

Remedies to social problems that do exist are public discussion and education and the punishment of wrong-doers. Acts of violence against others are punishable by law.

For all these reasons, the Librarians' Guild asks that you defeat this proposed ordinance in all its versions. Thank you.

A similar ordinance passed in Los Angeles County, but the city ordinance went down to defeat. Bravo, Billie!

October 32 (November 1) was a hugely successful Halloween party at Central Library.

THEY GATHERED TOGETHER ...

By Roy Stone



And where there had been books, 1600 hot dogs began to heat, buns were made ready, massive jars of mustard and ketchup were opened. Meanwhile in the depths of the Central Library, bodies were shaped and dragged, knives were plunged, creatures were unleashed and lights were dimmed. A graveyard grew eerily; an MC was imprisoned in a stack elevator; a witch stirred a nasty brew. Meanwhile at the top, 144 balloons were filled with helium to decorate the floor below...

An intense effort by about 30 people in less than minimum time, with just enough interest and energy, made the Second Annual Halloween Party a reality. Committees were formed quickly and reports and updates were given rapidly. There was no time to waste. Jane Nowak and Sheila Nash made buttons furiously. Aided by Joyce Albers and others, they produced a collection of buttons that sold quite well. Jennifer Lambelet took t-shirt orders, and called and delivered and packaged hundreds of t-shirts. Thea March and Calvin Robinson secured faces, creatures, snakes, bugs. Helene Mochedlover, Sharon Lee, Laurie Aron and Kelly Ingalls selected and purchased the food, drove to the West Side, and delivered it ready to heat or cool. Bottles and cases and bags and cartons too numerous to mention were carried to the serving sites. Michael Uhlenkott and Michael Leonard advertised the event with style and flair. Cecilia Riddle and Gordon Brooks planned the impartial judging for the costume and pumpkin contests. The Haunted House was planned and refined for those with strong enough hearts to venture through the dangerous path.

Time ran out, and October 32 arrived. The lights were set, the bugs hung, the bodies placed, the mood enhanced by appropriate sound effects. Quickly Jo Anna Johnson and Bob Reagan got the balloons in place. The jail was created, games were set up, stories began to be told to the children, and "Ghostbusters" was beginning its first showing. Fortunes were being told by Sherry Smith, and pumpkins began to arrive in most creative appearances and decorations. Normally mellow, frequently conservative people appeared as strange creatures: ghouls, ghosts, space travelers, punks, Hare Krishnas, bookworms, hangmen — all far too outlandish and unusual to do justice to here. And this group of several hundred creatures and things mingled for several hours and then disappeared into the night that never was.

That left time for the clean-up committee to quickly replace chairs and tables, carry trash to the loading dock, store the remaining food and clean the floors. And below, the Haunted House was returned to its ghoulish and scary state without spiders and creatures and mazes and bodies. Next morning, all usable bodies, snakes, creatures and materials were wrapped and stored ... for next year.

1986: Harriet Newton began her second term as President. Board members were Fontayne Holmes, Rosalie Preston, Sheila Nash, Romaine Ahlstrom, Arthur Pond, Ann Maupin, Camille Carter, Laura Weber, Pearl Yonezawa, Helene Mochedlover, Roy Stone, Michaela Johnson.

The year began with the Guild, Library Administration, and City Personnel agreeing that class specifications for the Librarian series were long overdue for revision. All librarians were asked to prepare position descriptions detailing exactly what they did on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Other Guild concerns were recruitment and centralized interviewing.

On Tuesday, April 29, at 10:52 a.m., fire broke out at Central Library and burned for nearly eight hours despite heroic efforts by 300 firefighters.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHIEF JOHNSON, STAFF ASSISTANT CHIEF, PLANNING SECTION

FROM: ED REED, INSPECTOR, PUBLIC SERVICE UNIT

DATE: MAY 20, 1986

SUBJECT: CENTRAL LIBRARY FIRE OVERVIEW

On April 29, 1986, at approximately 10:52 a.m. the fire alarm at 630 West 5th Street sounded, prompting the evacuation of approximately 400 employees and patrons of the downtown Central Library. Due to the effective training of the library staff by the Fire Safety Education Unit, the safe and very orderly evacuation took place without a single reported injury.

