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American Association of Law Libraries Special Committee on the Future of AALL 1983-1985, Final Report, November 1985

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American Association of Law Libraries

Special Committee on the Future of AALL 1983-1985

Final Report

November 1985

The Special Committee on the Future of AALL, initially known as Special Committee on Professional Needs of the Legal Information Specialist of 2084, was created by President M. Kathleen Price during the summer of 1983. Its members are Philip C. Berwick, Ann M. Carter, Leah F. Chanin, Richard A. Danner, Marian G. Gallagher, Anne Grande, Kamla J. King, Steve Margeton, Phyllis C. Marion, Kate McKay, Peter C. Schanck, Margaret Shediak, Sara Sonet, Dennis J. Stone, Kay M. Todd, and Sarah K. Wiant, Chairperson.

The Committee was asked to examine the law library profession and the American Association of Law Libraries and to express specific recommendations about AALL for its improvement in order to assure that the AALL will be the association of first choice of its members in the future. The Committee made every effort to gather as much information about the library and information profession generally, and the AALL membership specifically. A final report was completed in November 1985 and submitted to the Executive Board at its winter meeting in New Orleans on January 3, 1986. The Board is considering various aspects of the report. While that review takes place, the Special Committee felt that the membership would be interested in seeing the entire report.

Overview

In June 1983, Kathleen Price, President of the American Association of Law Libraries, established the Special Committee on Professional Needs of the Legal Information Specialist of 2084 to examine whether AALL reflects the current needs of law librarianship/legal information specialists, whether the Association will offer necessary future leadership to prepare its membership to practice in a dramatically changing society, and whether AALL will be the first choice of professional membership in twenty-five years.

The Special Committee consisted of representatives from several special interest sections and committees, all of whom are involved in the activities of the Association. They also represent membership in a major proportion of chapters. Several other individuals were invited to participate in the work of the Committee as ex officio members.

During the first year the Special Committee explored the implications for law librarians of the changes to be expected within the next decade in the field of information science and the functions and operations of law libraries of all types. It then identified issues reflecting the current needs of membership, obtaining information on procedures followed by similar associations, conducting long-range planning, and seeking input from the AALL membership. The Special Committee asked each chapter to rank eight major categories, which were condensed from fifty-one issues discussed at length by the membership-at-large, by chapter members at their meetings held over a period of two years, and by AALL members informally at AALL conven-

tions and throughout the year. A list of issues was published in the *AALL Newsletter* (February 1984) and a copy of the survey was mailed to the membership at that time. Although the response to the questionnaire from the membership-at-large was small (approximately 180 questionnaires returned), it was apparent that those responding had given the issues careful thought. Several chapters submitted lengthy reports describing their deliberations and ranking all categories. Other chapters forwarded summaries of their discussions on the issues, ranking some, all, or none of the categories. When results of the survey and the chapter reports and summaries were compiled, the eight categories were ranked. In descending order of priority, the categories are education, membership, relations with others, organization, publications, meetings, legislation, and the National Law Library. Although the Special Committee did not draft a long-range plan, our objective was to propose goals that would allow the AALL to move toward systematic decision making. It is the hope of the Committee that all of the priorities will be addressed by the Executive Board in the next three to five years.

I. Education

Despite common folk wisdom, libraries are not merely buildings, but are collections of materials in a variety of formats. Information is less a physical entity than it is a set of activities. From these activities services derive. Today's society depends on printed information, and it is unlikely that new technology will make such traditional methods of preserving information obsolete in the near future. Technology will merely create additional methods of storage and retrieval of data.

It is clear from the Special Committee's study that the principal reason for membership in AALL is education. To help law librarians prepare for new roles, education is addressed in several ways: adequate and appropriate formal education, programs at conferences or continuing education, opportunities to undertake and benefit from sponsored research, and public programs. Libraries, like other social institutions, face technological and social changes. There is, however, a fundamental shift in the traditional information activities of acquiring, preserving, and dissemination. There likely will be less acquiring and preserving and more disseminating information as libraries become more dependent upon information stored in a computer data base. Locally held collections may become less important and could even disappear. Clearly, the predicted employment change is from task-oriented jobs to more intellectual activities.

It seems appropriate to seek guidance from law schools, law firms, courts, and government concerning their needs for recent graduates. The AALL, therefore, must consider training and preparation of law librarians in accordance with these needs. At a minimum, directors expect general reference knowledge, human relations skills, and basic bibliographic expertise. Most entry level specialists demonstrate satisfactory levels of competency in general reference and bibliography, but few are experienced in the use of computers.

