



CHAPTER 15

Union Stewardship: A Space for Mid-career Librarian Leadership

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Introduction

In the spring of 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic forced universities into a defensive crouch and administrators frantically looked for easy ways to cut costs, thousands of higher education jobs were suddenly at risk. At the University of Oregon, librarians were among 200+ faculty contracts under threat for non-renewal, representing a 33 percent overall cut in our librarian workforce. The crisis prompted us—three mid-career librarians and union stewards—to do whatever we could to save those jobs and to shore up colleagues’ morale through the uncertainty. We worked closely with our faculty union leadership to develop advocacy strategies and to engage allies and colleagues in the fight. As our work progressed and our mutual support network deepened, we realized we shared another common issue that encompassed broader and more existential concerns. After our early career years spent cementing job skills, building professional profiles, and pursuing promotion, we all found ourselves asking, “Where do I want to put my energies in the next phase of my work life? How can I make a meaningful impact?” Our experience demonstrates the value of engaging in labor union activism as a vital opportunity for

the mid-career librarian to advocate for colleagues and to further one's own professional development.

What Is a Union Steward?

Within a union, there are different roles and levels of responsibility, from the rank-and-file members up to paid leadership staff. While any person represented by a bargaining unit can choose to become a dues-paying member of a union and have a say in guiding priorities, a union steward is one of the formal roles available to members. A union steward serves as a liaison between their department or unit and the union's Executive Council and Representative Assembly, communicating department-level issues to union leadership and, in turn, sharing union news with colleagues and coordinating union activities within the unit. Above all, a union steward is an advocate and advisor for union members within their department regarding union-related issues, such as salaries, contracts, and work conditions. A union steward engages with members of their department or unit to listen for concerns and issues, helps support colleagues in negotiations with management, and organizes members of the department around specific union goals as needed.¹ The steward is an entry-level, volunteer position within the union hierarchy, which makes it easy for a person with energy and willingness to become more involved in union activities and advocacy, even if one has little prior experience in this realm.

We were motivated to become union advocates out of a belief that creating healthy organizations means supporting the whole person at work. This form of service brings one in contact with colleagues across library units, fostering a feeling of direct support for coworkers without needing to be in management or human resources. Becoming a union steward means taking an active role in shaping contract priorities to ensure that librarians' specific issues stay at the forefront.

Indeed, mid-career librarians are in an ideal position to become union stewards. Their professional experience makes them credible spokespersons for the particular needs of librarians in negotiations dominated by conventional teaching and research faculty. They have the communication skills and institutional knowledge to enact effective advocacy, amplify voices, and push for more shared governance with a keen understanding of the organization's levers of power.

Throughout this chapter, we bring readers through our journey as three mid-career library union stewards leading our unit through the COVID-19 pandemic. We coalesced as an organizing team in the early months of the pandemic, at a time when our library's administration was already in transition and our entire upper leadership team was comprised of interim roles. We stepped up to advocate and support our colleagues because we recognized work that needed to be done; we did this while undergoing the emotional and professional strains of a global pandemic and while two of us faced the possibility of losing our employment contracts. Although we are at different places on the mid-career spectrum and we each came to union steward work for different reasons, we shared similar values: an interest in women's worker rights and shared governance; a preference for collaborative feminist leadership style; and a desire to develop professionally through building

partnerships and supporting our colleagues rather than pursuing advancement through a hierarchical management structure. In this chapter, we share how we developed an advocacy plan to preserve jobs and raise the profile of librarians, and how we looked beyond the immediate crisis to enact organizing principles that we hope become normalized across the library faculty: collaboration, guidance, deep listening spaces, collective advocacy, and action-oriented practices that speak truth to the needs and rights of academic librarians.