At the height of the fire, which lasted approximately 7½ hours, 60 companies, or put another way, about 300 firefighters, eight rescue ambulances, and three helicopters responded to the major emergency fire. Chief Engineer and General Manager Donald O. Manning reported that, "This was the most difficult structure fire the Los Angeles City Fire Department ever had to fight." This was also the largest commitment of fire and emergency medical resources to a structure fire in the history of Los Angeles.

Due to the concrete construction and lack of ability to open up the building and allow the tremendous amount of trapped heat and smoke out, 45 firefighters suffered injuries consisting primarily of heat exhaustion and steam burns. Twenty-four of the firefighters required hospitalization.

Firefighters were credited with saving the library's irreplaceable treasures through aggressive salvage work while battling the flames and hot dense smoke.

Through the efforts of the Los Angeles Fire Department Arson Section and assisted by investigators from the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, it has been determined that the \$22 million fire was arson. Composite drawings and press conferences by the Department have been widely used to appeal to the public for help in locating an individual wanted for questioning in the case.

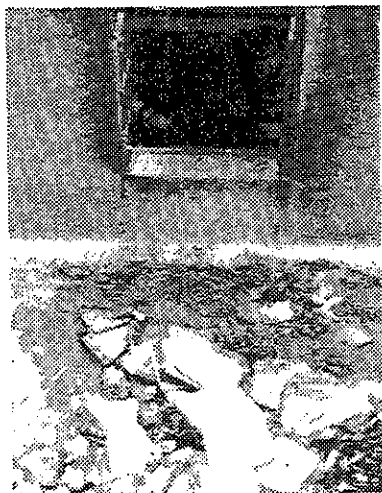
Because of the potential loss of very valuable historical and cultural documents and because firefighters battled the intense heat and smoke for 7½ hours to bring it under control, the Central Library fire received national television, radio and newspaper attention and high praise to the Los Angeles Fire Department.

APRIL 29 — MAY 24, 1986
A SUMMARY OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

By Roy Stone

First came the news about Central Library. In the branches or other locations, it was a phone call or someone in person with the bad news. In some branches it was storytime; some staff were at the reference desk; others were going through the delivery; but somewhere from a source that will always be remembered the impossible news is heard. Central Library is on fire. Central is burning. To the Central staff it was just another fire drill at first; then, right in front of their disbelieving eyes they saw smoke; they saw more fire trucks, heard more sirens, saw more smoke and then flames. The view became a surrealistic nightmare that still haunts them.

At first the reports were bad, but then the reports on the radio lengthened in duration and shortened in frequency; as the day wore on the reports grew ever more terrible to hear. The firefighters were challenged by molten steel, narrow and unknown corridors and stairways, and in great abundance was fire's favorite fuel. The bad news got worse, became the horror of the days and nights that followed.



The firefighters would not waver from their determination and their single purpose; their drive would not be halted. They crashed through cement walls to attack the raging flames from the rear; they drilled through cement floors to attack from above. They fought through the thick dark smoke, past walls that were glowing from heat; they fought past the steam that burned them; they fought the exhaustion that weakened them. And they were fearless. They would only accept being victorious; there would be as little damage to the unique collection of printed words as could be accomplished. And they were beautiful in their hard-fought victory hours and hours later.

