

VICTORIA PARK
(CONT.)



But that historic agreement still did not recognize that job specifications for all civil service grades in the Librarian series were woefully out of date. No one had done a systematic analysis based on contemporary position descriptions. There were no accurate position descriptions at that point. Guild leadership proposed addressing inequities through demonstrating that the librarians' job descriptions were inaccurate and out of date. Thus we came to phase three--realigning salaries and creating pay grades that recognized the scope of responsibility of positions.

Harriet Newton, then LG president, Fontayne Holmes, the LG executive vice-president, and I, past president, were appointed by the Guild Board to be the job analysis committee. We knew we were making history with our proposal: 1) to move City Personnel Dept. to accept contemporary job descriptions, 2) to hire a job analysis expert to design an appropriate pay grade structure, 3) to negotiate a contract which recognized rank and file responsibility and skill, and would give career ladder opportunities which paralleled the administrative series.

That was in 1985. In mid-1989 I can look back with pride that the LG has moved the CAO's view of librarians' worth. It is not finished of course. No one negotiation ever totally resolves major conflict. The City's Personnel Dept. has yet to this day to accept and formally approve the new job descriptions which evolved out of the labor/management joint project (a real milestone in union/administrative history at LAPL). While pay grades have now been accepted for two classes in the librarian series, the CAO refused to pay grade the senior librarian series. Granting a larger bonus acknowledged disparity but logic mandates pay grades to parallel the worth of the administrative or management series.

Librarians who are yet unborn LAPL staffers will benefit from the clear mandate of the Librarians' Guild-to upgrade the relationship of our women-dominated work force with other professionals in the city. This local is unique both in AFSCME and in librarians' unions generally. We stand together because we really are all in there together.

21 years. In those first 10 or so years we grew in strength and position. The worker issue and professional issues were blended so well that each supported the other. The inequity of our compensation had been documented by management's own outside study in 1969. Our union has demonstrated in the 1980's that our professional commitment to equity can be negotiated in ground-breaking ways. Truly, in union there is strength.

We really are all in there together. ■

VI. The Nineties: 1990-1993

1990: Arthur Pond was elected President as the new decade began. His supportive Board consisted of Nancy Dennis, Camille Carter, Sybil-Blazej-Yee, Pearl Yonezawa, Gene Estrada, Billie Connor, Susan Odencrantz, Richard Kraus, Ann Maupin, Helene Mochedlover, Roy Stone, and Pat Spencer.

The selection process continued for a new City Librarian to take the library into the 1990's. Professional Concerns Vice President Billie Connor and her committee put together a packet of informational material about the Guild. This packet was sent to all six finalists for the position of City Librarian.

Major concerns of the Guild in 1990 were branch funding disparities, involuntary transfers, and security. New City Librarian Elizabeth Martinez Smith accepted an invitation to a Guild membership meeting, where she spoke about her goals for LAPL and answered members' questions.

1991: Arthur Pond began his second year as President. Michaella Johnson, Gene Estrada, Richard Kraus, Henry Garland, Sherry Van Sickle, Camille Carter, Nancy Dennis, Helene Mochedlover, Tracy Eason-Mochizuki, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Pat Spencer made up the rest of the Executive Board.

In an effort to correct branch funding discrepancies, money which had formerly gone to Central Library was allocated to branches by Administration. This caused a spirited protest by a group of library staff members. This group, which came to be known unofficially as the "Dirty Thirty", felt that the deficit was expected to be made up by Save the Books money, which was contrary to the purpose for which this fund was created. The "Dirty Thirty" were publicly reprimanded by City Librarian Elizabeth Martinez Smith in one of her first collisions with staff.

Tom Lippert, Guild President in 1971, died. Tom was instrumental in organizing the Guild and in signing up members. Since 1985 he had worked for the Los Angeles County Public Library, where he was head of the American Indian Resource Center.

At the end of 1991, Helene Mochedlover resigned after fourteen years as Communicator Editor. Under her guidance, the Communicator became the best professional library/union newsletter in the country, winning awards and having articles reprinted in many library literature anthologies.