Who We Are

The University of Oregon has three major unions to support different employee groups: the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), which represents graduate employees; the Service Employee International Union Local 085 (SEIU), which represents classified staff; and United Academics, which is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).² United Academics represents more than 1,700 faculty across a broad spectrum of classifications: tenure-track faculty, career instructors and researchers (non-tenure track), pro-tem faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and librarians.³ Within the University of Oregon Libraries, we are fortunate to have three union stewards, one with several years of experience and two newer ones. We each came to union stewardship through different paths and at different points in our careers, all of which allow for fruitful strategy meetings, a shared workload, and unique points of view.

As a trio of white cisgender women with advanced degrees and relatively stable full-time academic positions, we recognize our racial, class, and educational privileges. As women in academia, we have personal experiences with systemic sexism in our profession, and as labor rights advocates, we strive to foster a workplace culture that protects the rights of more marginalized workers and makes space for intersectional perspectives beyond our own lived experiences. We live and work in Oregon, a state with a long history of explicit white supremacy and racial exclusion; this history continues to shape the demographics and cultural prejudices of the places where we live and work, which directly impacts the hiring and retention of marginalized persons, particularly people of color, at our institution. In our work as library union stewards, we center the experiences and concerns of our most vulnerable colleagues through supportive communication practices and collaborative organizing processes within the library. We also emphasize intersectional concerns within our unit to union leadership to ensure that these concerns are prioritized within the broader union advocacy at the bargaining table.

Kate specializes in digital scholarship and digital libraries. Ann is a music librarian with responsibilities in public and technical services. Elizabeth, as a subject specialist, provides reference, instruction, and collection development services to multiple departments on campus. All of us supervise student employees, and some of us supervise paraprofessional staff. Among the three of us, we are engaged in many of the library's core functions and services, and our respective roles bring us in contact with colleagues throughout the UO Libraries. Each of us has made a deliberate choice to remain in the middle of the organizational hierarchy rather than move up into management.

Throughout her nine years of being a digital librarian, Kate had always held some type of leadership and management role in developing new digital services and programming for academic libraries. Middle management seemed inevitable and desirable, but recently Kate decided to stay away from it after working in three different libraries where top-down administrative approaches were institutional norms, a style that does not feel comfortable for her. After serving as an interim director for a special collections and archive department, she realized that she could lead and manage laterally instead of changing her entire career path to focus on management. She also recognized that she was better at empowering people and influencing them to be great when they were equal peers in the organization.

In Ann's case, the prospect of becoming a manager held additional disruptions. She has wanted to continue working within her specialization of music librarianship, but that goal conflicted with an assumed upward path into management—to move into a management role in her current institution would require leaving her disciplinary specialization, while pursuing management opportunities within that specialization would require leaving her current institution for another position elsewhere. She opted instead to stay in her current role and leverage long-lasting relationships with administration and teaching faculty in order to make a much-needed improvement to specialized library resources and spaces for her subject area.

For Elizabeth, the traditional management hierarchy hasn't been an appealing option as it would take her away from the aspects of librarianship that are most meaningful to her: working directly with patrons to connect them with the information they need. She dreaded the prospect of less time helping students and faculty and more time dedicated to writing performance reviews and managing staff. Nonetheless, after twenty years as a public services librarian, she wondered what else she could learn to keep the field interesting, relevant, and meaningful, without the pressure of a formal leadership position. How could she leverage her relatively safe position as a senior librarian to support her colleagues, amplify their voices, and advocate for change in organizational culture?

Why Did We Choose to Become Stewards?

Working actively within the union became the ideal channel for each of us to further these goals while remaining in our current jobs; each of us has experience working in non-unionized organizations. This first-hand knowledge and experiences with the values and protections a union brings to the workplace have heavily influenced why we have chosen to become stewards. As union stewards, we see our role as a way to exercise our feminist leadership skills and abilities. This leadership style is an alternative to traditional, hierarchical leadership and organizational cultures. And with it, union stewardship allows a way to strengthen relationships and power with and among colleagues. It provides a tangible, meaningful service that improves our institution. The role also gives us the opportunity to participate in direct servant leadership to influence decision-making that negatively and positively impacts the well-being of our worker colleagues according to

our collective bargaining agreement. Even within a top-down management structure, we have power with our collective as well as being identified as trusted individuals within our library.