A. *Professional Degrees*

Unlike the sciences and their relationship with the National Science Foundation, there has been no mechanism to the Department of Education for input about

priorities in library science and information education. In 1983, the Department of Education authorized King Research, Inc. to investigate issues of concern to those in the library and information profession. Dr. Jose Marie Griffith directed the study—*New Directions for Library and Information Science Education*—which attempted to determine present and future competencies needed by information professionals, along with the education required to support these competencies. The intent of the study was to demonstrate the relationship between knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and between activities and performances. AALL is ill-equipped to investigate such issues as knowledge and competency on its own. While the field of law librarianship is somewhat unique, there is still much to be gained from this study. Since library and information schools will look to this study when reviewing their curricula, AALL should adopt its findings in planning educational efforts.

Many library schools are closing, while others, such as the University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, and Berkeley are planning to expand curricula and include programs in law librarianship. Some universities, such as Indiana, are integrating library and information science programs with other subject disciplines. At Indiana a student may choose to enter a joint degree program and receive both a master's of arts from one of several departments and a master's in library science, or may select a specialization, such as information systems and records management offered with the School of Business. In still other environments, library schools are pressured not to integrate but rather to merge with computer science and telecommunications programs. Yet, the basic curriculum of most schools focuses on general librarianship, with an occasional course in law librarianship. The AALL should become more active in this area by developing curriculum guidelines and should encourage members to serve on graduate school library and information science advisory councils.

Standards for formal education represent the collective judgment of professional association members as to what constitutes an appropriate professional education. The library profession at large should review old standards and plan to develop and adopt new standards improving the accreditation process. Here, AALL can make a significant contribution.

In the fall of 1984, the American Library Association and the United States Department of Education began a project to reexamine the accreditation process for library and information schools. Recognizing the importance of this study, the Executive Board appointed Margaret Leary to represent AALL. The AALL generally has removed itself from the accreditation process, preferring to leave responsibility with the American Library Association, the American Bar Association, and the Association of American Law Schools. Nonetheless, the American Association of Law Libraries continues to support the need for standards for quality librarian/information science education, and therefore the Special Committee recommends that the American Association of Law Libraries develop goals for programs in education for law librarianship. When the project is completed and the American Library Association presents a process for accreditation of library and information schools, the American Association of Law Libraries should encourage its membership to take part willingly in accreditation visits as appropriate.

For much of this decade the American Bar Association Library Committee has debated a change in the standard for qualification for an academic head law librarian. The Special Committee further recommends that the American Association of Law

Libraries become an active participant in the American Bar Association/Association of American Law Schools' accreditation process.

B. Continuing Education

If library school departments continue to educate for only beginner level librarians, educational development is even more necessary, and by default the responsibility for further education falls to the professional association. Continuing education is essential to maintain a well-informed membership.

The membership of many chapters or regional groups increased as a result of the demand for educational programs on a local level for the members who do not attend national programs, some of whom are not eligible for AALL membership. Much of the growth in membership was from corporate, court, or government "one-person" libraries, where the librarian frequently lacks formal education in library science, law, or both. Certainly, other private sector libraries have large staffs with varying knowledge and competencies just as law schools do. Therefore, the demand for levels in education is varied. Furthermore, the professional needs of nonacademic professionals may differ from those of academic law librarians because of their clientele.

The AALL needs to develop a model and standards for career ladders for library and information managers in corporate legal departments, law firms, courts, or government. Moreover, the AALL must design programs to prepare individuals for these challenges.

Given the need for education programs ranging from entry level training to sophisticated information science and management techniques, the Special Committee believes it is important for AALL to expand education opportunities and, therefore, the Committee recommends that AALL establish the position of Director of Education within the Headquarters staff whose fundamental objective must be to develop a program to prepare the membership to meet the challenges in the coming decades.

This recommendation emanates from chapter discussions and individual comments, reflecting present needs of the membership in terms of topics, levels, course sequencing, and geographic offerings to prepare the membership to meet technological demands and economic changes. The Association can assist in defining the professional librarian's role, both for its members and for information specialists generally, and, within this, can assume an increasing role in developing national information policies.

The AALL, in cooperation with other information societies, should conduct studies of the information community to determine the needs of the membership. Individual chapters and special interest sections can provide insight into the concerns of members. In public programs AALL can develop a network for assistance, so long as the race to keep pace with technology does not reduce efforts to provide timely library services.

Whatever programs result from this recommendation should not be viewed as a replacement for the Education Committee, which should assume program definition and management oversight responsibility. An appropriate committee structure would be seven members, five members of whom are appointed by the President

and one representative each from the Council of Chapter Presidents and the SIS Council.

