

## The Law School Library Director of the Twenty-First Century: What Deans Think

*At the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Law Schools, the Section on Law Libraries sponsored a program in which several law school deans discussed the future role of the academic law library director. Ms. Roehrenbeck's introduction to the issues confronted during the program is followed by edited remarks from the program's speakers.*

### Introduction\*

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¶1 At a recent annual meeting of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS), a panel of law school deans discussed the role of the academic law library director in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> With libraries facing numerous challenges, including a shift in collection format from hard copy to digital, tighter budgets due to a downturn in the economy, and an expansion of Internet resources and search engines, the AALS Committee on Law Libraries thought that members of the section would be interested in learning, firsthand, what deans expected from directors in this new era.

¶2 To provide the deans with a frame of reference, several months prior to the meeting the committee presented the panelists with the following hypothetical situation: "Assume your director is retiring or is resigning to take another position. In anticipation of commencing a search for a new director, what duties, responsibilities, and qualifications will you include in preparing a revised job description for the position?" The committee hoped that this scenario would prompt the deans to consider the changing environment for law schools and law libraries in formulating their responses.

¶3 In addition to the hypothetical situation, panelists were given questions that had been submitted ahead of time by members of the section. The committee polled the membership through the electronic discussion list used by law school library directors.<sup>2</sup> The responses to this solicitation covered a broad range of subjects, including teaching responsibilities, tenure standards, fund-raising roles, and involvement with technology support. The committee selected eight questions and shared them with the deans several months prior to the conference. Each dean was

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1. Law Library Director of the Twenty-First Century: A Panel of Experts, program presented at Annual Meeting of the Association of American Law Schools, Washington, D.C. (Jan. 3, 2003).
2. Posting of Carol A. Roehrenbeck, croehrenbeck@kinoy.rutgers.edu, AALS Deans Panel, to lawlib-dir@lists.washlaw.edu (Sept. 16, 2002) (copy on file with author).

asked to answer two of the questions in their remarks. Remaining questions were presented during the question-and-answer period of the program.

¶4 A distinguished panel of deans from a variety of private and public law schools agreed to participate: Alex Johnson,<sup>3</sup> University of Minnesota; Robert Smith,<sup>4</sup> Suffolk University; Mary Kay Kane,<sup>5</sup> University of California, Hastings; and John Makdisi,<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas University, Miami. The result was an interesting and lively program. The deans presented their ideas on all aspects of the job of the director and identified what they needed from a director. The ideas were as varied as the backgrounds of the deans. In the following pages you will have an opportunity to read some of those presentations and draw your own conclusions about the role of the “Law School Library Director of the Twenty-First Century.”

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3. *Editor's Note*: Dean Johnson was not able to submit edited remarks for publication in *Law Library Journal*.
  4. See Robert H. Smith, *The Librarian's Risk of Irrelevance (in the Eyes of the Law School Dean)*, 95 LAW LIBR. J. 421, 2003 LAW LIBR. J. 30.
  5. See Mary Kay Kane, *Technology and the Law School Librarian of the Twenty-First Century*, 95 LAW LIBR. J. 427, 2003 LAW LIBR. J. 31.
  6. See John Makdisi, *Improving Education-Delivery in the Law School of the Twenty-First Century: The Vital Role of the Law Librarian*, 95 LAW LIBR. J. 431, 2003 LAW LIBR. J. 32.