

What Did You Think



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Two members discuss and review AALL's 98th Annual Meeting and Conference

by Megan Garton and Anne Matthewman
photos by Brant Bender



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Association of Law Libraries

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of the Conference?

It all started when Anne Matthewman and Megan Garton volunteered to write a review of the entire Annual Meeting for *AALL Spectrum*. Anne is a veteran AALL member; she attended her first Conference in 1988 in Atlanta and has attended every Meeting since. Megan is new to law librarianship. She has almost finished her first year as a professional librarian at UNC Law Library in Chapel Hill and attended the Conference in Boston last year as a student member. Paul Healey, *AALL Spectrum* editorial director, asked Anne and Megan to keep a running conversation of their experiences in San Antonio.

It was a busy five days for Anne and Megan. They met several times and had their final discussion together at the San Antonio International Airport on Thursday, July 21. The busy terminal is full of travelers, some conspicuously identifiable as law librarians by their BNA Annual Meeting bag. We find Anne and Megan sitting down to savor a few last bites of enchilada.

Megan: Whew! My luggage is so full from all these great freebies from the vendors and from shopping at the Rivercenter Mall. I am so excited to catch up with you once again.

Anne: So, what did you think of the Conference?

Plenary Sessions

M: I really enjoyed the first plenary session, "Building the Libraries Our Users Deserve," with Roy Tennant, user services architect of the California Digital Library (<http://roytennant.com>). It was interesting to contemplate a library catalog modeled after Amazon and Google. I wonder if we both noted his challenge related to library catalogs as finding aids. He was quite blunt when he said, "All of them suck, and you can quote me."



“ One of things I found most fascinating with Kang’s presentation was his use of MindManager software to illustrate his themes. I have never seen a presentation where the speech and the slideshow melded together so well. ”



Plenary Session II, “Pervasive Computing: Embedding the Public Sphere,” was fascinating and, at times, a little frightening. Jerry Kang, professor of law at the University of California Los Angeles (www.law.ucla.edu/kang), likened people in the age of pervasive computing to “cyborgs with access to information.” In the augmented reality Kang described, we could “right click” on people, places, or things to identify common interests, even as our cell phones and every swipe of our credit cards help companies track our location, desires, and preferences. Perhaps librarians, in the not so distant future, will say, as Kang suggests, “How can I help you celebrate your preferences?”

A: *One of things I found most fascinating with Kang’s presentation was his use of MindManager software to illustrate his themes. I have never seen a presentation where the speech and the slideshow melded together so well. I am still a bit confused about all his terminology—smooth mall, friction mall, percolating, real virtuality, rfid tag—but I am definitely going to find out more. Readers might be interested to know that his Web site leads them to several of his theories and publications.*

I was pleased when I heard that Tennant, author of the “Digital Libraries” column in Library Journal, was to be a plenary speaker, as I always read his columns and learn a lot. But you are right, he certainly shook us out of our complacency about library catalogues today. His comment that we “need to get our act together” reminded me that as librarians, we can never stop thinking or planning ahead to keep pace with our patrons. His demonstration of Google Maps tied to locations of library books was particularly eye-opening. If you combine what Tennant and Kang said, you will realize that libraries will have to be at the forefront of pervasive computing and need to be fully embedded in the public sphere.

Programs

A: *What did you think about the concurrent programs?*

M: *Of the 60 programs, one of my favorites was “Realizing Visions and Valuing History: Twenty Years of the Standing Committee on Lesbian and Gay Issues.” It was interesting to hear the panel members reminisce and talk about the formation of the group in 1985 as a Standing Committee of Contemporary Social Problems, now the Social Responsibilities Special Interest*

Section. The handout included a list of the resolutions, programs, and bylaw changes effectuated by the group. As a new member, hearing about their work to pass resolutions was helpful in putting in context the resolution before the AALL Business Meeting this year.

As an academic law librarian, one of my favorite meetings to attend is the Academic Law Libraries SIS Relations with Online Vendors Roundtable. It is a great opportunity to have a dialogue with vendor representatives face to face, discuss common problems and frustrations, and recommend possible solutions to problems with the vendors present. What about you?