In order to ensure that the fullest possible range of educational interests of the membership are represented and balanced, the Special Committee recommends that each chapter appoint an officer of continuing education for professional development who would work with the Education Committee and the Director of Education.

II. Membership

Although the Executive Board authorized a survey of the membership that will determine much about the educational background of our members, a more complete profile is needed. The Special Committee believes that the AALL needs better statistics about its members and their libraries. This data should provide the basis for better service and programs. Efforts to develop a unified library survey form, which would not only be compatible with the ABA statistics-reporting requirements but which also would provide the type of statistics AALL needs, should continue. The form could, like the MLA and ARL annual statistics reporting form, request general statistics in Part A, completed by all libraries, and special statistics in Part B, completed by different types of libraries.

Although private, court, or government librarians do not face the same requirements as academic law librarians due to accreditation standards, professional qualifications are essential on all levels of librarianship, and it is unfortunate to see a nondegreed individual hired as a librarian at roughly the same salary as an entry-level librarian. It is important for AALL to work with other library groups or information groups to oppose lowering the standards for federal librarians and to resist the "trickle-down" effect, diluting the level of competency in the nonfederal sector.

AALL should take the position that law librarians should have appropriate degrees in information technology, such as a master's of library science or information science. Employers also should consider competence or degrees in other relevant fields, such as automation or management, as appropriate when hiring a librarian.

Like other professions, law librarianship may have a personnel problem: the presence of unproductive, inactive and weak membership. Even more draining are the people who do not belong to the local, regional, or national association and who do not attend meetings or conferences, nor do professional work. Those librarians who do not belong to AALL although they may qualify represent a pool of unutilized potential leadership skills.

To diminish this problem, the AALL should become more active by recruiting people to the profession who can solve problems, possess a quality education, demonstrate that they can manage, and are committed to research. One means by which recruitment could be improved is the involvement of law librarians in career counseling and by participating in local career programs. Students need to know more about law librarianship if they are to consider it as a profession.

Furthermore, AALL should work towards better employment opportunities for its membership. The Special Committee believes that the placement service could be enhanced by more involvement of the membership at the regional and local levels under the direction of trained Headquarters staff. The placement program should be reorganized by asking each chapter to appoint a placement officer who will coor-

dinate with the Headquarters staff. This individual also would serve as a liaison to the state bar and to local courts and government offices.

III. Relations with Others

Many among the law library profession report that the view of law librarians held by other legal associations is not an altogether positive one. Law librarianship often is perceived as being passive. Librarians have not continually strived to make their voices heard in the bar nor by legal educators. The answer has been to seek ways to improve the image of librarians within the legal world and the library and information profession so as to improve visibility among these groups and to increase confidence in leadership. To that end the Special Committee offers the recommendation that the AALL develop a strong public relations program for positive image creation with other library and information associations, business and government, and the general public; and that the AALL develop a strong public relations program with legal associations such as the ABA, AALS, and Association of Legal Administrators.

Better publicity about the Association and its activities is needed. Regular press releases should be sent to library and information science publications such as *Library Journal* and *Special Libraries* and to legal publications such as the *National Law Journal*, *American Lawyer*, *Los Angeles Daily Law Journal*, and to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. More articles about law librarianship should be published in journals that lawyers read, such as state bar journals or the *ABA Journal*.

Little research has been done regarding the services that academic law library users desire. Do faculty have a clear picture of when to use research assistants and when to use a law librarian? Attorneys must be better educated about what service can be expected from a law librarian. Lawyers need to see the time (i.e., money) that could be saved by using a law librarian for research. Moreover, lawyers should consider routine billing for librarians' services.

One approach to increasing visibility is to develop a brochure to distribute to all firms with more than twenty lawyers, courts, government, and businesses where there might be an opportunity for the services of a law librarian. The AALL should contact law firm administrators and ABA members to determine what they expect of librarians. A brief survey could be distributed at the AALL exhibition booth at the American Bar Association meetings or at state bar association meetings. Another avenue of enhancing the image of law librarians is to push for some type of membership in both the national and state bar associations for non-JDs so that many law firm and law school librarians could be active within them.

For several years the AALL has appointed representatives to other library associations and to the AALS as well as the ABA. It is equally important for these associations to become more aware of the activities of the AALL. The Special Committee therefore recommends that the President of AALL contact library associations, the AALS, and the ABA to encourage each of those organizations to appoint a liaison to the AALL.

Another area in which AALL should cooperate with others is technology. The AALL, probably through its Committee on Standards and the AALL representatives to national organizations like NISO-Z39, should consult with other librarian infor-

mation associations and pertinent committees of the ABA's Section on Science and Technology to set standards for equipment and systems to ensure future networking capability.