1992: The new year brought a new Executive Board headed by Michaella Johnson as President. Other members were Joyce Purcell, Gene Estrada, Maggie Johnson, Dan Dupill, Sherry Van Sickle, Camille Carter, Nancy Dennis, Richard Kraus (new Communicator Editor), Tracy Eason-Mochizuki, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Ivan Corpeño-Chavez.

Budget cuts and the hiring freeze continued. 14.5 vacant positions were eliminated and approximately 30 Librarian II's faced administrative transfers. Of course, this meant remaining staff had to work harder with no extra compensation--there was a salary freeze, too. The LAPL for the 90's training was greatly resented as it took so many staff hours which could not be spared.

The riots or "civil disturbances" in Los Angeles in the wake of the Rodney King verdict destroyed John Muir and J. Serra branches. Both had been relocated to mini-malls while the branch buildings were being reinforced to meet earthquake standards.

APRIL FIRE REDUX — JOHN MUIR BRANCH 1992

By

**Rosalie Preston,
John Muir Branch**

The afternoon breeze had come up and there was again that smoky fire smell. Each time I'd noticed it over the last two days I'd thought of April 29, 1986, and the Central Library fire. Afterwards I'd helped salvage books and ever since that charred odor had reminded me of that terrible day and the sad aftermath.

The phone rang and it was Charlotte Jackson, our Regional Manager. "Bad news, Rosalie," she said, and I thought she meant that we would not be able to re-open on Monday as we'd expected. "We've just learned that John Muir Branch was burned." It was something I'd feared every time I heard of another mini-mall being set afire. But this was Friday afternoon and I'd thought we'd managed to survive. The breeze blew more strongly and it seemed now that the scent of ashes filling the air must be from the books which John Muir Branch had lost.

Fontayne Holmes then called me to express her sorrow. She'd worked with us for over a year to negotiate the lease for the four mini-mall units and set up the building in a way that made it one of the most attractive of the mini-mall locations. Now it and J. Serra lay in ruins.

Then I cried and thought of the loss to the community and how upset all of our regular library users would be. Being across 60th Street from the junior high school for a year and a half, I had developed even closer ties with the teachers and new principal and continued the good relationship I'd developed more than 11 years ago with the school librarian LaVerne Baker. Our Friends of the Library group had begun to grow again and we were making plans to work more closely with other community groups and agencies to evaluate our services as part of LAPL for the 90's though we already seemed to be attracting a representative number from all ethnic, age, and economic groups in the area.

Jennie Rodriguez called me next. Fontayne had just talked to her. (Our Branch Librarian was on vacation.) We both tried to remember what we'd left on our shared desk in the workroom. I

recalled a book on teenage alienation (Teenage Wasteland by Donna Gaines) which Ascot Branch had loaned me and which I hadn't had time to look at yet. And two summer youth employment applications which I was to pick up Saturday and return to the E.D.D. office on Avalon Tuesday afternoon. How could I contact those two boys to tell them to re-do the applications? My list of teens who'd received applications had been burned also. The pamphlet file which I'd spent so much time weeding and reorganizing into seven drawers and which helped us cope with school assignments and community referrals. The three books on writing poetry which I'd had the Literature Department send to us for a junior high English teacher and which had not been picked up; six years ago I'd "saved" three poetry books from the same Department because they'd been borrowed and in my house at the time of that fire. Now three others were lost.

