

Guild

BUILDERS

1976-2016

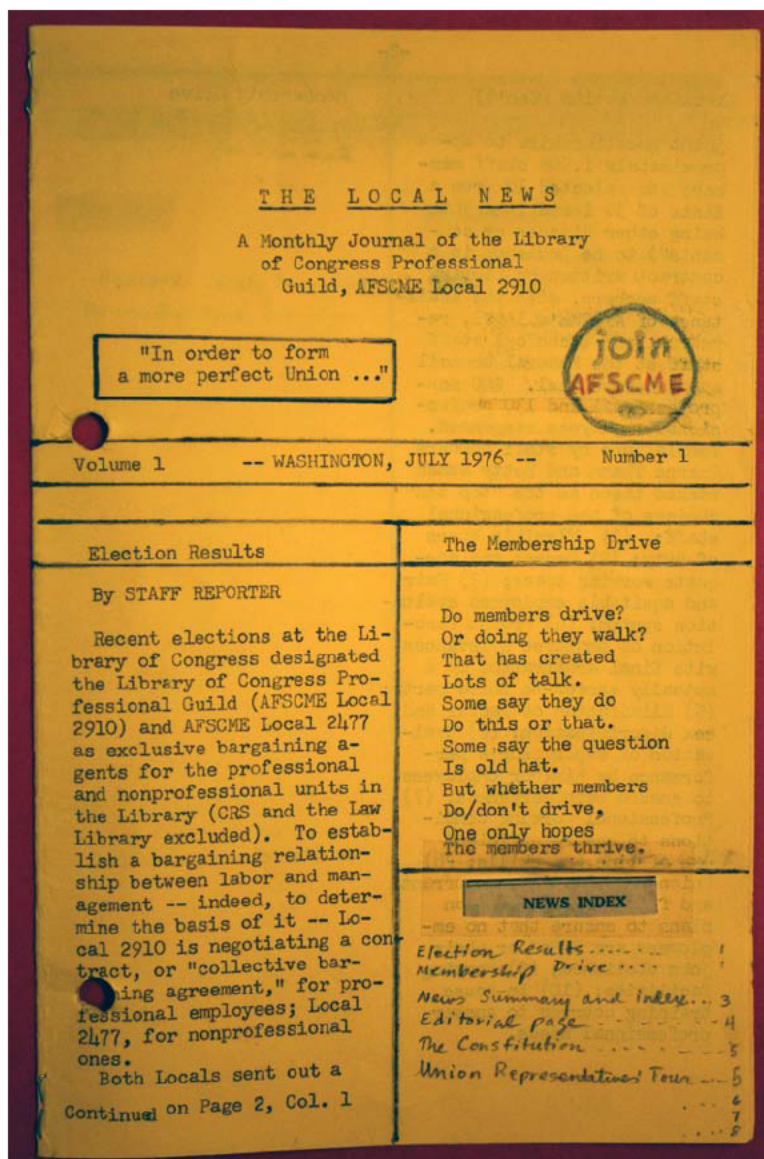
In honor of our fortieth anniversary, this is the next installment in an ongoing email series from the Guild, AFSCME Local 2910, that explores the history of our Library of Congress workplace from the unique perspective of its professional employees. Artifacts, anecdotes, personalities and events have all helped to shape our collective past.

Communication is the Key: The Newsletters

One prerequisite for the function of representative democracy is access to timely and accurate information—which is why the role of libraries in our country is so vital. At the Library of Congress, the success of our union has likewise been predicated on communication among bargaining unit staff.