In this role, we hold ourselves accountable for doing what we say we're going to do, all with a human-centric approach that makes sure to bring fellow union-represented colleagues along with us. Together we're able to exert power within our shared governance structures and organizational committee to always look out for the well-being of our colleagues and help to make safe and equitable work environments. Within these structures, we are able to directly organize and advocate for policies, guidelines, and documented practices that address the labor rights of vulnerable faculty groups (non-tenure track faculty, pro-tempore employees, pre-tenure women/BIPOC/LGBTQIA). We do this by bringing attention to the high amounts of invisible labor or beyond work capacity capabilities that union colleagues are asked to do while interrogating privileges. To do this work, we have educated ourselves about the social and cultural needs of people from different genders, races, and class positions to make ourselves better at listening, sympathizing, making space, stop-talking, and strategizing to support their tasks.

Speaking as three white cisgender women from middle-class backgrounds, we acknowledge that there are social and cultural benefits that we benefit from because of our positionalities while working in academia. As part of an industry that traditionally represents, and continues to hold, power for cultural norms associated with white male, heterosexual, and middle- to upper-level class privilege, we also acknowledge that there are human experiences that we will never have because of the color of our skin, our gender, or class status. Listening and educating ourselves about vulnerable faculty group experiences has given us context and understanding of how our peers need to be supported in the workplace regarding pay and benefits, work/life balance, healthy and safe work conditions, hiring and retention, promotion, family care, faculty commitments, and shared governance. Some resources that we have found useful include Karen Catlin's *Better Allies*, Rose L. Chu and Annie Pho's exploration of intersectionality in *Pushing the Margins*, Jennifer Brown's work on inclusion and diversity in the workplace, and Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead*.⁴ Training resources offered by Aorta, Resolutions Northwest, and search advocate training at the University of Oregon have also been valuable tools.⁵ They have all helped us frame social, cultural, and historical perspectives and apply practical actions for making work environments more inclusive and fair.

As core attributes of our advocacy and organized actions, centering inclusion and equity have allowed us to put our feminist leadership values into play. Through discussion and decision-making channels, such as shared governance library meetings, monthly all-library union-represented members meetings, meetings coordinated by the union, and direct meetings with union colleagues and library leadership, labor problems are brought up. More specifically, these spaces give us a forum to challenge and question what causes problems affecting vulnerable faculty groups regarding issues like hiring, retention, and promotion practices; unspoken service work, workload capacity pressures, pay inequity, work flexibility, breathable and sanitized workspaces, and an expectation for continued permanent employment have been foregrounded for advocacy.

What is Mid-career Librarianship to Us?

We view the journey of librarians toward and within “mid-career” as a winding path rather than as an exclusively linear flow that is rigid and static. Yehuda Baruch explores the phenomenon of multidimensional careers as an alternative to the aforementioned career system.⁶ They identify the history and reasons why linear careers no longer suffice for today’s career-oriented person because the ways that organizations and individuals manage careers have shifted due to changing job markets and technological progress and because of an increase in emotional labor occupations and the scope in which they are needed. In turn, the multidimensional career brings dynamic environment characteristics, multiple career choices being made throughout one’s work life, and more individual responsibility instead of an organization solely determining employability, progressing through the organizational career ladder, and staying in one job.

To us, mid-career is not simply a number of years in the profession staying on a rigid stable path, but rather sets of multidimensional career experiences and abilities that one has developed and shaped to combine personal values, ethics, motivations, culture, and social needs. Using the conventional thinking of the linear career system and one that is situated in academia, there can be expectations that moving up means advancing into a management position as well as going through faculty promotion to rise in ranking. For example, the status of assistant librarian, association librarian, and senior librarian all imply a seniority and hierarchical order that is based on time working and advancing professional teaching, service, and scholarship.