And eleven years of collection development—the young adult section, the adult Spanish collection, the classic titles in adult fiction and assignment-related materials throughout the adult nonfiction section. Our reference collection! How could we ever afford to replace the Interpreter's Bible which I'd just shown to a regular patron the last day I'd been at the branch, a theology student who was so excited to discover it. And our set of Current Biography back to the 40's. And the Dictionary of American Biography, an old edition but useful for the assignments made on obscure Americans. And all the books we use daily during Black History month, many of which are now out of print. And the book Slave Narratives, kept in the reference collection. It was not well-used but Elva Gibson, our messenger clerk of many years and now deceased, had admonished the Branch Librarian and me never to withdraw it as it told in the former slaves' own words what slavery and then freedom had meant to them. We'd allowed room for it in weeding down the collection for our move to the temporary location, and now it, too, was lost to us. All of our branch history, the beautiful trailing plants tended by our green-thumb clerk-typist. The two new swivel desk chairs we'd received in the last year to replace the broken-down ones of the 50's. The microwave oven we'd had to beg from Branch Library Services as our Friends group never has that much money in its bank account to cover such things. Our four paperback racks which we'd gradually acquired over 9-10 years of pleading every budget cycle. The old solid maple tables and chairs from our old building and the small matching set in the children's room. And the photo of John Muir himself, in sepia tones, which hung on the wall in the old building and caused one young boy to ask, "Is that the owner?"

Over the weekend, all of our staff made their way to the site, just to be sure that there really was nothing to salvage. And there wasn't. Young adult books furthest from the flames remained on the shrunken metal shelving near a window like pieces of toast, their edges charred and rounded with the center area a pale brown. Smoke and even some flames continued for nearly a week afterwards.

As the following week progressed, we talked to nearby residents and learned that the fire was set about 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 30, that the target was most likely the Korean-owned nail shop on Vermont, and that unlike the Central Library fire six years before, L.A. Fire Department was delayed in arriving. Neighbors called and called, while residents of nearby apartments came with buckets of water to try to save the library.

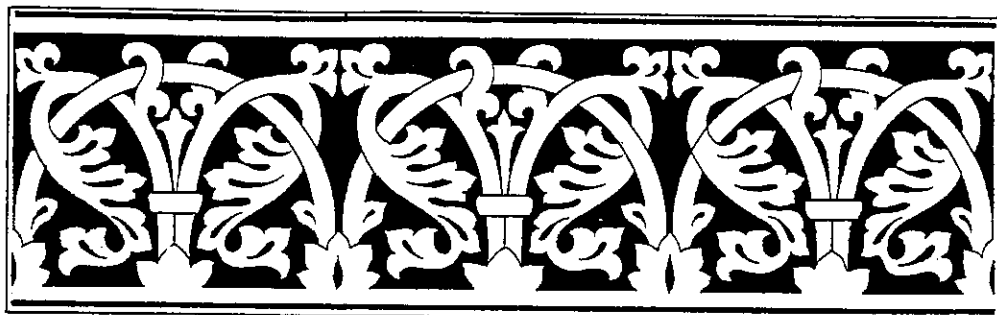
A group of teenaged boys, mostly Hispanic, had been in the area around that time—were they the arsonists? Was it an unknown adult? Was it part of an organized plan? There is no way for us to know. So in the weeks that followed, my rage and anger were directed variously at the ignorance of people who cannot foresee the consequences of their actions, who do not value the intellect (and how many of those there are in this country!), at Darryl Gates for allowing the community's rage on Wednesday night to get out of hand, towards Library Administration and the City of Los Angeles which had done nothing to protect the mini-mall sites (a nearby private library was saved because one employee stood outside on the Thursday talking to the teenagers), and towards the powers that be which had allowed the South-Central area to gradually lose all hope over the past 12 years.

Seeing books at other branches which we had once owned was a painful experience at first, as was answering reference questions without our collection, carefully developed over the past decade in spite of a shrinking materials budget. And I missed the contact with all of our regular patrons.

A fund-raising campaign, a second "Save the Books", was begun with Debbie Allen's \$10,000 contribution. The school librarian said she'd put up her old "Save the Books" poster in the school library with the new fund-raising information on it. But will we be allowed to select the specific books which our community needs? My fear is that we and J. Serra branch will become test sites for the Baker and Taylor ordering "profile."

Five weeks afterwards, I am finally able to drive to work without feeling depressed and unable to concentrate and without much reaction on seeing the burned shells of mini-malls all along the route. It is no longer as difficult to meet John Muir users as I work at nearby branches and to discuss plans for resumed service. I take comfort in seeing books which were in circulation returned to us. One day soon, they will again stand on our shelves among many new titles, a small reminder of our branch's 62-year history as a provider of library service to the surrounding community. ■

On September 18, 1992, a historic meeting occurred when the Board of Library Commissioners invited staff to come to an open forum and suggest alternatives to further budget cuts or possible workload reductions. 150-175 staff members attended from all divisions.



THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS MEET THE **S*T*A*F**

By

Roy Stone,
with David O'Brien,
#61 Fairfax

The word about the meeting spread around the system long before the actual invitation arrived: all staff members were invited to an after-work meeting to discuss the current fiscal situation; i.e., 'doing more with less'. In the weeks preceding the meeting there was a great deal of conjecture regarding administration--would they be present, and if so would that stifle criticism; regarding staff--would they turn out in large numbers; regarding staff comments--would they simply be restated administrative policies from some of the 'yes-people'? Who would attend, how many, what would they say, were questions in the minds of many.

Any doubts about how many would show up were dispelled as the staff, many driving long slow freeway miles, filed into the room. By the beginning of the meeting between two and three hundred staff members, ranging from principal librarians to messenger clerks, most of library administration, and three of the five commissioners were seated for the long anticipated open forum.

Commissioner Douglas Ring provided the impetus and the refreshments for the meeting. Seated on the auditorium stage at a table, he was joined by Commissioner Mary Lou Crockett and Commissioner Sanford Paris and City Librarian Elizabeth Martinez. Two floor microphones were placed in front of the stage for addressing the board; several hundred seats faced the stage in standard auditorium fashion. Most of the administrative staff were seated in the first several rows on the right. Commissioner Ring made the opening remarks to welcome everyone. The meeting began at about 6:45.

There were two representatives of the Librarians' Guild; first Michaela gave a brief presentation of ideas that Guild members and Executive Board viewed as having general support; Sherry Maylis represented the views of the Northeast Region, which had formulated its own consensus at the first of the regional meetings with the chief stewards. Both were well organized and represented the Guild very well. A wider view of problems that have faced this library system during the past year was presented next, pointing out the lack of communication, bad decisions, lack of staff input, etc. This and several other statements made may be found in this issue.

Then, in turn, all levels of staff faced the board with ideas, concepts, concerns, complaints, suggestions. The areas that dealt with the specific agenda of the meeting included allowing more flexibility, opposing layoffs, eliminating the adversarial positions taken by the three divisions, maintaining the freeze in administration, discontinuing tax forms distribution, discontinuing interlibrary loan, buying paperbacks instead of hardcovers, adding staff back to the regional and busier libraries, involving staff in the decision making process, reducing the materials budget to save

jobs, discontinuing the core collections, closing branches... keeping branches open with reduced hours, and much more. While they weren't part of the agenda, the Langston Hughes/Human Relations Commission report and the L.A.P.L. name change were mentioned several times.

Several key issues were raised throughout the evening. Noting the ineffectiveness of the public relations office, one person stated that it isn't a case of improving public relations, it is a case of having public relations. The next most frequently mentioned topic was L.A.P.L. for the 90's, with several people commenting that there is not time or staff available and that the company did not earn their money as consultants. Library administration was frequently hit for failing to include staff in the decision making process, failing to offer appreciation, failing to communicate. These issues were underscored by being voiced by staff members on many levels, from many different agencies.

The presentations, mostly well thought out, stated forcefully, quietly, nervously, enthusiastically, were completed about 9:00. Commissioners Crockett and Paris stated, in their closing comments, that the public relations office really did do more than people could see; that there were several issues to be studied and discussed at future meetings. Commissioner Ring expressed appreciation for the many ideas and the participation by the staff in a Friday night meeting. He asked that several items be placed on the next Commission meeting agenda, among them tax forms distribution, consideration of a rental collection, and reviewing the name change.

It may be fair to say that everyone was fairly tired and worn out by the end of this meeting, but there seemed to be a feeling of good spirits as they left; there seemed to be a reason to hope that the staff of this great library system will not be ignored any longer. As people waited in line for their cars, there were smiles as the evening's statements were reviewed.

