

Other Issues in Human Resource Management



Overview

It has been 10 years since Terry began her career as an adult services librarian in a large public library system. She is still in the same library system but not in the same position. Five years ago, she was promoted to head of the Reference Department and discovered that she was not only a good manager but also enjoyed managing. Now, Terry has just been appointed associate director for Human Resources in her library system. She is excited about the new possibilities of this position. She had become accustomed to such HR functions as training, staff development, and employee performance appraisals in her previous department head position, but her new role gives her the opportunity to work full time in human resource (HR) administration, and she is looking forward to it. She already has plans for reviewing and updating the system's personnel policies and procedures and for getting them online so that they will be more easily accessible. She intends to implement a new career progression structure in response to the requests of many long-term employees who have asked for the system to help them advance in their careers. Terry soon will be working with the city's Disaster Preparation Office to come up with a plan to be implemented in the event of injuries or medical emergencies in the main library or any of its branches. The director also has asked her to serve as the library system's representative in the upcoming collective bargaining between the union that represents the clerical employees and the city. Terry knows that she will be busy, but she thinks that her new position will allow her to contribute not only to making the library a better place to work but also to it being a more effective organization overall.

In addition to the human resource management that is the responsibility of every manager, there are some larger HR responsibilities that usually are assumed either by designated HR managers in the library or by the library director. This chapter will discuss these more specialized HR functions and give examples of how they are implemented in libraries.

Many HR functions such as the ones discussed in the previous chapter are related to day-to-day activities and are carried out by managers throughout the organization. There are, however, some things that lie at the periphery of the HR functions that, nonetheless, are very important to the management of the human resources in any organization. This chapter will look at some of those topics, ranging from policies and procedures to health and safety issues in the workplace. In addition, there are a number of external forces that affect HR management. Two of the most important of these, legal protections for workers and unionization, will be discussed as well.

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Throughout this section of the book, much has been written about HR policies and procedures. The development of policies and procedures is an integral part of the HR function of libraries and information centers. Clearly defined policies are essential to an effective HR program in every library. A policy is a statement of action that commits management to a definite plan or course of action. Policies—concerning hiring and promotion, for example—play an important role in every organization. They are used as guidelines for decision making. By reducing ad hoc decision making, HR policies lead to greater consistency and continuity in an organization. All employees need to understand, through written policy statements, topics such as why salaries are administered in a particular way, how and when performance appraisals will take place, and what benefits are available.

Even in larger libraries with specialized HR departments, the formulation of policy is ultimately the responsibility of the director. In most libraries, however, the director establishes policy with input from others. For instance, a group of supervisors or staff members might recommend the establishment or modification of a particular policy. Discussing, evaluating, and writing the policy statement can encourage the participation of the groups that will be affected by it.

An effective set of HR policies serves a number of functions. First, the formulation of such policies requires library management to think through the needs of both employees and the organization. Second, such policies provide consistent treatment for all employees. Because each supervisor follows the same policies, the equal treatment of each employee is assured. Clearly stated policies minimize both favoritism and discrimination. Third, such policies assure continuity of action, even during periods when managers or supervisors change. New managers have a written standard to follow, and policy remains stable. Employees need not endure vacillations in policies when supervisors resign or retire.

A human resources policy may be broad. For instance, “The X Library does not discriminate against any employee on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, or national origin.” Policies also may be narrow. For instance, “All employees are

entitled to four weeks of paid vacation each year.” It must be remembered that a policy is a general statement of intent and does not spell out the exact methods by which it will be implemented. That function is accomplished by the procedure, which provides methods for carrying out a policy. It sets forth the steps that are needed to accomplish a particular result. A library will have procedures as to how vacation times will be allotted or how equal opportunity will be assured. For instance, if choice of vacation time is governed by length of service to the organization, this process would be described in the procedure manual.

In addition to policies and procedures, organizations also have rules. A rule is defined as a regulation or prescribed guide for conduct or behavior. Rules are the minimum standards of conduct that apply to a group of people and should apply uniformly to everyone in that group. Examples of rules are ones concerning the number of work hours required per day or the number of allowable absences. Rules serve to ensure predictability of behavior so that the organization can achieve its goals and function without undue disruption.

Obviously, the policies, procedures, and rules of an organization should be written and available to all. If they exist only in the mind of the director, they fail to serve the purposes for which they are developed. However, they must be more than written; they must be communicated to and understood by all employees. Policies locked in the director’s desk are just as ineffective as those that are unwritten.

How are policies, procedures, and rules communicated through an organization? First, special care must be taken to communicate these documents to supervisors so that they can administer them equitably and uniformly. Often, organizations have special training sessions to acquaint supervisors with policies or to review them periodically. Nonsupervisory employees commonly learn about policies, procedures, and rules through the employee handbook or manual, which usually is given to each new employee during orientation. In many libraries, employees can access such information through the library intranet. When any changes in policies, procedures, or rules are implemented, they should be communicated and explained by the employee’s immediate supervisor. Manuals should be updated, as should any material maintained online.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The topics of training and staff development were covered in chapter 11. However, career development differs from both training and staff development. A career is usually defined as a series of positions occupied by an individual during the course of a lifetime, and career development is a long-term attempt to help employees shape careers that are satisfying to them. Ultimately, of course, career development is the responsibility of the individual employee; nonetheless, the best organizations pay attention to this topic. Helping employees, especially high-performing employees, achieve a satisfying career reduces turnover and enables an organization to retain valuable human resources. At the very least, an organization should recognize the complex issues that employees face as they attempt to manage careers in the changing workplaces of the twenty-first century.

Typically, careers are thought to go through certain stages. These stages are illustrated in figure 12.1.

Figure 12.1—The Stages of a Career

Each of the stages is marked by different needs and perceptions. The first stage is precareer, when a person is beginning to think about what type of profession or job he or she would like to pursue as a career. The early career stage takes place at the time of organizational entry, when an individual enters the job market and begins to establish a career. A newly minted MLIS graduate taking a first professional job in a library would be at this entry stage. The challenges of this stage are getting a first position and becoming established in the organization. After a few years in a career, the individual enters the midcareer stage. He or she is familiar with the field now and perhaps has been promoted into some sort of managerial position. Plateauing, discussed later in this chapter, is one of the common problems associated with the midcareer stage. The late career stage is when individuals are firmly established in an organization and are typically of great value to it because of their expertise and organizational knowledge. These are the people who likely will serve as mentors to younger professionals. Individuals toward the end of that stage are likely to be looking ahead to retirement. The last stage in a career is retirement. Once, most people retired at age 65, but with the end of mandatory retirement, employees are retiring at different ages. Even some of those who have retired return to the workplace as part-time or temporary workers, either at their previous organization or at another one. These career stages are not always as clear-cut as figure 12.1 might imply. People move through the stages at varying rates of speed, and, in an era when many people switch careers, some may not go through all the steps outlined, whereas others might go through them several times. Some of the arrows in the figure point both forward and backward to reflect the reality that many people change careers and often retirees go back into the workforce.