A: *I tried to get to several programs this year. As we are starting a virtual reference service in our library system very soon, I attended one program on that topic at which I got some useful information on evaluating a virtual reference service. The Hot Topic program on identity theft was frankly alarming, and I definitely won’t be taking a credit card to a gym where it might be surreptitiously scanned. Two programs that I found very interesting and useful were “Health Law in Cyberspace: Visionary Strategy or Recipe for Disaster?,” which provided lots of good consumer-oriented sites, and “Beyond the Blog: RSS, Wikis and Blikis,” which brought me up to speed on those strange-sounding beasts.*

Although it was not technically a program, I enjoyed the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA) session where Judith Cobb of OCLC presented the LIPA White Paper, which she had co-authored with Joan Allen-Hart of the San Diego Public Law Library. There I learned that there is a new term coming into play—“born archival,” which refers to digital information that is created in a format and manner according to archival best practices and standards. It is not merely “born digital” in any electronic format.

AALL really offers great learning opportunities. There were also some different programs before the Conference actually

started. There were workshops on subject cataloguing, on library systems, on strategies for researching European law, and on acquisition and management of electronic resources. Additionally, there was the Diversity Symposium and the Legislative Advocacy Leadership Training. LexisNexis also offered selected court librarians an opportunity to take part in Teaching Research in Court and Agency Law Libraries (TRICALL).

M: *New law librarians attended the Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL) and were introduced to the Association and the San Antonio area. I know from experience that this is a great way to start the Conference.*

Business Meetings

A: *Megan, did you go to either of the business meetings?*

M: *I attended both sessions of the AALL general business meetings. On the first day, I enjoyed hearing remarks by law librarians from the Canadian, British and Irish, International, New Zealand, and Australian associations. I had no idea there were opportunities to attend conferences across the globe. Does it happen often that there are resolutions like the one about having*

AALL take an official stance opposing the Iraq war? Were there more people than usual at the business meetings because of the vote on the resolution?

A: *Yes, I am sure there were several more people at the second session than usual. The resolution put forward was difficult to deal with because we had to weigh our personal feelings about the war in Iraq against the big picture of AALL activities and visions.*

Generally speaking, I find it a shame that more people do not attend the business meetings. They provide an excellent opportunity to “be in the know” and to



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demonstrate support for the work of the Association.

Exhibit Hall

A: It sounds like you spent some time in the Exhibit Hall.

M: Yes, I did. Have the vendors always been so creative in their exhibits? For example, the Thomson West airplane even provided in-flight snacks, unlike the plane I flew on here! There were 102 vendors, and all the ones I talked to seemed so friendly;

I didn't feel pressured. I appreciated the vendors who may have enticed

us with gifts and prizes, but actually provided valuable information. One booth did break the mold—

Bead Me Up, which sold jewelry of all kinds, had no information content, but it always seemed busy.

A: I have to admit I made several visits to Bead Me Up, and I couldn't resist one of the bracelets. One of my favorite areas in the Exhibit Hall is always the Activities Area, where chapters and SISs set up tables. These groups are the grassroots of the Association, and they always have innovative ideas.

This year the Centennial Committee had an interesting collection of photographs showing some of the first members. Additionally, the Archives display covered the development of the State Court and County Law Libraries SIS (SCCLL-SIS). As a member of that SIS, I found the display particularly interesting.

As for the main part of the hall, I noticed that there were a number of new exhibitors this year, such as The British Library, the Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI), Courthouse News Service, SkyMinder, Firm360 from Thomson, and TransPerfect Translations. Although I always visit the major print and electronic publishers to learn about new products, I find the smaller booths interesting, and I often leave them with valuable tips about services and products.

Awards

M: I was quite surprised at the number of awards that were presented this year.

A: Yes, many of our fellow members

received awards, grants, and scholarships at the Awards Ceremony held on Sunday afternoon. These included awards for articles, professional development projects, excellence in marketing, and public access to government information. The many grants and scholarships included the George A. Strait Minority Scholarship and the Ellen Schaffer Foreign Librarian's Grant. There is a complete list of recipients on the AALL Web site (www.aallnet.org/about/awards.asp).

The presentation of the Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award took place at the Association Luncheon. Three long-time AALL members received the Award this year: Charles R. Dyer, Michael S. Miller, and Roy M. Mersky. I think that we all feel a great sense of pride in our fellow members when they are chosen to receive this award.

M: I saw many awards given out, and even though I am new, I did know some recipients. One of the things that struck me was how important the grants and scholarships are to the members. Sometimes it can mean the difference between attending or not attending the Conference. In talking with some of the award winners, I realized that these are people who probably deserve some kind of award every day for their extra efforts. The awards presentations also helped me learn some history about AALL, since many of them honor past members and, in this way, their memories are kept alive.

Social Events

M: There were lots of opportunities to party and celebrate these accomplishments.