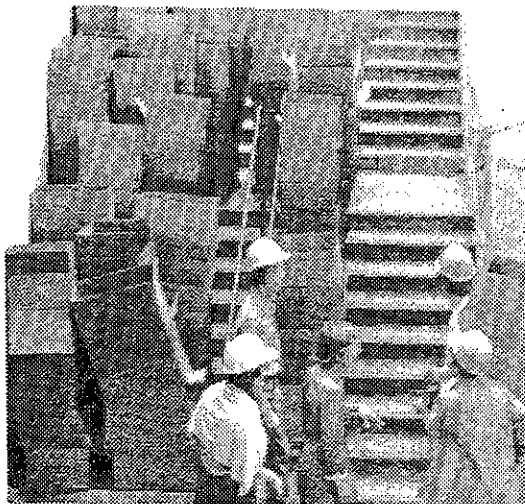
Finally the Central staff began to leave the torturing scene, finally the reports came that the fire was out after almost eight hours. It was over. The first part was over, that is. There were no lives lost, minimal injuries, and most of the collection was saved. It could have been so much worse. Science took the brunt of the damage but the Magazine Pool, Fiction, Literature, Foreign Languages, Social Sciences, Philosophy, History, Art, Business, and Children's Literature suffered also. Everyone suffered to some degree. Even third floor offices were damaged; some severely, such as the telephone room which just became a burned-out shell; the public information office was left in a real mess with some charred areas; others were left completely intact. The first

night and the day after, water remained almost one-half inch deep on all floors. Sawdust had been spread to absorb the water and lessen the possibility of further injury. Huge areas of books were unprotected by the plastic sheeting that had been placed by the firefighters — they simply could not get everywhere. Staff volunteers, allowed in Tuesday night right after the fire was controlled, made their way in small groups, each with a firefighter as guide, to throw more plastic sheeting wherever they could, to pull books from bottom shelves, to prevent further damage. The water that had saved the library now became the new enemy. Already the books were beginning to swell as they absorbed the water that had poured down upon them and even now was still dripping from some higher place.

Wednesday morning found the staff unable to enter the building. Inspectors, firemen, administrative staff were determining the condition of the structure and whether floors might collapse, steel might fall and other possible dangers. Electricians struggled all day to restore lights; finally a power generator provided enough light for a small crew of staff to start packing. Then the majority of the building was declared to be safe and most lighting was restored, but it was only the Central staff that faced the tragedy, and that was on Thursday, the second day after. There were no calls to branches. There was a large staff of people who could be mobilized, who cared, who would come to help. In the middle of the afternoon the Guild cancelled the general meeting for the following evening and urged everyone to help. It was beginning to dawn on the administrative authorities that they could use more staff to help; then they realized that they could call upon the people of our community and other groups like the California Conservation Corps. And the calls went out from the media and to regional offices to reach out to everyone who might help. Then severely worded messages were sent to the staff; they must come. The emergency excused the license taken and the words and the demands.

There was a time limit that was passing with every minute. Time and moisture could combine to defeat our whole purpose. The pace quickened as more workers arrived; branch staffs appeared, grabbed hard hats, and began to work packing wet books. Then volunteers came and made boxes for the book packers. More staff, more volunteers, more City departments, the Tree People, the Community Redevelopment Agency, the CCC, joined together to do battle. There were archivists and book-lovers and old people and young. A slight man in his seventies or possibly eighties was hefting boxes as a pallet loader. A small group of custodians freed the boxes jamming the entire loading dock, loaded them on pallets, wrapped and inventoried them and sent them out. A retired bookseller packed books for about twenty hours straight. They came and you came and came back again. Some people seemed to be there all the time.

Then the supplies ran out. The box makers had a supply but then that was soon exhausted. The tape was scarce, then gone. There wasn't enough of anything: masks, hard hats, pallets, food, even trucks to speed the books to cold storage and then the cold storage areas began to fill. Time was still moving; moisture was still being absorbed into books that looked like they might burst from the pressure.