In the past, employees often expected to go to work for one company and stay there until they retired. That expectation has been destroyed by the increased number of companies that have downsized, merged, or turned to temporary or contract workers. No longer can an employee, especially in the for-profit sector, expect a career working in a single company. Instead, the new pattern is one in which individuals are active agents in their own career development. In the not-for-profit sector, the organizational upheavals have been fewer, but employees still are affected by the new organizational rules that are in effect. The career ladders in most libraries are flatter than they used to be. An entry-level librarian who wants to move up the ladder to become a library director encounters many obstacles. The flattened organizations discussed in chapter 9 do not have as many levels of hierarchy as the ones they replaced, and new team-based organizations found in many libraries also have eliminated the need for many midlevel managers. The career progression pattern that used to exist in most large libraries, of becoming a department head and then an assistant or associate director and finally a director, is thus not as commonly available as before.



What Do You Think?

An article in *Fortune Magazine* contained the following quotation:

Close your eyes and picture an object that embodies the word “career.” If you joined the workforce say 15 or 20 or 25 years ago you’re probably hard-wired, as the techies say, to visualize your working life as a predictable series of narrow and distinctly separate rungs that lead straight up (or down)—in other words a ladder. Ha! Ha! Ha! My friend, the ladder has been chopped up into little pieces and dumped in the garbage pile. A crew of sanitation engineers disposed of it at dawn while you were dreaming.

The traditional system of career progression has been affected by the downsizing of organizations and the resulting loss of job security, the erosion of employee loyalty to the employer, and an environment in which new technology is always demanding fresh skills.

Do you think that the traditional ladder exists in the workplaces you know? If not, what is taking its place? How can organizations keep employees motivated without it?

Anne Fisher, “Six Ways to Supercharge Your Career,” *Fortune* 135 (January 13, 1997): 46.

In fact, careers are being viewed differently. There is a realization that not everyone wants to be a library director or a manager of any type. Different people have different aspirations. That is why the dual career ladders found in the LIS Education and Human Resources Utilization policy statement discussed in chapter 10 are helpful in allowing individuals who do not aspire to management to progress within a library. Also, there is some evidence that there are differences between age cohorts and that the wants of Generations X and Y may be different from those of the baby boom generation.¹ These younger employees do not identify job stability as an objective, and most expect to move and work at different institutions.²

Furthermore, it appears that today there are fewer people of all ages who want to move into jobs with more responsibility. The Families and Work Institute, a nonprofit research organization, conducted a national study to determine differences in the way generations view issues related to employment. Among college-educated men of Gen Y, Gen X, and the baby boom, only 52 percent wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility in 2002 compared to 68 percent in 1992. Among college-educated women, the decrease was even greater. Only 36 percent aspired to jobs with more responsibility in 2002 versus 57 percent in 1992.³

But, assuming an individual does want to progress up the administrative ladder, there are still roadblocks for many. Most libraries have been in a non-growth stage for a number of years. Well-qualified employees may find their

career advancement blocked because there are no openings in the positions directly above them, and, even worse, many of these positions are held by individuals who are only slightly older than the employee who is seeking advancement. Until the large number of baby boomers employed in libraries begins retiring, this situation likely will prevail.

Plateauing

When employees wish to progress but are unable to do so, they are said to be *plateaued*. Plateauing usually occurs during midcareer and can occur in two ways. Structural plateauing occurs when an individual is no longer promoted within the organization; content plateauing means that a job has become routine, and no challenging tasks are added to it.⁴ A special type of plateauing is sometimes referred to as the *glass ceiling*. The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that prevents women and minorities from ascending the institutional hierarchy. Although, in the past two decades, women and minorities have made significant progress into lower and middle management levels, neither is represented in upper management in proportion to their numbers in the general population.

All types of plateauing can result in employees who are stuck and are no longer stimulated by the promise of promotions or of new job content. Often, plateaued workers are frustrated, depressed, and nonproductive. More than half of the workforce are midcareer employees between the ages of 35 and 54. A recent survey of this group of employees found that they work longer hours than their older and younger counterparts, yet “only 43 percent are passionate about their jobs, just 33 percent feel energized by their work, 36 percent say they feel that they are in dead-end jobs, and more than 40 percent report feelings of burnout.”⁵

Although some employees accept plateauing as an inevitable part of a career, others do not. Supervisors often find that personnel problems such as irritation with fellow employees and intolerance of bureaucracy develop more frequently with plateaued employees than with others. In addition, valuable workers often seek employment elsewhere when they feel that they are stuck in a no-promotion situation.⁶

Managers can use a number of strategies, including those listed in table 12.1, to help employees overcome the stress of plateauing. These strategies include job enrichment, lateral transfers, cross-training, restructuring organizations to make them more horizontal so that decision-making power increases in the lower ranks, and educating employees about plateauing so that they will be prepared for periods of stagnation in their career development.⁷ Employees can be encouraged to take advantage of mentoring and networking opportunities that offer career support and possibilities for change. Managers of libraries, as well as other organizations, should attempt to find ways to make jobs interesting and to keep workers' enthusiasm alive if they want to maintain the effectiveness of employees whose careers have become plateaued. To crack the glass ceiling, managers should encourage women and minorities to apply for promotions as openings occur.

TABLE 12.1 Human Resources Practices that Help Overcome the Problems of Plateauing

<i>Performance Management</i>
1. Fight negative stereotyping with accurate appraisals
2. Ask around to appreciate fully how employees contribute
<i>Training</i>
1. Train for the future, not for advancement
2. Train everyone to contribute, not just the fast-trackers
<i>Career Development and Staffing</i>
1. Broaden opportunities to grow on the job
2. Remove roadblocks to lateral and downward moves
3. Help employees identify new challenges
<i>Compensation</i>
1. Pay employees for performance, knowledge, or teamwork
2. Look beyond financial compensation
3. Check to see if your perks send the right messages
<i>Human Resources Planning</i>
1. Determine how many employees are plateaued
2. Determine what proportion of plateaued employees are successful

Source: Adapted from Deborah E. Ettington, "How Human Resource Managers Can Help Plateaued Managers Succeed," *Human Resource Management* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 228.