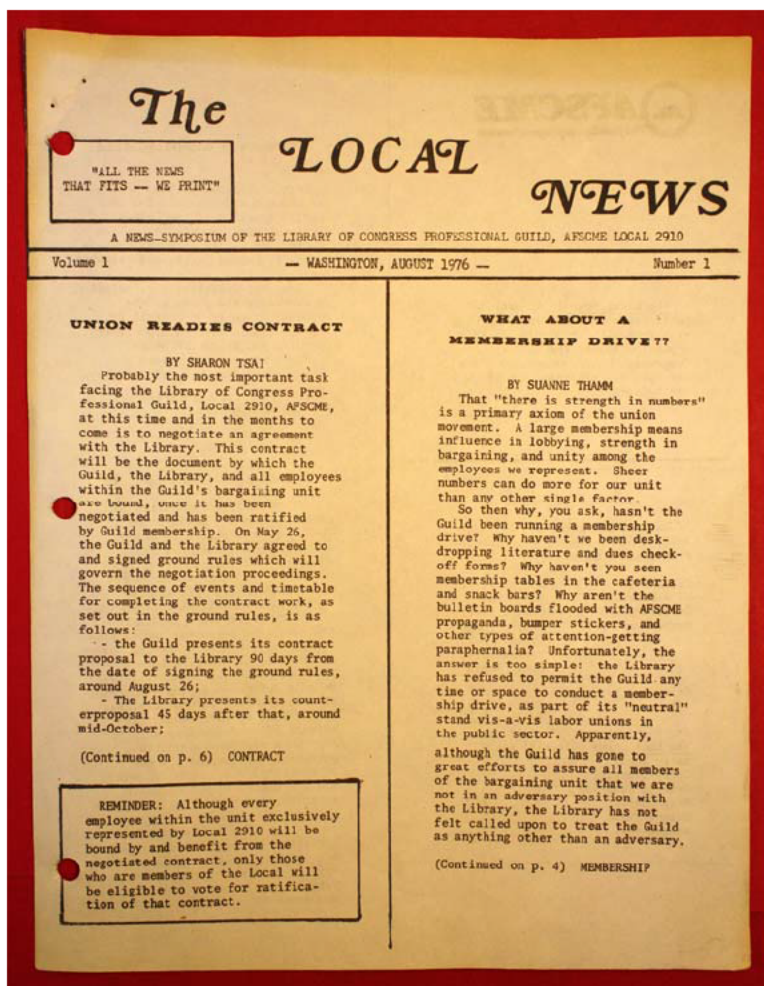
Communication emerged organically in the early days of the Guild in the form of printed newsletters, broadsides, and factsheets distributed to professional staff. Over the forty years of the Guild's existence, our newsletters have taken various names and formats, but the goal has always been the same: keeping members informed about important developments in the workplace and uniting staff in a common dialogue.

As recently discovered in the Guild archives, here is a prototype front page of *The Local News*, the first Guild newsletter dating from 1976:



In contrast to the first published issue, authorship of the draft *The Local News* cannot be definitively ascribed, though it is no doubt the product of the Editorial Board, which in 1976 consisted of Betty Auman, Terry Casraiss, Cynthia Johanson, Mary Slayton, Suanne Tham, and Sharon Tsai. If any of our readers can shed further light on this, please let us know.

The Local News: A News-Symposium of The Library of Congress Professional Guild, AFSCME Local 2910 first officially appeared in August of 1976. The front page of this first published newspaper looked like this:



Attached as a PDF is a full text version of Issue 1, Volume 1 of *The Local News*. It serves as a fascinating time capsule of a moment in the Library's development. Of particular note are the "Survey Results" by Suanne Thamm on page 3, which highlighted issues that staff found to be their highest priorities in contract negotiations. These included flexible duty hours, decent and adequate working space, a fair and equitable employee evaluation system, prompt resolution of employee grievances, elimination of racial and sexual discrimination, evaluation of supervisors' performance by his/her employees, union consultation on current and future reorganization plans, and in-house training courses to meet professional needs. Many of these issues are addressed in our contract today.

Some of the various newsletter and broadside titles that appeared over the past forty years include *AFSCME Alert - Local 2910*; *Guild Newsletter*; *Bulletin Board: The Voice of the Library of Congress Professional Guild*; and *Vocal 2910: The Voice of the Library of Congress Professional Guild*. Irrespective of the title, though, a rose is always a rose—and so information made its way to LC employees, ensuring them a collective voice in the decisions that directly impacted their worklife as professional staff.

Guild Builders: The First Forty Years

The United States' bicentennial year saw the birth of the Guild, on June 1, 1976. Through the subsequent decades and via the power of workplace democracy—polls, referendums, elections, and representation—the Guild has created a meaningful internal dialogue among professional staff and managers at the Library, and has become a force for change.

The Guild is no more nor less than its members. Together we share a strong sense of professionalism along with pride of public service, all while working at the nation's oldest federal cultural institution, the Library of Congress.

If you have any interesting LC workplace memories that you'd like to share, please send them our way!
email: guild@loc.gov | phone: 202-707-6493 | office: LM-G41 | Join the Guild!: www.guild2910.org/membership.html

*From the Guild Builders Editorial Committee, whose members believe that history is a bond of fidelity with the past.
Contribution this edition by David Fernández-Barrial.*