If we had to place ourselves on a career spectrum that assumes a beginning, middle, and end, then the three of us consider ourselves mid-career if it includes qualities like credibility, demonstrated leadership, emotional intelligence, organizational influence, and the ability to effectively make pathways for collaborations and communications that work across an organization and its units. Between the three of us, our number of years working as librarians in higher education ranges between ten years to more than twenty years, and we have varying degrees of the aforementioned attributes depending on our individual careers and institutional contexts.

At the University of Oregon, we have all passed a non-tenure faculty academic promotion that requires internal and external peer review, with an up-or-out promotion requirement. In the context of being mid-career librarians with the rank of associate or senior librarian, achieving promotion has granted us less vulnerability and more job security than our pre-promotion colleagues at the rank of assistant librarian. It has also empowered us to be better stewards and advocates for those library faculty who can’t or won’t speak up for their personal and professional needs because they have yet to go up for promotion review and fear bringing up issues with management because of indirect retaliation.

Together as union stewards, we’re using mid-career librarianship to our advantage to help our colleagues defend their rights to healthy and secure work environments. We position ourselves as connecting to others not just as workers but also as unique human beings with a responsibility to care for each other by being empathetic, relatable, responsive,

good listeners, and critically self-reflective and respectful when working with people from different cultures, races, genders, and sexes. As part of our union advocacy work, we exercise our feminist power through union stewardship with an eye toward making sure the workplace meets the professional needs of all union members.

Library Labor Advocacy: Spring through Fall 2020

Our labor advocacy work took off suddenly in the spring term of 2020 in response to an equally sudden labor crisis at our institution. As was the case at other colleges and universities nationwide, the COVID-19 pandemic initiated a rapid campus shutdown in mid-March 2020 and a shift to fully remote work and teaching. This sudden pivot raised complex concerns about the quality of teaching and learning experiences in a remote environment as well as the loss of typical campus life experiences for our students. Fearing pandemic-induced revenue losses from low student enrollment and drastic funding cuts by the state legislature, our university administration began to brace for a major budget shortfall in the 2020–21 academic year and began to strategize ways to minimize such a shortfall. Their resulting plan triggered an academic labor emergency that would shape our advocacy work for the next several months.

University administration initially approached our faculty union, United Academics, with a choice: the union could accept a significant and long-reaching faculty wage reduction plan that the university proposed or the university would seek to minimize costs by not renewing the contracts of 211 career non-tenure-track faculty across all disciplines who happened to be up for contract renewal that year.⁷ This proposed non-renewal allowed no consideration for program needs, job performance, or input by deans and other unit-level directors; among the hundreds of targeted faculty were eighteen librarians, one-third of the total library faculty workforce and nearly half of the union-represented librarians. The union rejected the wage reduction plan due to a number of equity concerns as well as the lack of union or faculty input in developing it. After some effort, they were able to arrive at a short-term agreement on a less severe contract reduction: the 211 career faculty would be given contracts at half their usual FTE rather than have their contracts eliminated altogether, and the university would re-assess shortly before the start of the fall 2020 term, adjusting faculty FTE upward if the budget allowed once the enrollment numbers for the new school year were better known.⁸

While this agreement granted a reprieve for nine-month instructional faculty whose contracts began in September and allowed the union a longer period of time to continue negotiations, it left librarians facing a more urgent employment threat. As twelve-month employees, our contracts begin July 1 with the start of the fiscal year, which meant we faced the prospect of an entire summer term with a third of our librarians reduced to half-time employment before the administration's promised reassessment would occur—all in the midst of a fully remote learning environment in which the library provided critical support for students and instructors. It became clear that we needed to communicate upward and outward what the ramifications of this shift would be on the library's ability to fulfill its

educational mission and how it would impact the rest of the campus community with the goal of storing contracts. To do this successfully, we would need to rally the teaching faculty to advocate on behalf of the librarians. Additionally, we hoped to build our leadership skills as stewards and gain a deeper understanding of the library's own faculty governance processes and how they might strengthen equity and job security for library faculty.