It must be remembered, however, that some employees welcome plateauing, at least at certain times in their careers. It is not unusual for employees to feel overwhelmed by their jobs, especially because the growth of technology is breaking down the barrier between work and personal lives. Although some employees still derive their primary sense of who they are from their jobs, many others seek fulfillment in different ways. These employees would prefer to focus their energy not on their jobs but on their families, volunteer work, hobbies, or other activities. It also must be recognized that employees place a different amount of emphasis on success in the workplace at different times in their lives. This is especially evident when employees are attempting to balance family responsibilities with those of the job. Someone who is caring for small children or an elderly parent may need reduced pressures at work for awhile, but that individual may wish to become more job focused and advance in his or her profession a bit later. Once again, employers need to realize that there is no one right approach. There must be flexibility to meet the needs of different employees. One expert has suggested that the corporate ladder be replaced by a corporate lattice—a more adaptive kind of framework,

which allows an individual to move in many different directions, not just up and down.⁸

Mentoring

Mentoring is a specialized form of career development. The term *mentor* is used to describe an influential person who significantly helps another, usually younger, person reach his or her major goals. Although mentoring always has existed in organizations of all types, only in the last few decades has the importance of this process been fully recognized. There has been a growing interest in mentoring in all fields. The reason for this is the clear link between career success and having a mentor. Many studies provide evidence of this link; their findings are fairly consistent in stating that very few individuals advance to the top administrative ranks in an organization without the help of a mentor or several mentors.⁹

There are four functions that can be a part of mentoring: teaching, psychological counseling and emotional support, organizational intervention, and sponsoring. The context and meaning of the term is adjusted slightly by each mentor and protégé. No two mentoring experiences are exactly alike, because no two people or set of organizational circumstances are exactly alike.¹⁰

The need for the mentor varies at different points in the protégé's career, and the things a mentor does for a protégé also differ. New employees need a mentor to help them learn more about the details of the job and the organization. As the protégés become more technically competent and begin to ascend the organizational ladder, the need for teaching might be less important than the need for emotional support. When the appropriate times for promotion and advancement occur, the mentor can be most helpful by providing organizational intervention and sponsoring the protégé to individuals in the higher echelons of the organization.

The advantages to the protégé are clear. But, because mentoring involves a considerable investment on the part of the mentor, it may be harder to understand what causes individuals to serve in such a capacity. Most mentors do not enter into such a relationship from altruism alone. The benefits are almost always mutual, and the mentoring role is almost always professionally rewarding. Sometimes, the mentor receives job assistance from the protégé and secures a valuable ally within the organization. In addition, the mentoring procedure causes the mentor to reexamine the day-to-day workings of the organization, which usually causes the mentor to learn more about it. A protégé who succeeds can make a mentor look very good. One of the responsibilities of present-day management is developing talent. The protégé therefore validates the mentor's worth to the organization. Having protégés who can help perform the mentor's job shows that the mentor is a manager who knows how to delegate well. And as a protégé advances, the mentor not only shares in the glory but also builds up a strong network of past and present protégés. Finally, many mentors derive great personal pleasure out of the process. They enjoy teaching and feel a sense of personal gratification as the protégé's career advances. They are pleased to see the continuity of their own work carried on by the protégé.



Try This!

If you are at a stage in your career at which you could use a mentor, try to find one. First, clarify your mentoring needs. Think about individuals who might be able to serve as your mentor. Are there possible mentors you have served with on committees or someone whose ideas you respect? If so, you might approach the individual and indicate that you are interested in learning more about the organization and ask if he or she would be willing to meet with you periodically on an informal basis to offer advice and insight into the organization. If you do not personally know someone who might serve as a mentor, try networking with your friends and colleagues to see if they might have suggestions.

There are more individuals who would like to have mentors than those who actually have them. Some organizations have established formal mentoring programs in which new employees are provided a mentor. These programs sometimes succeed, but mentoring relationships that arise spontaneously usually are more successful because both the mentor and the protégé see the value of each other without being forced into a relationship. Some mentors are now off-site and advise through e-mail.¹¹

Mentoring relationships, both formal and informal, should be encouraged by organizations as a means of career development and growth. But mentoring sometimes can have a darker side. Roma Harris has pointed out that because mentoring is by definition designed just for a few individuals, it may pose barriers that impede the progress of many librarians who are interested in career advancement but are not chosen as protégés.¹² Another problem with mentoring is that mentors usually are drawn toward mentoring those who are like themselves, and this unconscious bias often leads to an uneven availability of mentoring opportunities. And because mentoring requires the development of a personal relationship between the mentor and the protégé, it occasionally results in claims of sexual harassment or discrimination.¹³ There may be a need for formal guidelines to accompany a mentoring program. Overall, however, the benefits of a well-designed program to provide mentoring seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES IN THE LIBRARY

Employers have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their employees. Today's workers are demanding a more healthful environment in which to work, and most managers are trying to provide such a workplace. Most libraries today are smoke free so that nonsmokers are not exposed to secondhand smoke. Many libraries have security and disaster procedures in place to attempt to prepare for unexpected emergencies.

Physical Stress

Overall, libraries provide fairly safe workplaces. However, one type of physical problem found more commonly in libraries today is injury caused as a result of the use of computers. Now that computers are used as a tool by almost every category of worker in a library, more and more employees are suffering from a condition known as repetitive stress injury (RSI), most frequently carpal tunnel syndrome. RSI has been common for a long time in employees working in factories who perform the same motion repetitively throughout the day. Now, the same condition is appearing in libraries and information centers where staff spend a large part of the day working on computer keyboards. According to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), over the past 25 years ergonomic injuries have gained recognition as a major factor in workplace health. One survey found that 3.1 percent of staff members in Association of Research Libraries libraries are affected by carpal tunnel syndrome.¹⁴ As more employees spend more time in front of computers, the number of these repetitive stress injuries is likely to increase.

Libraries and information centers have begun to take steps to prevent RSI and to provide relief to those already exhibiting symptoms. Many libraries have invested in ergonomic chairs, workstations, and keyboards. Other libraries have instituted more frequent breaks, increased the types of activities within a job, started exercise sessions, or provided training in attempts to alleviate and prevent RSI. Many libraries have established ergonomic standards and policies to govern the use of computers.¹⁵ Because the use of computers will continue to be an essential part of the work life of most library employees, managers of all types need to be mindful of this physical stress to prevent the development of more cases of carpal tunnel syndrome.

RSI appears to be the most harmful result of using computers. Although a few years ago there was concern about radiation resulting from video display terminals (VDTs), studies have shown that the radiation produced by computer terminals of all types is slight. More common complaints are of eyestrain, back and neck aches, and body fatigue, which probably result from sitting in one position for too long. Again, good ergonomic practices, such as proper positioning of monitors, supportive chairs, good lighting, adequate ventilation, and more frequent breaks from working on the computer can alleviate many of these complaints.

Job-Related Mental Stress

Employees in all types of organizations are susceptible to stress, which is defined as the body's response to any demand placed upon it. Although libraries sometimes are considered to be stress-free environments, they are not, and library employees can be subjected to various sources of stress.



What Do You Think?

