA Conference. The theme was "No, Not Ever: Countering White Nationalism in Libraries." And PLG issued two resources lists in 2020 on Prison Education and on White Nationalism. The last PLG meeting at ALA was at the 2023 Annual Conference.

Progressive Librarian

PLG's journal, *Progressive Librarian: a Journal for Critical Studies & Progressive Politics in Librarianship*² has been its most important accomplishment for many years. All articles are freely available online on the PLG website. Three issues were published over this time period: no. 46 (Winter 2017/18), no. 47 (Winter 2019-2020), and no. 48 (Spring 2021). The last was a Special Issue on Palestine titled, "Libraries & Archives Under Occupation." In these 3 issues, there were 3 editorials, 17 articles, 2 interviews, 3 Braverman essays, 2 book reviews, 6 ALA documents, 4 PLG documents, and one Middle East Librarians Association document. The PLG documents were 2 overviews from the Union Library Workers blog, "Resources on Black Lives Matter," and "Progressive Librarians Guild Statement on Racist Incident at ALA Midwinter" (2019). Apart from the 2017 program papers and special issue described below, there is no cluster of articles on any one theme. The "Managing Editor" for numbers 46 and 47 was Elaine Harger, and she is listed as assisting for issue number 48. Other editors were David Lesniaski, Nathaniel Moore, Katherine Phenix, Mark Rosenzweig, Jennifer Williams, Walid Habbas, Jessa Lingel, Ethan Pullman, and Tom Twiss.

Four of the articles come from a 2017 PLG program at ALA Annual Conference titled,

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“Deprofessionalization, Cutbacks & Progressive Librarianship in the Trump Era.” Speakers were long-time PLG activists Peter McDonald (Dean Emeritus from California State University Library in Fresno), Mark Hudson (Head of Technical Services and Adult Programming at Monroeville Public Library in suburban Pittsburgh), and John Bushman (Dean of University Libraries at Seton Hall University). The fourth speaker was Maura Seale, History Librarian at the University of Michigan.

The articles from the Special Issue on Palestine were generated after a 2018 SRRT program organized by Tom Twiss featuring Mosab Abu Toha, celebrated Gaza poet, essayist, short story writer, English teacher, and founder of the Edward Said Library in Gaza. It was titled “Libraries in Gaza: Between Despair and Hope.” Although there were several editors for this issue, it was Twiss who was the key organizer. There was an interview with Toha and five articles. The articles were “History of Palestinian Libraries and Archives Under Israeli Occupation” by Anan Hamad (Director of the Palestinian Legislative Council Library), “The International Board on Books for Young People in Palestine” by Mary Fasheh (retired librarian and Vice President of IBBY), “Libraries in Gaza: Between Despair and Hope: The Edward Said Public Library, Gaza’s Only English Language Library” by Mosab Abu Toha, and “Private Libraries in Nablus Have a Bright Past and an Uncertain Future” by Lara Kanaan (Nablus journalist).

Not immediately apparent from this last table of contents are appendixes titled “Some of the Most Important Libraries in Jerusalem Since the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” “Article by a Gaza Librarian” on Al-Shawka Library in Rafah, “Article by a Gaza Librarian” on Al-Sikka Library in Beit Hanoun, “Testimony of al-Ataa’ Librarian: Is It My Fault That I Am a Palestinian?: Days of Horror: Testimony of the Librarian Abla Hamad,” and “A Collection of Drawings by Gaza Children Depicting Israeli Aggression on Gaza 2008-9.” The issue also includes the 2019 SRRT “Resolution in Defense of the Free Speech of Supporters of the Movement for Palestinian Rights,” and a long exasperating explanation about what happened to it in ALA titled, “Communications of the SRRT Action Council and ALA Review Task Force.” Given the current devastation in Gaza, it likely that these first-person accounts will serve as the last historical records of these library refugees from Israeli brutality.