In April, Kate and Ann began to meet virtually and develop a system for developing and tracking advocacy projects, communicating with faculty librarians, and communicating with United Academics staff and leadership. Elizabeth joined our efforts, initially as an interested volunteer, and eventually signing on officially as a faculty union steward for the library in July. While some of us had more prior union experience and others had more extensive project management experience, none of us had done this sort of organizing before, and we quickly established a cooperative, non-hierarchical dynamic to our partnership. We set up weekly meetings with each other to plan projects and discuss strategies; we also set up weekly meetings with the union organizer assigned to our unit, wherein we could ask for input on our ideas, alert the union to library-specific concerns and issues, and get a better picture of the situation from the union's perspective. We started to hold monthly meetings with our unionized librarian colleagues to help answer their questions and hear their concerns and interests. We became adept at running these meetings efficiently, engaging in collaborative work during meeting sessions, and setting clear individual tasks and deadlines to work on before the next. Despite the virtual nature of these meetings, we have had consistent engagement from members, which shaped the scope of our work and helped make it more successful. We utilized several online tools to manage this collaborative workflow, including Zoom and Microsoft Teams for real-time video conferencing and chat communication, Google Drive for creating and storing documentation of our meetings and advocacy projects, and Trello for project management. We also created a WordPress website—<http://uolibrariansunited.com>—to help communicate important information about our situation and our advocacy work.

Over the course of the late spring and early summer, we aligned our advocacy campaign along three branches of communication: highlighting the invisible labor of librarians, mobilizing internal support within our campus community, and cultivating external support throughout the state and region. With the invisible labor branch, we intended to highlight the work that librarians do that is often invisible to the rest of campus and the general public, with the goal of saving positions and full FTE assignments by demonstrating the breadth and depth of the expertise and functional roles of the librarians whose appointments were under threat. We particularly wanted to spotlight the work of our colleagues in non-public-facing roles, who might not have allies elsewhere on campus due to the behind-the-scenes nature of their work. For example, both librarians who managed electronic resources were slated to be reduced to half-time contracts at a time when electronic resources were being purchased and used more heavily than ever before. A colleague specializing in assessment provided us with purchasing and grant statistics that helped us frame a picture of the financial value of librarians to the institution, from saving students money to bringing in significant external funding. Another colleague with expertise in digital scholarship assisted us with presenting all this information on our

website in a way that clearly and effectively visualized both the expert knowledge under threat and the monetary value of our work.

Our second advocacy branch, mobilizing internal support, was intended to help rally our campus community around the library. While we recognized that all our campus colleagues were facing challenges due to the proposed contract reductions, and due to the pandemic in general, time was on our side at that moment since the threat was more imminent for us than for them. We began by creating templates for letters that campus allies could use verbatim or adapt as needed to contact the university provost in support of preserving librarian positions at full FTE. We created a Google form to collect testimonials from faculty, students, and other allies that asked about specific positive ways that our institution's librarians had supported their teaching, research, and learning.⁹ We posted both the letter templates and the testimonial form on our mobilization website, then shared both resources with our library colleagues and asked those in public-facing roles to reach out to their liaison units to encourage them to send an email or write a testimonial. (We also created a sample request template that they could use for those outreach messages.) We reached out to our union leadership to ask them to help amplify our call for testimonials and letters of support, which they did through direct action requests to stewards and representatives campuswide and through an article in their online newsletter.¹⁰ Within just two weeks, faculty and students had submitted more than 100 testimonials, and while we have no way to know how many letters of support were sent to the provost, numerous individual faculty members contacted us to say that they would write letters. Additionally, several larger faculty bodies, including the Romance Languages Department and the University Library Committee, also wrote letters of support, which they shared with us.