Offering consultations to groups seeking to establish a law library is another means by which law librarians could provide a valuable service and improve their image. The AALL should consider establishing a consultation program which could be modeled like the one offered by SLA. The SLA membership provides one day of free consultation as a service to an organization establishing or improving its special library.

IV. Organization

One of the objectives of the Special Committee's study was to determine how the organizational structure of the AALL aids or hinders participation in Association activities. The Committee attempted to reappraise the organizational structure with the goal of providing maximum professional growth and participation of the membership.

There are benefits for maintaining a strong national organization. Such benefits include funds for projects and potential for a professional staff in areas such as professional development or education, placement, public relations, and publications. Perhaps the greatest benefit, however, is the sharing of knowledge about all types of law librarianship. Most law librarians are willing to share information. One of the more important benefits of Association membership is social contacts; at all levels, members seek a network of contacts. They also want a sense of belonging to a group. Lobbying efforts for legislation of concern to library groups or information groups could be more successful with the support of the Association speaking as one voice. Members look to the Association to accomplish goals that could not be achieved at the individual, chapter, or regional level.

The organizational structure of committees within the AALL provides the means for developing and carrying on the policies of the Association. The Special Committee recognizes that only a small percentage of members receive committee assignments, primarily because of the size of committees; therefore, the committee system at the national level does not generally promote a sense of participation. Many committees do not know what the Association expects them to do. At present, there is an overlap of committee responsibilities, and other committees exist long after the need for their creation has expired or been reassigned. Furthermore, whether a committee accomplishes anything depends directly on the involvement of the chair. New committees now begin their work during the annual convention, thus alleviating some of the difficulty of conducting all committee work by mail. Although the committee structure is not without problems, it still works relatively well. Therefore, the Special Committee recommends that the Board be encouraged to review standing committees and their responsibility for policies within the Association and to redraft the *AALL Handbook* to include a more clearly defined statement of goals and responsibilities for each committee.

The creation of special interest sections was the beginning of an effort to involve more members in Association activities by encouraging membership participation in groups that deal with specific areas of law librarianship by type of law library

or by particular subject. As such, the special interest sections perform educational and informational functions and provide for increased membership participation within the Association. Involvement in special interest sections was further improved by the establishment of the Special Interest Sections Council, consisting of the current chair of every approved special interest section and a chair from among the previous year's council members. SIS involvement in the planning of selected AALL convention programs is another step by which participation is enhanced. Because the SIS structure provides increased participation by the membership in AALL activities, the Special Committee recommends that the SIS structure should remain unaltered.

Nearly all respondents to the informal survey or individuals responding during chapter discussions conducted for this study pressed for some means for strengthening the relationship between the AALL and its twenty-five chapters. The Special Committee believes it is necessary to clarify the lines of relationship between AALL and the chapters and to place the Executive Board in a position to act directly in establishing policy and mechanisms to bring the chapters under the fold of AALL.

The AALL Financial Planning Committee determined that membership in chapters includes approximately 1,300 individuals who are not AALL members and who might be brought into the AALL to strengthen the membership base.¹ Everyone who meets the criteria for membership ought to belong to the AALL as an individual; however, many will be precluded because of requirements for national membership. Because education is the most important goal of the Association and since members should promote professional development, the Special Committee was reluctant to recommend mandatory membership at both chapter and national levels. The AALL provides educational opportunities and supports people who do not qualify for membership in the AALL through the chapter programs. The establishment of the Council of Chapter Presidents was an effort to promote the relationship between the chapters and their representation in AALL. To foster further that relationship, the Committee recommends that the bylaws be amended to provide for chapter membership in the AALL.

In order for a chapter to enjoy AALL affiliation, a majority or, in the alternative, two-thirds of its members must also be individual members in AALL, and its officers must be AALL members. Only individual members of AALL would be eligible to hold office at national, SIS, or chapter levels, to serve on national committees, or to vote in AALL elections. Chapters would be assessed a service fee according to their membership in return for services provided by the AALL. Such services could include continuing education opportunities offered at the chapter or regional levels, mailing labels, publicity, placement, and lobbying activity.

V. Publications

Many of the problems with the Association's publication program have been addressed during the past two years, most particularly the infrequency with which

1. *American Association of Law Libraries Financial Planning Committee 1982-84, Final Report, May 1984*, 77 LAW LIBR. J. 386, 393 (1984-85).

issues of *Law Library Journal* appeared. Articles were not being published in a timely manner. Manuscripts that should have gone to *Law Library Journal* were going to other publications. With the acquisition of word processing equipment, the draft of an author's guide, the change in editors, the electronic transmission of manuscripts to the printer, and the reorganization of the *Law Library Journal* Committee into an advisory board, the *Law Library Journal* soon will meet its publication schedule. The creation of advisory boards for the Association's other publications temporarily seems to have resolved other publication problems.