A recent article in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* began:

Our subject, a college librarian, is near the end of an exhausting workday which included teaching three hour-long library instruction sessions to first year students enrolled in a required, multiple section English Composition course. He ate lunch while attending still another campus committee meeting. He has spent the last month at work in a similar fashion and has been feeling quite stressed, perhaps even “burned out.” While at the reference desk, he interrupts his collection development activities (for which he is facing a deadline) to help a student get background information on a future profession she is considering. As she leaves with the information she needed, he thumbs through one of the reference books he had shared with her, the 2000 edition of the *Jobs Rated Almanac*, curious to see how it has rated his profession in terms of stress. Imagine our subject’s feelings on learning that, of the 250 occupations considered, librarianship is ranked ninth-lowest in terms of job stress, about the same as for book-keeper. Bookbinder and barber are ranked higher in terms of stress.

Is librarianship a stressful profession? If you think so, what produces the stress? What can libraries do to promote less stressful workplaces?

Deborah F. Sheesley, “Burnout and the Academic Teaching Librarian: An Examination of the Problem and Suggested Solutions,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 27, no. 6 (November 2001): 447.

Today, more employees in all types of organizations, including libraries, are reporting feeling stress or tension as a result of their jobs. Without a doubt, among librarians, part of the cause of this stress is the increasing rate of change within the profession. Librarians, now more than ever, are being asked to master new methods and technologies for doing their jobs. Technology has speeded up the way things are run; e-mail, faxes, and instant messaging have cut the time needed for communication but also have added pressure to get things done faster. Organizational change of all types, if too rapid and frequent, may result in stress. In addition, because of the budget cutbacks in many libraries, librarians often are asked to assume more responsibilities.

Stress arises from many sources. Role ambiguity arises when positions are poorly defined and employees do not know what is expected of them. Some librarians feel the stress of what is known as role conflict when different groups of people hold different views about how that employee should behave. Oftentimes in libraries and information centers, there is tension between the professional and support staff when roles are blurred and changing.¹⁶ In some organizations, interpersonal demands cause stress when an employee must

constantly deal with unpleasant or abrasive co-workers or supervisors. In addition, in many libraries, the effect of downsizing has resulted in a smaller number of employees doing the same amount of work.

Of course, not all stress-related disorders are caused by workplace stress; many employees have stresses caused by off-the-job factors, such as family or financial problems. Sometimes, stress can be produced by the conflict between job and home responsibilities, especially in two-career families with children. Table 12.2 shows some of the common causes of stress.

Stress is not always bad, and different employees are able to tolerate different levels of stress. Without some stress in organizations, there likely would be much less energy and productivity. Many people work more effectively under conditions of mild stress. When there are deadlines looming, many people work faster and better. However, the same deadline often can cause other employees to experience extreme stress. It is when stress is severe and unending that it becomes destructive.

Although it has been commonly thought that managers feel more stress than lower-level employees, recent research has shown that this is not true. For example, a study of 270,000 male employees at a large corporation found that the rate of coronary disease increased at successively lower levels of the organization. It is thought that top-level executives feel less stress because they have greater control over their work than employees at lower levels.¹⁷ The more control employees have over their own work and the more information they have about possible changes that will occur, the less likely they are to feel job-related stress.

Stress may be evidenced in a number of ways, including absenteeism, irritability, tardiness, and inability to perform well. One of the jobs of the manager is to help identify the cause of the stress and try to help eliminate it, if possible. All managers need to be aware of the individual differences in their employees and help them cope with the stresses in their lives. If the effects of the stress are more than the manager can handle, the employee should be referred to a health professional for diagnosis and treatment.

TABLE 12.2 Common Causes of Stress

Personal causes	Financial problems Family problems Illness	Personality traits ¹
Organizational causes	Interpersonal demands Role conflict or ambiguity Technology	Downsizing Leadership Constant change

¹ An interesting study that investigates the relationship between personality traits and various aspects of job satisfaction, including stress, is Jeanine M. Williamson, Anne E. Pemberton, and John W. Lounsbury, "An Investigation of Career and Job Satisfaction in Relation to Personality Traits of Information Professionals," *Library Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2005): 122–41.

Burnout

Burnout is a specific type of stress-induced condition that affects individuals engaged in so-called people work. Burnout results from emotional strain and the stress of interpersonal contact, especially from dealing with people who are having problems. Individuals suffering from burnout typically experience exhaustion, both physical and emotional; a negative shift in the way they respond to other people; and a loss of self-esteem. Remedies for burnout can be found at two levels. At the personal level, employees should structure their lives outside of work to give them a sense of comfort and control. Employees should pursue an active life outside of the work environment. The managerial responsibilities for aiding workers with burnout include knowing the symptoms of burnout and making workers familiar with them, holding staff meetings that can be used for staff support, and fostering a sense of teamwork among the staff. If staffing patterns permit, managers also may restructure jobs so that librarians do not spend as much time with patrons or revise schedules to shorten periods of time spent at public services desks. Workshops in stress management or time management also can be useful.



Try This!

Are you feeling burned out or overstressed because of your job? Try these tips suggested in *Library Mosaics* to reduce those feelings.

1. **Find time to play.** You need to get away from the workplace and spend time with family and friends.
2. **Get physical.** Try to work physical activities into your day and focus on something else besides work when you are exercising.
3. **Set realistic objectives.** Most stress arises when you feel overwhelmed at work. Try to prioritize your projects. Do not strive for perfection; good enough will do.
4. **Use your support network.** Turn to people who will support, encourage, and give you candid feedback.
5. **Keep your options open within your present organization.** Individuals who burn out usually feel that they have no way out. Look for other areas of the organization in which you might be happier. Update your résumé and be prepared to show what you can contribute to the organization in other areas.
6. **Leave if you have to.** If there is no sign that the situation will change, prepare to look for another job. Check out job advertisements, network, and begin to look for another position.

“Snuffing Out Burnout,” *Library Mosaics* 11, no. 2 (March/April, 2000): 22.

Managers should pay special heed to recent research that has demonstrated the importance of the organizational context on burnout. Burnout can be caused by managers who do not respect the work done by employees. When employees do not feel that the organization values and respects them, they often experience burnout. Managers who belittle or patronize employees can be a cause of burnout and rapid staff turnover.¹⁸

It is important to try to prevent burnout because it is rarely confined to one worker. Employees with burnout who display a negative attitude toward their jobs, customers, or colleagues are sure to have a negative effect on their fellow employees. To keep burnout from spreading, managers need to recognize the symptoms and prevent it whenever possible.

Violence and Crime in the Workplace

Violence and crime are increasingly serious problems in almost all workplaces. Although libraries are not places where violence often occurs, violence is still not unknown in them. There have been several recent cases of librarians being murdered while on the job, and assault and robbery (of both staff and patrons) and vandalism are unfortunately relatively common in libraries. Libraries have tried hard to make themselves seen as accessible places, and this accessibility has sometimes left them vulnerable. There is a perception among most people that libraries are safe places, and often users are not as vigilant as they should be. Many libraries, especially in urban areas, have been affected by the increasing numbers of homeless and mentally ill individuals who come to the library to get off the street. Library buildings, with their often relatively deserted stack areas and isolated work spaces, provide secluded spots for individuals who are attempting to prey either upon property or upon other individuals. There is also a perception that violators will not be prosecuted in libraries as readily as they would be in other types of organizations.