The fourth day, Saturday, was the peak of everything at once. More staff, more volunteers than ever; shipment after shipment of boxes arrived; more pallets, and tape by the truck load, and hard hats. Supplies of all types in huge quantities were there to feed the needs of hundreds of workers. Boxes were made for the packers, crowbars loosened the swollen books, slides and chutes were made. Boxes slid down ramps, were loaded on handtrucks or handed down corridors by human assembly lines, packed on pallets, then to be shrink-wrapped and inventoried and loaded onto the trucks.

The activity reached a fever's pitch, everywhere packing, taping, pushing, lifting, straining, faster, more boxes needed there, form a chain, unload supplies, load pallets, fill the hand truck, faster, inventory, load the truck, send it out, faster, tighter, smoother as it went along. Hope Street became a loading dock, two forklifts going continuously; pallets were loaded faster than the trucks. Fifth Street was another loading area but smaller. Pallets were brought out, stacked along the street, along the sidewalk, numbers sprayed, fill the void, get it done. Get it done. There were no days, no nights - just the impossible to accomplish: pack up Central Library. Defeat the results of the insane act that began the mad rush. There was drive and determination and again a single purpose working, flowing through the building with strength and urgency. And then it was over. The massive human effort was successful; the impossible had been accomplished. By Sunday all the dry books were stored; all the wet were in freezers. The CCC, the CRA, the volunteers, the other City departments and all but a very few library staff had gone home.

But Monday came and new areas were declared to be safe. Charred areas, wet books next to burned-out sections, ashes floating, were now ready to be emptied. But there were no volunteers, no helpers now, only the Central staff to do it all. Every day a new area was made safe to enter, worse than before with more charred volumes, more swollen books, more damage, more horror at the loss. There was more packing and loading, more wet, more dry, then the Magazine Pool full of choking air and ash and twisted steel and an honorable collection that had become rubble and trash. And still the Central staff alone to face

it, shoveling foot-high debris out of the aisles so they could reach and pack any salvageable materials remaining on the shelves, struggling with flashlights in the narrow, dark, eerie confines of the Pool. Various rumors now surfaced, along with the absence of administration, along with the absence of ideas and plans and information and communication and concern for the workers. But there was no absence of ash or odor or nightmares, no absence of depression or anger or fear. And still the Central Library staff alone to face the problems, day after day, after nights of exhausted and troubled sleep.

Finally there are some plans, a few weeks later, but nothing definite. Still nothing to assure the Central staff that they are cared for, that their living nightmare will be relieved, that their concerns are being heard. Weeks later it is the Central staff to face the torture of working in an unsafe, unhealthy environment, doing work in a place that makes no sense. Only the Central staff know how difficult it is, only they daily face the ash and soot and mold. It is just business as usual for them.



For months, Central Library staff worked under incredible conditions.

SAVE THE LIBRARIANS!

Okay, John Q., you were right there when we needed you to save the library's books from impending mildew. We all pitched in and packed up box after box of soggy, smoky volumes, and rushed them off to be salvaged through the wonders of modern technology. You fearlessly donned your hard hats and entered the burned-out shell of what was once our venerable Central Library.

Remember the grime and soot you waded through to get at the books? — The mounds of rubble, the sawdust and debris on the floor, the atmosphere that left your respiratory passages lined with scum. Well, that's still all there — And so are we!

Since that fateful day, the library's professional and clerical staff has been working every day under those same conditions. Our sensible shoes are caked with indelible smudges of charcoal; our hard hats weigh uncomfortably over the buns in our hair; and our horned-rim glasses have come out of storage again, since none of us can wear our contact lenses when the particles per million are so dense and so large that you can count them with the naked eye.

There is still no hot water and little running water anywhere, and no maintenance service to deal with the broken glass left from the smashed windows and the trash accumulated by 290-plus people in the course of each "normal" work day. Three telephone lines and three rest-rooms serve all the members of our woman-dominated staff.