This may be the beginning of a new awareness that the staff can provide useful information for the decision making process. There were no easy solutions to the very difficult times that the Los Angeles Public Library system faces, but at long last a window has been opened. It will be up to the staff to make use of it or let the library continue to be guided by those with other goals, other agendas, by those who do not yet understand the service that this library system provides for the residents of the City of Los Angeles. ■

1993: The new Executive Board had Ivan Corpeno-Chavez as President. Other board members were Joyce Purcell, Rosalie Preston, Gail Furci, Dan Dupill, Arthur Pond, Camille Carter, Laura Dwan, Richard Kraus, Martha Tarango, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Cheryl Maylis

The case of the "Dirty Thirty" dragged on and was finally laid to rest two years after it began, through the mediation of John Wyrrough and Carol Wheeler of Council 36.

THE DIRTY THIRTY EXPLAINED

By

Members of the
Editorial Staff

During the past year there have been many references to the "Dirty Thirty", but while some people knew the story behind the term, the great majority did not. The complicated situation is hereby submitted for your edification, and for the record.

During the 1991-92 budget year it became apparent that the proportion of materials funds for Central Library and branches would be dramatically altered. A committee of Principal Librarians from the regions and Adult Services recommended that funds be reallocated in a report to the City Librarian. Although many facets of that report remain unclear, even today, it was used in the administrative decision to reassign approximately 25% of Central Library's materials budget (\$467,000 in round figures) to Branch Library Services.

Central Library departments maintain a current and retrospective collection of books and periodicals which is utilized by library patrons throughout the city via interlibrary loan and telephone reference, as well as providing an important information resource for the western United States. Had Central Library Principal Librarians been involved in the committee analyzing the funding patterns it is possible that the reduction in the subject departments' funds would have been structured in a more manageable way, but as it was, the subject department managers were left with a disastrous dilemma: Would it be possible to maintain the collection with almost half-a-million fewer dollars to spend? The answer, clearly, was no. At a department heads' meeting in the summer of 1991, a suggestion was made that increasing the Save the Books allocation to subject departments could help bridge the budgetary gap that had been created. It was one of those meetings where important issues were agreed to silently and passively. Soon afterward, Save the Books funds were allocated to purchase serials which in prior years had been funded through the regular library materials budget.

There was an inherent problem with this decision since Save the Books funds are only to be used for the rebuilding and enhancement of the damaged and destroyed collections, not to replace city appropriations. To many staff members it seemed wrong to gather donations for one stated goal and then disregard it. This issue was discussed among the Librarians' Guild's leadership and in the Guild's professional concerns committee, and it was also mentioned to the City Librarian, who gave assurances that there were no problems with handling the funds in this manner. More time went by with no change in the situation.

Because the Guild was taking no action, one librarian wrote a letter to the administrators of the funds in question—the STB co-chairs: Mayor Bradley, Arco CEO Lodwick Cook, and Jack Shakely of the California Community Foundation. It was hoped

that they would investigate and make any appropriate changes. The only response came from the mayor, who merely indicated that he was forwarding the letter to the City Librarian. This resulted in a meeting between Ms. Martinez and the librarian who expressed concern. The City Librarian was displeased that the letter writer had not contacted her directly, but she explained that the City Attorney, Mr. Cook, and all other parties involved had been part of the decision-making process; it had been determined that the reallocation of funds was neither illegal nor improper but fell well within the purview of Administration's authority. In addition, she indicated that almost all the materials available for replacing the damaged or missing areas of the collection had already been purchased; the rebuilding was, for the most part, complete.

For a short time, this meeting put an end to active inquiries into the situation, though concerned staff still talked among themselves about the ethics involved, since hundreds of large and small donors had been told that their contributions would be used to rebuild the damaged collections. Now, some of this money was being substituted for the reallocated City funds—a practice that is normally prohibited in fundraising circles. Since there was no way to address this issue without going to the media, it was dropped for a time, tormenting those who believed that false pretenses were used to get people to donate to Save the Books.