A: There are always a number of social events at the Conference, and I am struck by how generous the vendors are in sponsoring these events. LexisNexis again threw a great party for the Opening Event. After that party, I am now addicted to churros! Thomson West sponsored the SCCLL-SIS reception on Tuesday evening at the Institute of Mexico, located in Hemisphere Park. We had great food and camaraderie and an opportunity to see some interesting Mexican art.

I always put on my dancing shoes for the Thomson West party on Monday evening. I have to admit that line dancing is not my forte, so I just

Some of Your Favorite Programs

We asked and you told us

A-3: May It Please the Court: Strategies for Discovering Pro Se Services That Judges Crave

E-2: Form and Function: The Basics of Designing and Building Your Law Library

E-3: Managing for Cultural Diversity

F-4: "The Guide to Fair Business Practices": Where Do We Go from Here?

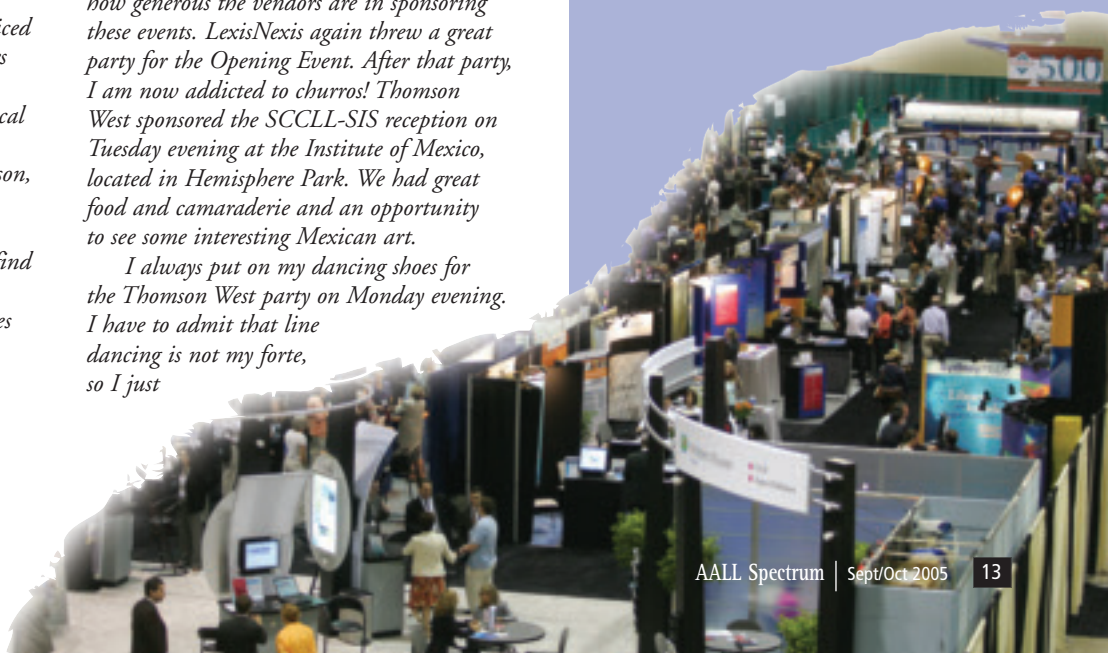
G-2: Room at the Top: Strategy Tips from the Hiring Squad

I-2: Holding Difficult Conversations

J-3: How to Create a Privacy Policy Statement

K-3: Beating the Boredom Blues: How to Give Presentations Without Putting Your Audience to Sleep

Research Instruction and Patron Services SIS (RIPS-SIS) Roundtable on Internet Use Policies



watched when that took place. Some of our fellow librarians sure looked at home in their Western gear. Again, there was lots of great food, margaritas, and friendly company.

M: At the LexisNexis Opening Dessert Event I sampled my first prickly pear margarita and several traditional Mexican desserts. The ice sculpture of the skyline of San Antonio was magnificent and so clever with the riverboats made of watermelon. Thomson West sponsored the Academic Law Libraries SIS (ALL-SIS) Reception and Awards at St. Mary's University School of Law. Lindsay Hutchins Matt, from William Mitchell Law Library St. Paul, enjoyed seeing how St. Mary's building was organized. She felt "good to be in an environment of academic librarians and be able to bounce ideas off each other."

This year I was fortunate to be a guest of new "Bender Baby" Margaret Hall at the LexisNexis Grant and Scholarship Program, held at the Institute of Texas Cultures. It was a lovely evening with great food, opportunities to meet influential people in law librarianship, and a chance to make new acquaintances.

Interesting Happenings

M: There were lots of other things going on around the convention center as well. Did you notice?