Braverman Award

PLG has given the Miriam Braverman Award almost every year for the best article of a library and information science student on a socially responsible issue. The award is named in honor of Miriam Braverman (1920-2002) who was a socialist, writer, and activist progressive librarian, and a long-standing PLG member. There is a short biography on the PLG website. The \$500 award was to offset costs in attending the ALA Annual Conferences, where the students presented their papers at PLG meetings. All are freely available on the PLG website. The awards for this period were:

- 2018, Alessandra Seiter, “Libraries, Power, and Justice: Toward a Sociohistorically Informed Intellectual Freedom,” *Progressive Librarian* issue no. 47: 107-117.
- 2019, Yoonhee Lee, “Towards Universal Access to Knowledge: The Invisible Labor of Digitizing,” *Progressive Librarian* issue no. 47: 118-127.
- 2020, no award due to Covid19 and cancellation of in-person ALA Annual Conference.
- 2021 joint awards, Eli Holliday, “Death to the Professional: Re-envisioning Labour in the Public

Library,” and Ashley Huot, “Prison Zines: Relations, Communication, and Records.”

- 2022, Daniel Clarkson Fisher, “A Promised (But Ultimately Unreachable) Land: The Fallacy of ‘Political Neutrality’ Exemplified by Former U.S. President Barack Obama’s Appearance at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition.”

- 2023, Maggie Grabmeier, “Out of Bounds: Sexual Harassment from Patrons in the Public Library.”

PLG Chapters

Over the course of PLG’s history, at least 19 local chapters have been established in the US and Canada, mostly for students at LIS schools. 16 are listed on the PLG website, and my book included 18, of which 2 are not in the list on the PLG website: Bay Area and Edmonton. In the first update to my Progressive Library Organizations book, I highlighted seven local PLG chapters that were active during all or some part of the period 2013 to 2017. As far as I can tell, only two of these have been active during 2018-2023, the St. Kate’s and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) chapters. Only St. Kate’s is active at the time of writing, but it also appears that the Simmons College chapter is reviving in 2024 after about a 10-year pause.

St. Kate’s (St. Catherine University)

St. Kate’s is a Catholic women’s university in St. Paul, Minnesota. The PLG chapter was established in 2005, and the chapter’s faculty advisor, David Lesniaski, has been instrumental in the editing and production of the printed journal issues since 2012. Events have included a 2018 Prisons and Libraries panel, a 2020 Mapping Prejudice Social Hour and a speaker on “Evictions, Tenant Rights, & Libraries.” In 2021, the chapter had accountability strategy meetings, and a speaker from Into Account, a survivors of sexual violence advocacy organization who discussed the David Haas case, an author and composer of contemporary Catholic music who was accused of sexual misconduct by dozens of women. In 2021, the chapter also held a talk by a speaker from the Library Freedom Project on privacy and surveillance issues. In that year, members also twice packed books for the Women’s Prison Book Project. Members toured the Hmong Archive at the East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul in 2022 and toured the Halvorson Music Library at St. Kate’ in 2023. They also held a coffee and conversation with Sandy Berman that year.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)

The UIUC chapter emerged in 2007 and continued until the fall of 2022. It was quite active from 2018 to 2020, but less active for 2021 and 2022. Regular activities included working on a campus food drive, volunteering with the local Books to Prisoners project, working with the unhoused population, having a reading club that produced resource lists, and participating with the Graduate Employees Organization labor union (although they were excluded from membership by the university administration). Events included a 2019 panel on services to the incarcerated, a 2019 zine cataloging workshop, and a 2020 voter registration activity. This author gave a talk on the history of PLG in 2019. The group’s faculty advisor in 2018 was Kate McDowell, and Karthryn La Barre served in this role from 2019 to 2022.

¹ <http://www.progressivelibrariansguild.org/index.shtml>

² This author published the article, “ALA, IFLA, and South Africa” in issue no. 46 (Winter 2017/18). It was the third article in a series. The first was “ALA, IFLA, and Israel/Palestine” in issue no. 44 (Spring 2016), and the second was “ALA, IFLA, and South Africa,” in issue no. 45 (Winter 2016/2017).