Library managers are now more aware than they once were of the possibility of workplace violence, and many are now taking measures to attempt to lessen it. Many libraries have installed surveillance cameras to increase patron and employee safety and to decrease vandalism. Other libraries have hired additional security people.¹⁹

There is no way to make any environment completely safe for workers and customers, but libraries should consider implementing the following measures to increase their safety:

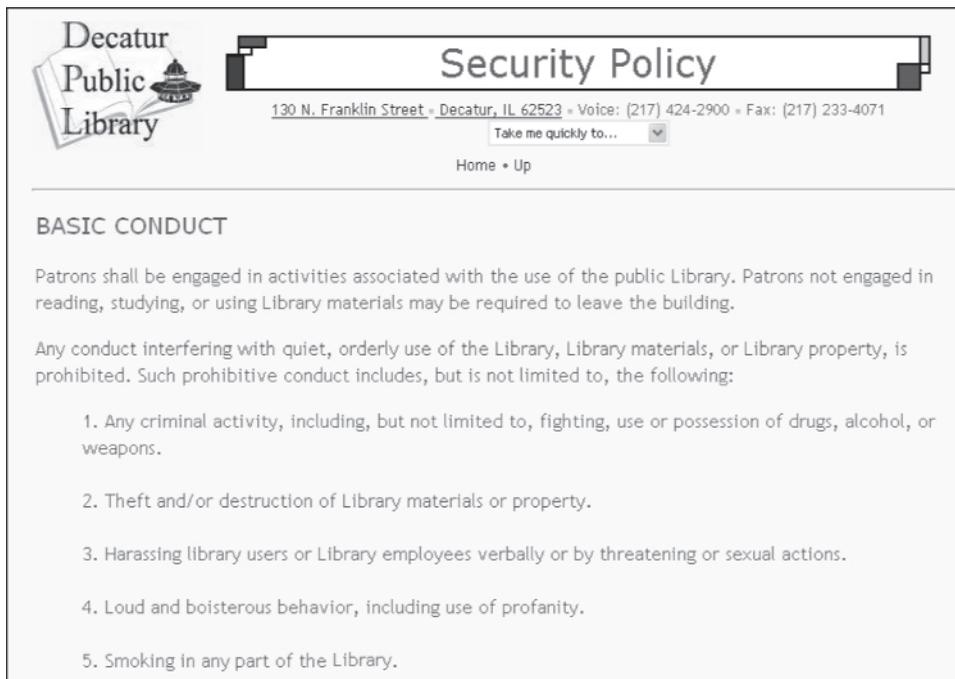
1. Have policies in place that ban all weapons, including weapons in vehicles in the parking lot.
2. If conditions warrant, require employees to submit to searches for weapons or to determine their fitness for work.
3. Have an organizational policy that states that no violence or threat of violence will be tolerated.
4. Have an organizational policy that requires employees to report acts or threats of violence to management.

5. Develop relationships with mental health experts who may be contacted for assistance and recommendations in dealing with safety and emergency issues.
6. Train managers and all who work with the public to recognize the warning signs of violence and train them in techniques to diffuse potentially violent situations.
7. Equip desks in public areas with panic buttons to alert security officers immediately if help is needed.²⁰

Most libraries have preparedness programs for natural disasters such as floods or hurricanes, but fewer have instituted such programs for violence in the workplace. All libraries need manuals relating to emergencies, and librarians should be trained in what to do in the event an emergency arises. There also should be clearly stated security policies to protect librarians and patrons. A partial example of a security policy may be seen in figure 12.2. All managers hope that they never need to use such a policy, but they always should be prepared in the event something does occur.

Overall, most libraries are focusing more than ever before on the health and safety of their employees. Many encourage employees to participate in exercise, weight loss, or other wellness programs. Employee assistance programs have been instituted at a number of organizations to provide help to employees

Figure 12.2—A Part of the Security Policy of the Decatur Public Library



Decatur Public Library

Security Policy

130 N. Franklin Street • Decatur, IL 62523 • Voice: (217) 424-2900 • Fax: (217) 233-4071

Take me quickly to...

Home • Up

BASIC CONDUCT

Patrons shall be engaged in activities associated with the use of the public Library. Patrons not engaged in reading, studying, or using Library materials may be required to leave the building.

Any conduct interfering with quiet, orderly use of the Library, Library materials, or Library property, is prohibited. Such prohibitive conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Any criminal activity, including, but not limited to, fighting, use or possession of drugs, alcohol, or weapons.
2. Theft and/or destruction of Library materials or property.
3. Harassing library users or Library employees verbally or by threatening or sexual actions.
4. Loud and boisterous behavior, including use of profanity.
5. Smoking in any part of the Library.

Source: See the complete policy at Decatur Public Library, “Security Policy” (2000), <http://www.decaturlib.il.us/policies/security.html>.

with various types of personal problems, such as alcoholism or drug use. Many library managers are becoming better at helping prevent both physical and mental stress. Managers realize that it is cost-effective to invest in the health of employees, because healthier employees are more productive than those who are suffering from physical or mental conditions. Making the library workplace environment a safe and healthy one is a win-win situation for employees and employers.

EXTERNAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN RESOURCES— LEGAL PROTECTIONS

All of the subjects discussed so far relate to specific internal HR functions found in libraries of all types. There are, however, two broader external forces that have had a profound impact on human resources work in many libraries. These issues are (1) legal protections for employees and (2) unionization.

The number of federal and state regulations relating to the HR function of management has increased over past decades, and, today, virtually every HR function from hiring to firing is affected by them. These regulations have provided workers with more legal protections, especially in the area of equal employment opportunity. Nonetheless, there are still some areas in which employees have very few rights. Almost every employee not covered by a collective-bargaining contract or civil or state service rules is at risk for dismissal because of the employment-at-will principle that permits either party in an employment contract to cancel it at will. Although legislation protects workers from being fired for such reasons as age, gender, national origin, or disability, workers not covered by either collective bargaining or civil service regulations have few legal remedies to combat being fired or discharged.

There are other areas in which workers have limited protection. Although the right to free speech is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, managers in the private sector can legally discipline workers who say something damaging about the corporation or its practices.