Still remaining unanswered is the question of focus of both *Law Library Journal* and the *AALL Newsletter*. Much like the continuing debate within the AALS regarding the publication of a scholarly journal, membership opinions vary widely. Some feel that only a small percentage of the membership would be interested in articles on legal topics, scholarly or practice-oriented works. Others feel that both law and library science are important, particularly as library science applies to law. A segment of the membership would like the *AALL Newsletter* and the *Law Library Journal* combined into a glossy publication like *Library Journal*. In the future, the Association's publication program may expand to the extent that the Board should consider establishing a position of Director of Publications at Headquarters whose responsibilities include the further development of the Association's publications. Such a recommendation may be premature at this time, but the Publications Committee should study the issue.

VI. Meetings

Members suggest that an annual meeting with the national program that appeals to all is important and should be continued. A balance of substantive law, management, and technical education is healthy. In order to provide education and professional opportunities to a larger percentage of members than those in regular attendance at a national convention, the Special Committee suggests that AALL also hold regional meetings. In the alternative, selected educational programs should be packaged and made available to chapters.

Funds should be made available for scholarships for attendance at national meetings. The Board should consider AALL sponsorship of CONELL as an introductory program to the Association. Sponsor donations are generally forthcoming and have been generous; however, these donations are made to the general treasury on behalf of CONELL. Local chapters should encourage nonmember law librarians to attend.

VII. Legislation

As the principal information association in the United States whose focus is law, the Special Committee views with grave concern the Association's lack of leadership on legal issues of concern to the library and information world and believes the AALL should take a stand on such issues rather than just reacting as has been done so often in recent years. The Board has before it a draft prepared by the Committee on Legislation and Legal Development which sets forth statements of AALL federal legislative policy in numerous areas. The Special Committee endorses the work of

this committee and urges that AALL Board approval of the final draft should be forthcoming. Moreover, some procedures by which testimony within the stated policy is drafted by appropriate SIS or committee members should be developed. To that end, the Special Committee recommends that the AALL establish a legislative program to encourage the enactment of legislation which supports the information industry in the public as well as in the private sector, to monitor legislation, and, when feasible, to lobby to ensure access to public information.

VIII. National Law Library

For many librarians, the concept of a national law library is a dead issue. With the expanded services offered by both OCLC and RLIN, academic law libraries have access to most of the nation's legal resources. Many corporate, court, and government libraries have joined a bibliographic network, and others rely on chapters or consortium association for access to legal information. LawNet may fill whatever gap exists, although some argue that LawNet seems to duplicate existing networks and services.

Since the issue of a national law library received the lowest priority by both chapters and individuals, the Special Committee recommends that the AALL devote its energies to higher priorities, particularly education, rather than the establishment of a national law library.

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the Special Committee makes the following recommendations in the areas of education, relations with others, organization, legislation, and the national law library.

A. Education

- That the American Association of Law Libraries develop goals for programs in education for law librarianship
- That the American Association of Law Libraries become an active participant in the American Bar Association/Association of American Law Schools' accreditation process
- That AALL establish the position of Director of Education within the Headquarters staff whose fundamental objective must be to develop a program to prepare the membership to meet the challenges in the coming decades
- That each chapter appoint an officer of continuing education for professional development who would work with the Education Committee and the Director of Education

B. Relations with Others

- That the AALL develop a strong public relations program for positive image creation with other library and information associations, business and government, and the general public

- That the AALL develop a strong public relations program with legal associations such as the ABA, AALS, and the Association of Legal Administrators
- That the President of AALL contact library associations, the AALS, and the ABA to encourage each of those organizations to appoint a liaison to the AALL

C. Organization

- That the Board be encouraged to review standing committees and their responsibility for policies within the Association and to redraft the *AALL Handbook* to include a more clearly defined statement of goals and responsibilities for each committee
- That the SIS structure should remain unaltered
- That the bylaws be amended to provide for chapter membership in the AALL

D. Legislation

- That the AALL establish a legislative program to encourage the enactment of legislation which supports the information industry in the public as well as in the private sector, to monitor legislation, and, when feasible, to lobby to ensure access to public information

E. National Law Library

- That the AALL devote its energies to higher priorities, particularly education, rather than the establishment of a national law library