Pursuing our third branch of library advocacy, cultivating support from external sources, was a broader effort that involved more assistance from our colleagues within the library. We sought to share our situation with our professional organizations and peers at the state and regional levels and ask them to send statements of support to the university administration. We hoped that such outside attention would serve to establish the significant contributions of our library faculty to state and regional library partnerships and bring some additional pressure to bear on the university to preserve FTE appointments. We identified specific professional organizations to reach out to and determined the best ways to make contact with the elected leaders; while we contacted some of them directly, many of our UO librarian colleagues were happy to reach out to people with whom they had direct working relationships through elected roles, committee assignments, and other collaborations. Ultimately, we confirmed letters of support sent from the Oregon Library Association, ACRL's Oregon chapter, Northwest Archivists, Inc., the Oregon Heritage Commission (a wing of the Oregon State Library), the Information Literacy Advisory Group of Oregon, and the librarians of Oregon State University.

By late June 2020, the swift mobilization efforts of spring term paid off: we received notification from the provost that librarians would retain full FTE for the summer, though fall term and the new school year remained in question. (These were later settled for all 211 non-tenure-track faculty through further negotiations between the union and

the university.) While we cannot say for certain that our advocacy directly caused this outcome, the possibility remains high that summer contract reductions might have occurred if we had not pursued these tactics. Although we no longer had the sword of Damocles hanging over us, the three of us were not ready to step back from the work that we had embraced. We had built a system of communication and cooperation that allowed us to work effectively, and we had built momentum. The library has always had one of the highest faculty unionization rates on campus, but after this experience, the librarians as a group had seen the value of their union representation up close, and many were ready to engage with additional policy and governance issues.

As we moved into the 2020–21 academic year, the three of us also began to engage publicly with issues of library faculty governance in ways that were not directly in our capacities as union stewards but that were clearly in dialogue with the perspectives on labor rights and equity that we had developed as stewards, aided by the more visible profiles we had achieved during the spring. While we already had a standing spot for union updates on the monthly meetings of our governing body, the Library Faculty & Officers of Administration (LFOA), we also worked to bring attention to other issues that we felt were important. In fall 2020, we formally proposed a resolution to the LFOA calling for diversity, equity, and inclusion practices to become standard in all library hiring searches. This resolution ultimately passed, after several months of lively discussion, clarification, and revision, though its power was as a collective statement of values, not a binding policy document. It did, however, offer a rare (in our library) instance of LFOA business emerging from the faculty body rather than being handed down for approval by administration and offered a path for other faculty to do the same. We also worked closely with the Library Faculty Personnel Committee, the official peer-review body for library faculty contract and promotion reviews, to evaluate changes that would need to be made to our performance review processes as a result of a new agreement between the union and the university that moved non-tenure-track faculty away from contract-based employment altogether and into a new expectation of a continued employment model. While we receive occasional pushback from library administration or less union-friendly colleagues about our presence and involvement in non-union-specific library spaces, overall, our colleagues have received our active presence well, and our engagement has sparked other members of the library faculty to propose their own new ideas and needed changes to our library's practices.

Union Advocacy as a Place for Mid-Career Connections

As mid-career librarians choosing to serve in the role of union stewards, we all came to this role at different points in our careers; but we all had to choose quickly, in the face of an institutional crisis, how we would enact the role. That initial choice to actively engage has shaped how we have continued to approach the responsibilities of a steward and how we have worked together as a team. For us, union stewardship has become a space on the career continuum that embodies qualities we associate with mid-career status: advocacy and support for colleagues; leadership without traditional hierarchy; protection and aid

for those new to academic librarianship; and guidance, confidentiality, and deep listening to our colleagues.