The right to privacy is another area in which employees, especially those in the private sector, do not have clear protections. Privacy issues have become a growing concern for workers with the growth of electronic technologies of all types. For instance, although the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 prohibits outside interception of electronic mail by a third party, the act does not affect inside interception. This means that, unless an individual organization has a policy prohibiting it, employers can read their staff's e-mail, listen in on telephone conversations, install small video cameras anywhere, and search employees' lockers and desks. The use of electronic surveillance is growing as more and more organizations monitor people using personal computers by counting keystrokes and mistakes.²¹ On the whole, these new monitoring technologies are considered to be extensions of managerial prerogatives, and employees currently have few legal tools to combat them.²² Obviously, this electronic monitoring can be beneficial if it can prevent or disclose misconduct or if supervisors use it in training to give constructive feedback to help

individuals improve. But studies also have shown that employees who know that they are monitored are more likely to be highly dissatisfied and to suffer from such conditions as fatigue and hostility.

Suggestions for reform of electronic monitoring have come from many sources, and the proposed reforms almost all agree in advocating that employers do the following: monitor in the open, monitor only relevant activities, monitor only periodically, and encourage employee participation in setting up the monitoring standards and practices.²³ Employers have the right to monitor employees' communications and activities but still should take care that they do so only when necessary. Employees should be familiar with and understand the policies relating to surveillance and monitoring.

Another challenging legal issue in the workplace is that of random testing for the use of drugs. Many employees feel that drug testing is a violation of their privacy, but, in most states, employers of all types have the right to screen employees for drug and alcohol use. These types of tests are often mandatory for certain positions, such as airline pilot.

Although the rights of employees are better protected now than they were in the past, there are still areas in which few protections exist. Because the employment-at-will rule allows employers the right to discharge workers for any cause, employees who wish to maintain a job sometimes are subjected to practices in the workplace that they feel violate their privacy. Many of these privacy violations are extremely resented by workers and cause mistrust and ill feelings on the job. The rights of both employers and employees need to be balanced. Supervisors should strive, as much as possible, to show respect for employees' privacy and dignity, even when they are not legally obliged to do so.

Equal Employment Opportunities

Many of the legal protections enjoyed by workers are found in the area of equal employment opportunity (EEO). Equal employment opportunity refers to the right of all people to be hired and to advance in a job on the basis of merit or ability. Discrimination against protected classes of people in any aspect of employment is now prohibited by law in the United States.

Before the passage of EEO laws, employers were able to hire, promote, or fire whomever they wished. It is sometimes forgotten how much various civil rights rulings have changed the entire field of HR management. For just one example of this change, see the job advertisements listed in table 12.3. These advertisements were printed in *Library Journal* in 1959, before the advent of civil rights protections for job applicants. Advertisers were free to look for applicants of a specific gender or age.

Today, women, racial minorities, older workers, and people with disabilities have acquired substantial employment rights under the law. The equal employment opportunity laws have exerted a profound influence on the U.S. labor scene. HR functions, such as hiring, interviewing, testing, training, promoting, appraising, disciplining, and compensating, have been affected by equal employment opportunity laws.

TABLE 12.3 Position Descriptions from the Classified Advertising Sections in the January 15 and July 1959 Issues of *Library Journal*

Stymied in your present job? Want to broaden your experience? Like to work in a brand-new building under ideal conditions? Insist on liberal fringe benefits? Want faculty status? If so, and if you are a male, you may be interested in the position of Assistant Cataloger ...
Director, Male, Challenging opportunity in fast-growing Long Island suburb of 40,000. New air-conditioned building ...
Assistant Director. Male. Newly enlarged public library in historic ...
Position in small college for young woman interested in cataloging and general reference.
Cataloger (Assistant Librarian) needed for small, Midwestern liberal arts college. MA, MS in librarianship, or M.Lbn. desired. Either young female or male (preferred) ...
Cataloger (half time or less) Reference, rank of assistant librarian, faculty status, needed by small Midwestern university. Woman under 40 ...
Assistant librarian, Responsibility for main library service in a city-county. Man or woman under forty.
Circulation-Reference Librarian needed immediately for active modern library in progressive community with 20,000 residents. Real opportunity for young woman with initiative ...

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Other Important Federal Legislation

Although federal laws prohibiting discrimination against certain groups of employees go back more than one hundred years to the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1871, the most powerful impetus to equal employment opportunity came with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII of that act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in all employment practices, including hiring, firing, promotion, compensation, and other conditions or privileges of employment. The primary aim of this legislation was to make overt discrimination actionable in all phases of employment. Title VII has been interpreted in the courts many times since its passage. These court decisions have established that an employer's practices are discriminatory if they affect any one of the groups protected by Title VII in an adverse manner, even if the employer had no intention to discriminate.

It is against the law for any organization to have policies and practices that have an adverse impact on any protected groups, unless that organization can demonstrate that those policies and practices are justified by business necessity. Business necessity has been narrowly interpreted to mean that the employer must show overriding evidence that a discriminatory practice is essential to the safe and efficient operation of the firm. Once a plaintiff shows

a prima facie case of discrimination by demonstrating adverse impact upon any protected group, the burden of proof falls on the organization to justify its employment policy or practice.

Title VII as amended by the Equal Opportunity Employment Act of 1972 covers all private employers of 15 or more people, all private and public educational institutions, state and local government, employment agencies, labor unions, and apprenticeship and training programs. Thus, most libraries in the United States are covered by Title VII. It is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a five-member independent agency appointed for a five-year term by the president of the United States with the advice and consent of Congress. The EEOC investigates discrimination complaints and develops guidelines to enforce Title VII.

The federal laws relating to EEO are too numerous to discuss comprehensively in this section. Highlights of the legal framework are presented in a table 12.4. Most states also have antidiscrimination laws that are sometimes more comprehensive than the federal laws. For instance, at the present time the federal antidiscrimination laws do not extend to cover sexual orientation, but discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is part of the antidiscrimination laws of many states.

Affirmative Action and Comparable Worth

Today's workplaces are much more diversified than those in the past because of the passage of legislation requiring equal opportunities in hiring, promotion, and other personnel practices. Although it has been more than forty years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, there are still many unsettled areas in EEO. Two of these are affirmative action and comparable worth.

Affirmative action refers to a set of specific procedures designed to ensure an equitable distribution of women and minorities within an institution. Affirmative action was created in 1965 by Executive Order 11246, which required government contractors to have a written plan to remedy the effects of past discrimination. Any organization that holds a government contract of a certain size is required to have a written affirmative action plan. Many other institutions have voluntarily produced such plans.²⁴ The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) of the Department of Labor administers the order.

Despite the belief of some, affirmative action does not require fixed quotas, preferential hiring, or the employment of unqualified people. Affirmative action does, however, require an organization to determine whether there are fewer minorities and women working in particular jobs in the organization than reasonably would be expected by their availability in the workforce. It also requires organizations to establish goals and timetables for remedying any underutilization that might be identified.

