

## MILEX Meeting Minutes January 26, 2024

### Attendees

|                    |                       |                  |                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Brandy Whitlock    | Jill Burke            | Sarah Gilchrist  | Mariette Largess   |
| Loretta Spangler   | Molly Magee Barra     | Richelle Charles | Melissa D'Agostino |
| Danya E. Leebaw    | Cameron Caswell       | Emily Holland    | Sophie Reverdy     |
| Simmona E. Simmons | Suzanne Taylor        | Lisa Sweeney     | Vicky Marchand     |
| Shaunda Vasudev    | Amber Pierdinock-Weed |                  |                    |

Academic Freedom for Librarians: Landscapes, issues, and questions presented by Danya Leebaw

Modern concept of academic freedom is only about a century old and has no official definitions, it's a continuing conversation. It continues to be challenged.

Guiding Tenets: Full freedom in research, freedom in the classroom, freedom as a citizen, as an academic, and as an officer of an educational institution.

There are also obligations, when speaking as an individual, making sure to not speak as the institution, not introducing unsubstantiated claims. Tenure and academic freedom go hand in hand. Without tenure you can lose academic freedom. Some do try to occupy a middle ground but it's hard, better than nothing but hard.

From Sarah Gilchrist for reference: <https://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

Our focus has been on the Freedom to Read, complicating protections for librarians. Protecting patrons' rights is very important, but it does split our focus.

Library Work is inherently political, attempting to claim neutrality can cause us problems. Microaggressions and self-censorship happen with BIPOC librarians and users from librarians and patrons.

In our research into academic freedom for academic librarians we started with these hypotheses:

Most academic librarians value academic freedom but do not feel completely protected by academic freedom policies.

Social identity and financial insecurity will affect academic librarians' experiences and perceptions of academic freedom.

We value academic freedom, but we may not be protected by it. Needs for life (economic insecurity) may affect whether we, librarians, will fight for our academic freedom.

What we ended up finding was:

Libraries could be very conservative, even in a liberal institution. Academic freedom was for faculty and not librarians. In emerging areas, such as social media, librarians feel the least secure in expressing themselves. Some librarians were informally penalized, and report high rates of negative physical, emotional, and intellectual impacts. Struggling to determine walking the tightrope of being on a social justice committee but being told to tone themselves down to be more approachable to the student body. Sometimes we are only protected by a single understanding leader. Librarians can be silenced when doubting their support from leadership.

What can Librarians do?

Unionize - California's union fought for and won academic freedom for themselves and all professional staff in the university system.

Raise the profile of librarians within broader academic associations and your campus governance. Be involved and speak up and out,

Raise awareness of this specific issue in libraries and professional associations - You have to raise the issue within and without the library, but don't get yourself fired to do it. Start small and build up allies, other librarians, administration, faculty, and student body.

Stand in solidarity with other library workers,

Start seeing connections between disparate events.

Discussion of real events around academic freedom, and its lack, that librarians have experienced, how we might have reacted and what could have happened versus what happened.

**Business meeting:**

April Conference:

Conference centers are very expensive, too much for right now. But in the future, it might be something to look at off Friday, so maybe a Thursday conference if we cannot find any alternatives.

Attendance is down, pre-pandemic we would have about 40-ish people.

The places that we've tried so far haven't really been set up how we would need.

Cost of location, parking, food service/catering

Universities of Shady Grove – Mariette Largess

Arundale Mills, Baltimore County Community College Location – Brandy Whitlock

McDaniel's – Loretta Spangler

Frostburg – Molly Magee Barra

Cecil College – Melissa D'Agostino has provided information

Space needed for 40-50, instruction space with a projector, catering (us or the institution?), tables, possible breakout space for future. Space needed for April 19th, 2024, 9 am - 4.30 pm and future events

Conference Content, One-shot Plus

Would it be good to have the membership present first? Yes, we'll send it first to membership.

Lightening rounds? We'll see how long people want for presentations.

We'll still try for a keynote, and possibly for a wrap-up speaker.

We will need space for the June 14th meeting, the July meeting is the 12th and will be held via Zoom.

Possible topic for future meetings is AI:

Nelson Group, AI has proven to be sycophantic, <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/>

Due to the name, people are expecting a level of trustability, intelligence that is just not possible. Hallucinations continue, garbage in garbage out, if you've learned to use it properly and AI can still be very helpful.