Our long-term experience, in the library profession generally and at our current institution specifically, gives us a healthy dose of perspective regarding changes in practice and institutional culture that helps us advise our colleagues who are earlier in their careers. Our non-managerial status, on the other hand, keeps us working in the trenches, relating as peers to our fellow unionized librarians. As a trio of stewards, we have established a model of leadership not tied to seniority or longest experience, and we have deliberately chosen to work as a collective in our meetings, our email communications, and our public presence. The working relationship that the three of us have developed within our steward team has proved so productive and mutually supportive that it is leading us into new collaborations on library projects unrelated to labor activism. Likewise, our comfort with personal outreach to our coworkers on union issues has laid the groundwork for warm working partnerships (and even friendships!) with colleagues we didn't previously know.

The contract crisis, as well as the facts of living and working in a global pandemic, had exacerbated cracks that were already present in the labor environment of our library—burnout and capacity overages among librarians trying to stretch beyond their own roles to help cover numerous vacancies, lack of confidence in library leadership, and low morale. We found that one of the most meaningful side effects of our spring advocacy campaign was to boost morale and help our colleagues feel that someone was fighting for them. We openly shared all letters of support that we received as well as the full data set of testimonials from faculty and students so that our colleagues would know who was rallying to their sides. In our monthly meetings of union-represented librarians—which our colleagues voted to continue as a regular occurrence after the contracts were resolved—we provided opportunities for people to collectively share and process emotions and introduced mindfulness practices to create space in the crunch of Zoom fatigue. We also invited staff from the union to educate the library faculty about additional financial benefits of their union memberships, including mortgage assistance and discounts on auto loans. We engaged our colleagues in articulating desired institutional changes and visualized the stakeholders and influencers involved in those changes through tools such as power mapping.¹¹

We initiated opportunities for one-on-one discussions in addition to the larger monthly group meetings. In winter 2021, we held individual climate interviews with nearly all unionized librarians to get a snapshot of current labor issues within the library as we approached the one-year mark of the pandemic and prepared for the arrival of a new library administration. From these interviews, we identified overarching themes and issues that were commonly shared among most or all library faculty and which we hoped to articulate to the incoming leadership. The interviews themselves allowed space for individual faculty members to share problems they faced in their individual work situations, and while many of these served as much-needed vent sessions, a few of them resulted in actionable workplace issues that we were able to follow up on and help resolve. In addition to these interviews, we have observed significant increases in both the frequency and regularity of steward contact by unionized librarians, compared to near-zero statistics prior to the pandemic.

While much of the professional literature regarding labor unions and librarianship has focused on the financial benefits of unionization, we have found that active involvement with our faculty labor union as stewards for the library faculty has brought about a deepening of our professional identities as mid-career librarians.¹² Through the work we have done as stewards, we have developed extant working relationships within our library and kindled new ones; we have supported our colleagues and each other and brought about tangible shifts in the institutional climate; we have advocated for the importance of the work that librarians do at our institution, both to the university and to the union leadership; we have improved working conditions for librarians in our library system and pushed for change through governance processes and; we crafted an entirely new system and workflow for our advocacy efforts. That we did this all through virtual contact while working remotely during an unprecedented global pandemic that radically disrupted life as we knew it might seem surprising, but large disruptions create opportunities for new patterns. As we move forward, we hope that our voices and leadership model invite others at our institution to also investigate union stewardship as they enter their mid-career stage of librarianship.

Notes

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2. Two additional labor unions exist on campus, the University of Oregon Police Association and the Teamsters Local 206, but each represents a small group of employees in one specific unit, while the major three unions mentioned above represent large employee groups across myriad campus units.
3. "Who We Are," United Academics of the University of Oregon, accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.uauoregon.org/who-we-are/>.
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11. “Guide to Power Mapping” Impact Justice, April 2019, https://rjdtoolkit.impactjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Resource_Guide-to-Power-Mapping_.pdf.
12. Rachel Applegate, “Who Benefits? Unionization and Academic Libraries and Librarians,” *Library Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (October 2009): 446, <https://doi.org/10.1086/605383>.

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