Despite the impact of affirmative action legislation over the past three decades, both the federal and state commitment to affirmative action seems to be weakening, and the future of affirmative action is unclear. Opponents of affirmative action have two major objections to it. They argue either that it has worked so well

TABLE 12.4 Major U.S. Federal Legislation Relating to Equal Opportunity in the Workplace

Federal Law	Date	Provisions of Legislation
The Equal Pay Act	1963	This act requires all employers to provide equal pay to men and women who perform work that is similar in skill, effort, and responsibility and that is performed under similar working conditions. The only disparity permitted in payment of wages is disparity resulting from a seniority system, a merit system, a system that measures earning by quantity or quality of production, or a differential based on any factor other than sex.
The Civil Rights Act	1964	Title VII of this act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in all employment practices, including hiring, firing, promotion, compensation, and other conditions or privileges of employment.
The Age Discrimination Act	1967	Prohibits age discrimination against persons who have reached the age of forty in hiring, discharge, retirement, pay, and conditions and privileges of employment decisions. The act also restricts mandatory retirement.
Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA)	1970	Establishes mandatory health and safety measures in organizations.
Vocational Rehabilitation Act	1973	Prohibits discrimination based on physical or mental disability. Its provisions were strengthened in the ADA described below.
Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)	1985	Requires employers to offer health insurance coverage on a temporary basis to employees who have been terminated or laid off. The insurance is to be paid for by the employee and ordinarily is available for up to 18 months after the change in employment status.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	1990	Bars discrimination against individuals who have disabilities. A person is considered disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of life's major activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. An employer must not deny a job to a disabled person if the person is qualified and able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation. If a disabled person is otherwise qualified but unable to perform an essential function without accommodation, the employer must make the accommodation, unless that would cause undue hardship.
Civil Rights Act	1991	Creates rights to compensatory and punitive damages, including the right to jury trial, for individuals who are the victims of intentional discrimination as defined by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are caps on both the compensatory and punitive damages, except for racial discrimination; these caps are based not on the seriousness of the discrimination but on the size of the employer's work force.
The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	1993	FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks unpaid, job-protected leave to employees for causes including childbirth, adoption, their own serious health problems, or those health problems of a close family member.
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act	1996	Allows employees who change jobs to switch health insurance plans and get new coverage despite preexisting health conditions.

that it is no longer needed or that it is a means of reverse discrimination against individuals who are not in the preferred classes and thus favors women and minorities at the expense of more qualified white males.²⁵ Recent court decisions have narrowed the scope of affirmative action while still upholding its value. As the workforce becomes more diversified and as former minority groups become the majority in parts of the United States, affirmative action programs are coming under increasing scrutiny, and their future is uncertain.

Comparable worth, an issue that is closely related to equal pay, began to be discussed in the 1980s. At the heart of this issue is the fact that many occupations in our society are segregated by gender; men are heavily concentrated in certain types of occupations, and women are concentrated in others. At the same time, women who work are, on average, paid less than men who work. In 2003, the median earnings of women who worked full time were 80 percent of the earnings of men who worked full time.²⁶ Part of this disparity can be attributed to the fact that the occupations in which women are concentrated pay less than the occupations in which men are concentrated. Because librarianship is a profession that is approximately 80 percent female, salaries of both male and female librarians are adversely affected. The Equal Pay Act, passed in 1963, made it illegal to pay one gender less than the other for doing substantially the same work on jobs under similar working conditions requiring equivalent skills, effort, and responsibilities.

Advocates of comparable worth say the concept of equal pay for equal work should be broadened to include equal pay for comparable work. For example, a job in a profession dominated by women, such as librarianship, which requires a certain level of education and experience, should pay the same salary as a job in a profession dominated by men, such as engineering, if that job requires comparable (but not identical) education and work experience. Comparable worth is based not on jobs being the same, but on them being comparable, based on an evaluation of the intrinsic worth or difficulty of that job in relation to other jobs in that organization or community.



What Do You Think?

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 requires equal pay when men and women are doing substantially the same work. Comparable worth would extend this principle to work requiring comparable skills, training, effort, and responsibility. People hold widely varying views on comparable worth. What do you think? Should librarians continue to work for this principle? What might be the results of this?

There are two main problems with instituting comparable worth: the difficulty of establishing the mechanism to measure the worth of jobs and the sizable increase in labor costs to employers. There is still a great deal of controversy concerning comparable worth, and perspectives on the topic differ widely, even among librarians. Recent court decisions indicate that courts will not require employers to implement comparable worth policies nor find them liable of discrimination for using market values in setting salaries. But nothing

prohibits an employer from adopting comparable worth standards. There is no doubt that employees in many fields, especially those employed by state or local governments, will continue to press to have comparable worth issues addressed. Professional organizations also are continuing to advance this concept. One of the primary focuses of the recently established American Library Association's Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) is comparable worth.²⁷

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a relatively new area of federal regulation and, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, it is now the fastest growing employee complaint. In 2005, the EEOC received 12,679 charges of sexual harassment: 14.3 percent of those charges were filed by males. In 2004, the EEOC resolved 12,859 sexual harassment charges and recovered \$47.9 million in monetary benefits for the charging parties and other aggrieved individuals.²⁸ This increase is attributed to an increased willingness on the part of women to file formal complaints and to a Supreme Court ruling, *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.*, that made it easier for plaintiffs to win their cases.²⁹

Sexual harassment violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the EEOC, sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- The victim as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man.
- The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex.
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a nonemployee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful sexual harassment may occur without economic injury to or discharge of the victim.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.³⁰

There are two types of sexual harassment. One, the *quid pro quo* type, occurs when a supervisor or someone in authority demands a sexual favor in exchange for some type of employee benefit, such as a pay raise or promotion. The other type of sexual harassment, the hostile work environment, occurs when an employee is forced to work in an environment in which behaviors considered offensive to the employee, such as sexual jokes or teasing, occur.

Sexual harassment is a violation of federal law, and, in most cases, employers are considered liable for the actions of supervisors. In addition, employers can be held liable for the harassment of employees by nonemployees or third parties such as customers and/or clients. If, for example, a public services librarian were continually harassed by a library patron and the employer knew of the harassment but took no corrective measures, the employer could be held liable.³¹ Although most victims of sexual harassment are female, the regulations also apply to female-on-male harassment and homosexual harassment.³²



What Would You Do?

As Robert walked into the library for the evening shift, he had a feeling that this was going to be another one of those evenings. Robert worked as a paraprofessional at the Information Desk at Fairmead Public Library. Recently, his manager had resigned and had been replaced by Ms. Price. Ever since, Robert had worried that his job was in danger.

Robert did not think that he was the best library employee Fairmead had ever seen. After all, this was his second job, and he often came in tired after spending all day working in the accounting office at the hospital. Despite this, he enjoyed his library job, especially getting to interact with people after a long day shut up in his office alone. He even had suggested some changes to the way the library handled their cash transactions, giving the library the benefit of his long years of accounting experience and volunteering to train staff in the new methods.