It didn't take long for some of the "solid explanations" to unravel. First, subject department staff members indicated that there were many areas of the Central Library collections that were still in dire need of rebuilding, and that many, many items which would help restore the research and service capabilities of the burned collections were available for purchase. Next, it was learned that concerns existed in official circles about the way in which Save the Books funds were being spent; some STB officials were evidently not fully aware of the change in procedures. As these facts became known, the professional concerns committee of the Guild resumed discussion of the issue and drafted a letter for the Guild president to send, but questions were raised as to whether a Guild consensus existed on the controversy. Obviously not, since very few members were even aware of it. Despite the assurances of concerned members that this was a serious professional issue, the Guild Executive Board continued to debate whether it was appropriate for the president to sign the letter. Then, the wheels of Guild progress ground to a halt during the December holidays.

There were three choices for the people who were concerned about this: They could continue waiting for the cautious Executive Board to take action; they could contact the media; or they could send their own letter to the City Librarian and the STB co-chairs in the hope that multiple signatures would attract more attention than the lone name on the earlier letter. The latter alternative seemed the obvious choice; the concerned staff members drafted a letter, mentioned it to a few people during breaks and lunch, and in the total span of two hours over two days, thirty signatures were collected. Although this response made it clear that more would gladly join the list, the desire to resolve the problem as soon as possible and the belief that thirty was an adequate number of signatures combined to send the letter on its fateful path at this point.

As the letter writers had guessed, the signatures of thirty staff members, from clerks to Principal Librarians, caused an almost immediate reaction. On a Monday morning in early February 1992, all of the signers were called to attend a mandatory meeting at 1:00 P.M. Branch and Central staff members hastily rearranged their desk schedules. At the appointed time, all but three of the people who had signed the letter took their seats in the Central Library auditorium. Administrative staff Bob Reagan, Pres Blyler, and others took up a rear guard position. Elizabeth Martinez strode to the front of the room, her anger visible. She told the staff members that they were disloyal, that they were only trying to discredit her, that they wanted her to look bad, that they improperly contacted people outside the library system, and that this was the first she had heard of anyone having a problem with this issue. She then turned the meeting over to Betty Gay, who, she said, had been instructed to do whatever was necessary to "make sure this never happens again."

After Ms. Martinez left the meeting, Ms. Gay told the staff members that the letter was an improper way to resolve concerns of this type, that the chain of command should have been used, that once a decision has been made the staff should "give in and follow." And finally, Evelyn Hoffman angrily informed the group that if her fund-raising efforts failed it would be all their fault, and added that in most organizations those who disagree with administrative decisions seek employment elsewhere.

At the conclusion of the meeting, anger was simmering among the staff members who had been addressed so harshly; further insult was that three of them were given an official counseling session as the first step of the disciplinary procedure. The Librarians' Guild had no choice but to act at this point; stewards were contacted and grievances filed almost immediately. It was at this point that one of the thirty whose names appeared on the letter said that he had been erroneously included; of those remaining, some just wanted to forget the dressing-down they had received, or to formulate their own response, but a total of fourteen filed grievances, alerting the administrative powers that they would not abide the verbal mistreatment.

One source of partial consolation to the 29 staff members was the knowledge that their "inappropriate" letter accomplished a considerable portion of its intended objective. Save the Books officials determined that there indeed were problems with the handling of the funds. While money already spent on serials was not affected, all future STB materials purchases were to be solely for the "building and enhancing of the Central Library collections." The use of STB funds to replace City money ceased immediately, in the middle of the budget year, leaving a large financial gap in each department's 1991-92 materials budget.

The grievances continued until Council 36 Administrator John Wyrrough and Local 2626 Business Representative Carol Wheeler were invited to propose other ways to resolve the dispute. They worked with the administrative team on a letter as a possible solution. While the grievants wanted it to be a letter of apology, Administration was willing to be conciliatory but would hear nothing of apologizing. A starting point was reached when Administration submitted a letter, which was reviewed by the AFSCME mediators and chief stewards, and suggestions were provided to make it more meaningful and acceptable to the grievants. A fine line