AFSCME Local 1259: Detroit Public Library Records
4 linear feet (4 SB)

Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
Finding aid written by Johanna Russ on June 6, 2013. Processing assistance from April Conant.

Accession Number: LR002374

Creator: AFSCME Local 1259: Detroit Public Library

Acquisition: These materials were donated by Helga Herz, a long time librarian at the Detroit Public Library, and an officer in Local 1259. The majority of the records were donated in 2000, with a small addition in 2003. Both accessions were processed together.

Language: Material entirely in English.

Access: Collection is open for research.

Use: Refer to the Walter P. Reuther Library Rules for Use of Archival Materials.

Notes: Citation style: “AFSCME Local 1259: Detroit Public Library Records, Box [#], Folder [#], Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University”

Related Material: One audiotape from this collection is stored in the Reuther Library Audiovisual Department’s Room 354 Small Collections Cabinet, and a certificate of affiliation with the Michigan AFL-CIO from this collection is stored in the general ALUA Oversized box.
Local 1259, representing Detroit Public Library (DPL) employees, affiliated in 1949 with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Michigan Council 77. It represented professional librarians, as well as clerical and maintenance employees. A staff association existed for some years before union certification, and failed attempts to unionize were made before 1949.

In 1966, the Association of Professional Librarians challenged Local 1259 for rights to represent professional librarians. The case before the State Mediation Board centered on the definition of supervision, with the Association of Professional Librarians arguing that all professionals, from Division Chiefs to Librarian I’s had supervisory duties and thus belonged in the same bargaining unit: theirs. Local 1259 argued that only Division Chiefs were supervisors, and Librarian I, II, and III’s should remain in their bargaining unit, along with paraprofessionals. The Mediation Board ordered an election, where staff members could vote among three options for representation: Local 1259, Association of Professional Librarians, or neither. The election took place on December 12, 1966, and results were finalized in January 1967. Local 1259 would continue to represent Librarians I, II, and III, as well as paraprofessionals. The Association of Professional Librarians would represent Division Chiefs.

In 1970, at the end of the contract period, the Association of Professional Librarians again challenged for an election. This time around, they won the right to represent all librarians. Local 1259 continued to be the bargaining unit for the DPL’s maintenance and clerical workers.

Helga Herz began working at the Detroit Public Library in 1945 as a secretary. She loved the work and returned to school at the University of Michigan to earn her library science degree. She continued working at the DPL until 1978 when she was forced to retire by law at the age of 65. Beginning in 1957, Herz served in leadership positions in Local 1259 including Professional Section Representative, Legislative & Lobbying Committee Chair, Policy Committee member, Bargaining Committee Chair, President (1963-1965), and Vice President (1968-1969).

Herz had immigrated to Michigan with her mother Alice in 1942, escaping Europe and her native Germany during Hitler’s rise to power. She and her mother were both lifelong activists for peace. In 1965, at the age of 82, Alice Herz immolated herself in a downtown Detroit plaza in protest of the Vietnam War, the first person in the United States to do so. After her retirement from the DPL, Helga devoted her time fully to peace activism, including volunteering with the Wayne State University Center for Peace and Conflict Studies and continued active membership in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. She donated the Local 1259 records to the Reuther Library in 2000 and 2003. Helga Herz died in 2010 at the age of 97.
and financial statements; correspondence; meeting minutes; publications; constitutions; salary information; clippings; convention materials; and fliers. Many handwritten notes are also included. Though it is not known for certain, it is believed these notes were created by Helga Herz, the collection’s donor and an officer in Local 1259. One audio reel to reel is included. It is a recording of an interview with founding members of Local 1259, and it is believed that one of the interviewers is Helga Herz.

Important Subjects:
Collective bargaining--Librarians
Collective bargaining--Library employees
Collective bargaining--Professions
Women in the labor movement

Important Names:
Detroit Public Library
Herz, Helga
Ulveling, Ralph A.


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Box 2

1 Contracts Notes


2 Contract: Local 1259, 1968; 1971

3 Contract: Clerical and Maintenance Agreement working copy

4 Contract: Memorandum of Agreement for Clerical and Maintenance, 1968

5 Contract for Local 1259 Clerical and Maintenance, 1967-1974


7 Contract: Local 1259 Pre-Professional, 1968

8 Contract: Local 1259 Pre-Professional, 1968-1969


10 Contract: Memorandum of Understanding for Professional Organization of Librarians, 1971

11 Contract and organizing negotiations for AFSCME Michigan Council

12 Detroit City Employees

13 Detroit Civil Rights, 1961-1964


15 Detroit Library Commission Proceedings, 1963-1965 March


17 Detroit Public Library

18 Detroit Public Library Recommended Budget, 1956-1957

19 Detroit Public Library Recommended Budget, 1957-1958

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24 Detroit Public Library Budget Request, 1968-1969

25 Detroit Public Library Directories, 1965-1973

26 Detroit Public Library job descriptions

27 Detroit Public Library clerical job descriptions

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4 Detroit Public Library Register, 1968-1975
5 Detroit Urban League Library Survey, 1967
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6 University, 1964
7 FDR-CIO Labor Camp library, 1950
8 Libraries and unions: newsletters, brochures, and articles
9 Local 1259
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11 Local 1259 at American Library Associations (ALA), 1965
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7  Local 1259 Membership lists, 1968-1969
8  Local 1259 News (publication), 1950-1957
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10 Local 1259 opposition to contract cleaning
11 Local 1259 response to AFSCME survey, 1966
12 Local 1259 Working material for letter campaign, 1969-1970
13 Local 1259 Working notes and correspondence
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15 Local 1259 Working papers, 1968
16 Local 1259 Working papers
Local Union Administration course from Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations of University of Michigan and Wayne State University, 1972
17 Management of Change: Some Skills and Techniques for DPL Middle Managers, 1975
19 Michigan AFSCME manuals
20 Michigan Council 55 Special Bulletin (publication), 1970 February 11
21 Michigan Public Employees Council 68 Reporting (publication), 1964-1965
23 Michigan Organizing and Representation Memo (publication), 1965-1966
24 The Michigan Public Employee (publication), 1966
26 Michigan public employee labor law
27 Michigan public libraries legislation, 1964
28 Michigan State AFL-CIO Leadership Training Institute, 1961
29 Salary and legislation information, 1964-1967
30 Salary information, 1960s
31 Salary information, 1970-1972
32 Wayne County Employee (publication), 1966 February