A: I spent a lot of time on Sunday watching the dogs at the River City Cluster Dog Show (www.rivercitycds.com) being groomed in the next conference hall. But an amusing thing happened to me on Tuesday when I volunteered at the registration desk. A couple came up and wanted to register for the Universal Round Dance Council (www.danceurdc.org). I had a hard time convincing the woman that we were law librarians, not round dancers. She kept insisting that I had her syllabus for the competition. I wonder, did any law librarians move from our Conference to the round dancing one?

M: I was impressed by the Fiesta of Books Book Drive. Barbara Lah of the University of New Mexico School of Law Library, who chaired the drive, told us that the school district benefiting this year is the San Antonio Independent School District.

The students at these schools are from low-income families, and the school libraries really need the help. They are only budgeted \$1 per child per year for book purchases. The majority of students are Hispanic, but there are also native Indians, Asians, and African Americans. Most are identified as economically disadvantaged. So far, the drive has received 451 books and \$2,231 in cash donations.

I also wondered about the group of women knitting and embroidering in the Exhibit Hall seating area. It turns out that is the new Stitching SIS. Organizers Joanne Dugan and Carolyn Tanen told us that "the Annual Meeting always offers librarians a chance to get together with others who share their interests outside the library. The

Baseball and Dancing SISs are long-standing and popular traditions, and this year the Stitching SIS was a new entry in the field. Several librarians took advantage of the Exhibit Hall breaks on Monday and Tuesday to meet and share their love of needlework and all things fiber. The crafts represented included knitting, needlepoint, counted cross-stitch, and quilting. Dugan and Tanen hope to make this an annual event.

Tours

A: Did you see much of San Antonio, Megan?

M: Though I was busy attending programs, meetings, and dinners, I took some good advice from more experienced law librarians and allowed time to see some of the sights in San Antonio. Visiting the Alamo was quite an experience. I also took time to stroll along the Riverwalk. I had never stayed in a hotel with R, for Riverwalk Level, as a button in the elevator. Before leaving for the airport, we took an hour-long bus tour around San Antonio. Seeing more of the city was a great way to end the week.

A: On Saturday I took the organized tour, which visited the missions of San Antonio. Of course the first was the Alamo, and then we moved on to four other missions, including

Mission San Jose and Mission San Juan. These missions are in varying states of disrepair, but amazingly all still function as parish churches. At Mission San Juan we saw a very stirring film about the development of the missions and the roles played by the local Indian tribes. Within the mission walls one feels a great sense of peace and calmness.

I also walked around the Riverwalk and took the boat tour. Although I have a great sense of direction at street level, I was thoroughly mixed up walking on the Riverwalk. I had to come up to street level to figure out where I was. My last stop was La Villita, an interesting and picturesque historic district, with restaurants, arts and crafts, and historical exhibits.

And Now, Goodbye

M: It was so nice to meet you, Anne. I had such fun, learned so much, and met many great people here in San Antonio. It was a little sad to leave, and next year I'll probably be singing "I got the St. Louis Blues" on the plane home.

A: You know, Megan, I always feel a little sad at the end of the AALL Conference because I know I won't see many of my friends for another year. But I still go home with a bounce in my step because there are so many wonderful experiences at the Conference. I attend interesting and educational programs, I learn about new products in the Exhibit

Hall, I often get to see a city I haven't visited before, and I feel connected to a network of cool, savvy people.

M: Clearly lots of people need to be thanked for making our Conference experience such a great one. Three cheers and many thanks and pats on the back to the Local Advisory Committee, the

Annual Meeting Program Committee, the Executive Board, volunteers, speakers, moderators, sponsors, and exhibitors for joining together to produce a great Meeting. See you next year. ■

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Anne Matthewman (amatthewman@tlaonline.ca) is the library manager/executive director of the Toronto Lawyers' Association.