We're good sports and don't mind hard work, but enough is enough! For three weeks now we've served as construction workers, movers, janitors, and all-around handymen (persons?). But there is so much professional library work that needs to be done to restore our library to a functional capacity; let us get back to the work that librarians really do. Contrary to popular concepts, librarians do not spend their time checking out books and shushing people. Our duty is to select, evaluate, organize, compare, and generally be aware of sources of information, including books, databases, software, CD ROMS, videos, magazines, government documents, and newspapers. To do this we need desks, files, typewriters, mail delivery, telephones, and computers.

Offers continue to flow in from all over the country from individuals, companies, and institutions willing to donate resources to our noble cause, but we have no facilities to receive them nor work space to sit down and determine our losses and needs.

All we ask is for a "clean, well-lighted place" to work in before we, the librarians, burn out, too.

The aftermath of the fire and resulting staff working conditions were to occupy the Guild for the next several years.

On September 3 a second arson fire raged at Central Library. This time the Music Department was the victim as thousands more books and music scores were lost. Staff morale plummeted again.

The Guild called in Professor George Hagglund, Director of the School for Workers at the University of Wisconsin, to work with the Guild and Library Administration to update class specifications using the position descriptions prepared by staff. The updated version was sent to City Personnel, where it disappeared from the ken of mortal man.

1987: Harriet Newton was still President, and the able Board consisted of Sheila Nash, Rosalie Preston, Susan Odencrantz, Billie Connor, Arthur Pond, Camille Carter, Laura Weber, Helene Mochedlover, Ann Maupin, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Michaela Johnson.

In January, Eda White and Joyce Elliott, co-chairs of the AFSCME Council 36 Women's Committee, organized the first statewide AFSCME Women's Conference. Nearly 200 women attended the workshops, applauded speakers Maxine Waters and Joy Picus, and enjoyed the Will Geer singers Saturday evening. It was a huge success.

The effects of the Central Library fires continued to be felt. Administrative staff worked in comfort, even luxury, on the 35th floor of the Arco tower. Central staff continued to work in appalling conditions with some respite to those working part-time in branches. SCAN and MCLS relocated temporarily to UCLA. Branches were grateful to have Central staff even on a part-time basis, but were devastated by the loss of Central's resources for back-up. LAPL became an interlibrary loan borrower rather than a lender, as other area libraries helped supply patrons' needs.

In October, an earthquake damaged the Anderson Street facility and temporarily closed six branches. It was insult on top of injury!

On October 31, 1987, the Central Library shut down, and staff was reassigned to various locations including branches, Anderson Street, and the Rio Vista warehouse. At the warehouse working conditions were even worse than at Central, and the Health, Safety, and Welfare Committee chaired by Ann Maupin had its work cut out for it trying to present workers' complaints to a generally unresponsive Administration.

1988: Another new era as Laura Weber replaced Harriet Newton as President. The Board consisted of Arthur Pond, Gene Estrada, Susan Odencrantz, Billie Connor, Michaela Johnson, Camille Carter, Nancy Dennis, Helene Mochedlover, Ann Maupin, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Calvin Robinson.

The Guild observed its twentieth anniversary with a huge party at the home of Sylva Manoogian. Nearly all the former Presidents attended.

Central staff continued to work at Rio Vista, sweltering in the summer and freezing in the winter. Pigeons, cockroaches, and rats added to the ambience. Meanwhile, the library acquired the former Design Center on Spring Street and began readying it for eventual occupancy as a temporary Central Library.

1989: Laura Weber was still President. Board members were Arthur Pond, Gene Estrada, Susan Odencrantz, Billie Connor, Glenda Prosser, Diana Lisignoli (-Cochran), Camille Carter, Nancy Dennis, Helene Mochedlover, Ann Maupin, Pearl Yonezawa, Roy Stone, and Michaela Johnson.

City Librarian Wyman Jones announced his retirement after nearly twenty years effective in December, and the search was on for a replacement. The Guild began to consider the part it could play in the selection of his successor.