But even that had caused the latest in a string of conflicts with Ms. Price. On a fairly slow Saturday, Robert had attempted to teach one of the newer staff members the new cash procedure, and Ms. Price had sent word—through another employee—that he was to stop immediately, that he was distracting patrons. This had made Robert's blood boil: How dare she interfere with training that had to be done? And to humiliate him by sending an order through another employee?

She had been practicing this guerrilla warfare nearly since she had started her job three months prior. She would sit nearby while he worked at the desk but never talk to him the way she did with the other employees. She would send e-mail messages reminding him to do routine tasks that he had never failed to do but did not send them to the other employees she supervised; he had checked.

At first, the idea that Ms. Price might have a problem with his gender had been the furthest from his mind. Robert had gotten used to the idea that he was one of the only men working at the library and so had gotten out of the habit of thinking of himself as different. However, Robert had noticed that Ms. Price acted very differently to male patrons at the Reference Desk than to females.

Sexual harassment can be a real problem in many workplaces. Is Robert the victim of sexual harassment? What can be done to lessen the possibility of such conduct?

(For the rest of this case study, see <http://www.lu.com/management>.)

The field of equal employment opportunity is rapidly changing. The interpretations of the laws pertaining to EEO are changing as new regulatory agency rulings and court decisions are issued. Library managers dealing with any of the HR functions should attempt to remain abreast of changes

in these regulations and apply them to their organizations. Although federal and state EEO laws have constrained employers in their human resources actions, the laws have worked to make U.S. workplaces more diversified and equitable. The ultimate aim of all EEO regulation is to ensure that every individual, regardless of age, race, gender, religion, or national origin, has an equal right to any job for which he or she is qualified.

Unionization

From the 1970s onward, there was an accelerated movement toward unionization in various white-collar and professional jobs. A substantial number of public school teachers are unionized, as are a large number of nurses and college professors. Like their colleagues in other professions, a significant number of librarians belong to labor unions. Although there are no exact figures available, the most recent estimate is that approximately 30 percent of librarians work in unionized situations.³³

The history of U.S. workers' attempts to get fair and equitable treatment and to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives goes back to the earliest days of the colonies, but the real foundation of the U.S. labor movement was laid in 1935, when the National Labor Relations Act, popularly known as the Wagner Act, was passed. This act gave employees the right to organize unions and to bargain collectively with employers. The purpose of the act was to encourage the growth of unions and to restrain management from interfering with this growth. To investigate violations and unfair labor practices, the act established the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This board has the authority to establish the rules, regulations, and procedures necessary to carry out the provisions of the Wagner Act.

After passage of the Wagner Act, unions began to grow rapidly and continued to grow until the mid-1950s. However, the proportion of the total labor force that is unionized has shown a decline since then. This decline is attributed primarily to the decreasing number of jobs in manufacturing industries, in which the greatest numbers of unionized workers traditionally were found. But the downsizing and cost-cutting efforts of many organizations also have led to a new interest in unionization in many organizations in which the workers who remain feel overworked and underpaid.

To compensate for this loss of membership in the blue-collar industries, many unions initiated extensive organizing campaigns in the white-collar sector, particularly of public-sector employees such as government workers and public school teachers. Until the mid-1950s, white-collar workers constituted a minority of the nation's workforce. Since that time, they have come to outnumber blue-collar workers, and the gap continues to widen as automation and foreign competition reduce the demand for factory workers.

In 2005, union members totaled 12.5 percent of all workers.³⁴ This is a decline even from 1983, when slightly more than 20 percent of all workers were unionized. The decline in unionization has been concentrated in the private sector. Although 36.5 percent of workers in the public sector are members of unions, the percentage in the private sector has dropped from 16.5 percent in 1983 to 7.8 percent in 2005.³⁵ The percentage of workers in labor unions varies from state to state. In 2005, New York, Hawaii, Alaska, New

Jersey, and Michigan had union membership rates higher than 20 percent, whereas North Carolina and South Carolina had membership rates lower than 3 percent.³⁶

Some white-collar workers, particularly professionals, have been ambivalent about joining unions. Many professionals have felt that membership in a professional organization is the best way to advance their interests and the profession. Some professionals have believed themselves to be more allied with management than with production workers. Other professionals felt that, although unions might be desirable for hourly workers, professionals, with their higher status, did not need them. Nonetheless, as unionization has become more common in the public sector, increasing numbers of librarians, like other professionals, have joined unions. Often, librarians are given little choice when the library is part of a larger bargaining unit, such as municipal or university employees. The two factors influencing employees' interest in unions are dissatisfaction with their working conditions and a perception that they cannot change these conditions.³⁷ One of the major attractions of unions for most workers is the hope that collective bargaining will improve their salaries and benefits. Because many librarians are joining unions or wondering whether such a move might be in their best interest, an understanding of the unionization process is very important to human resources managers regardless of whether their own library is presently unionized.

To date, unionization in libraries has brought mixed results. On the plus side, unions have contributed to the formalization of human resources policies and procedures, improved communications, increased fringe benefits, and improved working conditions. According to the Bureau of National Affairs, in 2004 union librarians made an average of 39 percent more than nonunion librarians. The difference is even more dramatic among support staff as statistics show that staff covered by a union contract make 42 percent more than those without a union.³⁸ According to one study, university librarians in California who are represented by unions feel great loyalty to them. They feel greater loyalty to their membership in the union than to their membership in professional organizations.³⁹

On the negative side, unions have caused substantially more paperwork, contributed to the establishment of more rigid work rules, and created an adversarial relationship between librarians and library managers. A recent study showed that unionized professional librarians in academic research libraries were less satisfied with their jobs than nonunionized librarians, although the relationship between job satisfaction and unionization also was affected by the variables of salary and part-time status of the respondents.⁴⁰

Not enough research has been done yet about the effects of unionization on libraries. Unionization is a complex issue, and, because of its importance and possible impact on the library profession, more facts are needed to document and implement future planning.⁴¹ In libraries, as in all other types of organizations, harmonious working relations are necessary between management and workers. The adversarial relationship that often has resulted from unionization needs to be overcome so that organizations can function more effectively—for the good of both the managers and the workers.

CONCLUSION

The human resources function is becoming increasingly important in all types of libraries and information agencies. As these organizations become larger and more complex, HR becomes an even more vital part of library management. In the present era of downsizing and tight budgets, managers need to pay even more attention to HR processes than ever before. As this section has shown, the tasks involved in HR are many and diverse. For an organization to function efficiently, the HR function must be a high priority for every manager. All of the component parts of this function must be integrated into a smoothly functioning system that enables employees to fill their work roles in such a way that the organization can operate effectively.

Providing the best human resources to meet the needs of today presents problems and challenges, but these problems and challenges must be met. Effective organizations are those that are constantly trying to provide the best HR so that the organization can fulfill its mission, both now and in the future.

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