“What Did You Think of the Conference?” captions

1. *A mariachi band opens the Exhibit Hall Ribbon Cutting and leads AALL members into the hall on July 17.*
2. *A packed audience listens to the first plenary speaker, Roy Tennant, discuss, “Building the Libraries Our Users Deserve,” on July 17.*
3. *Second plenary speaker, Jerry Kang, gives a dynamic presentation about pervasive computing—how the tenuous line between cyberspace and real space is starting to blur—on July 20.*
4. *Lynn Corbett, research specialist at Lord Bissell Brook in Chicago, and Michelle Rigual, head of technical Services at the University of New Mexico Law Library in Albuquerque, staff the San Antonio Hospitality Booth.*
5. *Annual Meeting attendees visit the more than 100 vendors in the Exhibit Hall.*
6. *AALL members stay connected online via the AALL Internet Room in the Exhibit Hall.*
7. *President Victoria Trotta, surrounded by the AALL Executive Board, cuts the ribbon to open the Exhibit Hall on July 17.*
8. *Author Megan Garton, reference/electronic resources librarian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Law Library, and Nick Sexton, reference librarian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Law Library, enjoy the Opening Event, sponsored by LexisNexis, on July 17.*
9. *Barbara Lah, reference librarian at the University of New Mexico Law Library in Albuquerque, reads the resolution on the Iraq War submitted by the Social Responsibilities-SIS during the first business meeting on July 18. (See “From the Secretary” on page 6 for the resolution text.)*
10. *Pat Gudas Mitchell, head librarian at DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary in Washington, D.C.; Geoff Mitchell, guest; and Phil Rosenthal, of Fastcase Inc. in Alexandria, sample the many deserts at the Opening Event, sponsored by LexisNexis, on July 17.*
11. *Annual Meeting attendees receive a demonstration from a GSI representative in the Exhibit Hall on July 18.*
12. *A member of the Northern California Association of Law Libraries proudly displays her chapter’s table in the Activities Area of the Exhibit Hall on July 19.*
13. *An ice sculpture of San Antonio is the centerpiece of the Opening Event.*

You Say

What AALL Annual Meeting attendees thought about ...

... the Plenary Sessions

“Kang’s session was the fastest hour I spent at the Conference, and I regretted that it ended so soon. He gave us the impression that, if we’d had the time, he could’ve spoken to us for several hours on this subject. And because he made it all so interesting, we wouldn’t have been bored for a moment.”

—Anonymous attendee

... the Programs

“For quite some time I have wanted to do a strategic plan, but where to begin? This year’s Conference theme indicated that perhaps I might get some help; I was not disappointed. Sandra Yancey’s dynamic presentation, ‘Strengths, Problems, Opportunities and Threats (SPOT): Analyzing the Dynamics of a Successful Library Organization,’ gave me the idea on how to get started and have the whole library team play a part. On Wednesday morning, Cate Bower’s ‘Back to the Future: Thinking and Acting Strategically’ put a bigger action plan around what Sandra had presented and showed us how to complete a plan. The best thing is that none of this will go to waste on a to-do list. The four libraries in our firm have a retreat every fall, and we will be spending a full day working on our strategic plan.”

—Joan Rataic-Lang, manager of library services at Osler Hoskin Harcourt in Toronto

... the Business Meetings

“If all business meetings had such controversial resolutions, it would definitely increase attendance. It was exciting to have a topic at the business meeting be a topic of conversation at dinner, too.”

—Anonymous attendee

... the Awards

Charley Dyer, one of this year’s Gallagher Award recipients and retiring director of the San Diego County Public Law Library, said that he was humbled and awed to be chosen for the award. He said it was emotionally tough to get through his speech, but it was important to do so because he wanted to stress that we all do the same essential things in our jobs that he has done.

... Explaining the Parties to their Bosses!

“[I stress the] importance of attending social events and sharing ideas and experiences with librarians from all over the country.”

—Colleen McGuire, associate law librarian at Calfee Halter Griswold LLP in Annapolis, Maryland

... San Antonio

“One of my favorite things was a walk through the King William Historic District. We had a relaxing walk, strolling by beautiful homes, saw a serene portion of the Riverwalk, and ended with afternoon tea at The Madhatters Tea House and Cafe.”

—Anonymous attendee

... the Conference

“I have just returned to law librarianship after a five-year absence, and for me the Annual Meeting was exhilarating: old friends/new friends, excellent programs, and the opportunity to talk with vendors and see product demonstrations. Every bit of it was valuable to me.”

—Linda Gray, research librarian at Nelson Mullins Riley Scarborough LLP in Atlanta

“I always enjoy meeting librarians from a wide range of geographical areas and specialties.”

—Alison Alifano, associate director of library services at Sullivan Cromwell LLP in New York

“My favorite part of the Conference is connecting and reconnecting with fellow librarians.”

—Margaret Hall, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Law Library

Donna Byrne, librarian at Hancock Estabrook in Syracuse, New York, was thrilled with the Exhibit Hall because, “I got a lot of free trials.” She also enjoyed seeing all the new products.

Marla Sterritt, library director at Burnet Duckworth Palmer in Calgary, noted that publishers are making major enhancements to their products, and she is reassured that her firm was “right to go digital.”