The Design Center/Central Library finally opened, but not before months of back-breaking drudgery as Central staff unpacked and shelved thousands of boxes of books. It was a gala affair as the Mayor led Council members, Commissioners, staff and the eager public into the new facility. There were "ooh's" and "ahh's" at the automated catalog, carpeted floors, cafe, and escalator, but to the staff it was the end of a three-year ordeal of hard physical labor under the worst possible conditions. At last they were librarians again!

After impasse and fact-finding the Guild negotiated an historic contract with pay grades and career ladders.

VIEW FROM VICTORIA PARK

By

Eda White,
Branch Library Services

About "View From Victoria Park"

With this publication, a by-line which appeared in every issue from January 1981 to December 1983 returns as a regular feature. The view may have other dimensions now but remains personal and (with hope) analytical. Each column will contain commentary on the life and times of librarianship as viewed by this veteran L.A.P.L. staff member.

Hooray. Hooray for Laura. Hooray for the negotiations team: Harriet Newton, Arthur Pond, Michaela Johnson, Pat Spencer, Frank Knecht, Laura Weber. Hooray for all negotiations team members from 1973 to date. We've done it; the Librarians' Guild has come of age.

With the dust not yet settled from the 87/90 negotiations, it is time to reflect upon 21 years of battle with the city for recognition of the librarian classification. From my view there have been three significant stages in that process.



**VICTORIA PARK
(CONT.)**

The Myers-Milias-Brown Act, effective 1-1-69, mandated collective bargaining for public employees. The Librarians' Guild was already an AFSCME local. With Jane Goldner (Ellison) as president, the battle to redefine the role of librarians and the role of the Librarians' Guild began. The arrogance of the CAO's position in those first negotiations in 1973 led to charges of sexual discrimination filed by Jane along with unfair labor practice charges. The CAO repeatedly tried to break up the united force of rank and file workers in the same local as the supervisors. Even after the Employee Relations Board ruled that since the Librarians' Guild had existed with both classes in one organization prior to Myers-Milias-Brown that the local could remain a two-part bargaining unit, the CAO's negotiator would ask for separate sessions with the supervisors in order to address supervisorial concerns.

That went on until 1981. When the CAO's negotiator asked me for separate bargaining I told Gordon Lawler that the LG had one team. We would bargain separately for two units if he insisted but all members of the team would be present at each negotiating session. That closed the issue finally. By 1981 in fact, Guild membership was 85% or more without agency shop. Organizing was easy. Any librarian who cared about professional standards and/or worker issues knew the Guild's activist role.

Our long involvement in the comparable worth/pay equity struggle has been written about at length. Structural change in the civil service series had been an issue from 1973 on. The Jacobs Report in 1969 documented a pay inequity. By 1979 Ann Giagni and Jennifer Lambelet had done a preliminary job study. Each year the Guild inched toward the goal of pay ranges comparable to other professional classes which were male-dominated. In 1981 there was a letter of intent to negotiate comparable worth on the table from the 1980 MOU. We were told the city would not discuss it. Another letter of intent was offered. The Guild and Local 3090 filed sex discrimination charges. The 1983/85 contract finally saw range movement which moved the librarian series up in relation to male-dominated classes.

The equity issue dominated wage negotiations for years. The 1985-88 contract discussions resulted in an historic pay equity agreement. Without another job analysis the city agreed to parity with the administrative series but refused to start new hires at the same level as the administrative assistant. The excuse was, and is, a technical red herring. Our own administration has not accepted that responsibility exists from day one on the job, whether the new hire is skilled through another experience or not.

To resolve the deadlock the city proposed the time and grade movement from Librarian I to Librarian II, creating parity at the L II level. Ironically, the CAO's solution was totally supportive of the classic union platform to recognize and reward seniority. The second structural change, devised as a political expediency, validated the LG position that experience develops value.