



Educating All Our Members

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Whenever you are asked if you can do a job, tell ‘em, ‘Certainly I can!’ Then get busy and find out how to do it.”

Does that sound familiar? Sometimes it seems like we must learn something new every day in order to do our jobs. That’s where AALL’s educational program can help. During the development of AALL’s Strategic Directions, the Executive Board identified “lifelong learning and intellectual growth” as one of AALL’s core values. Much of our Association’s focus is on assisting law librarians with education through our Annual Meeting programs, publications, and continuing education programs.

As I mentioned in my November column, AALL is at the midpoint of its Strategic Directions, 2005-2010, so I am examining our progress on each direction. In that column, I looked at leadership. This month’s focus is on education. Our Strategic Directions goal states:

Law librarians will have the education and training they need to meet and leverage the challenges of the changing information environment.

Objectives:

- Expand the scope of educational offerings to meet the ever-changing needs of members
- Develop partnerships to increase the range of educational offerings
- Use a wide range of delivery means and opportunities to provide education beyond the Annual Meeting
- Increase the number of library school programs for law librarianship and increase awareness of law librarianship as a profession
- Increase the number and amount of grants and scholarships.

We have been making excellent progress in addressing these objectives, though there is more to be done.

Competencies of Law Librarianship and Professional Education Policy

The competencies, which were approved in 2001, and the Professional Education Policy, which was revised in 2007, form the framework for all of AALL’s educational activities. Each program must identify and demonstrate how it will help further one of

the 16 core competencies recommended for all law librarians or the specialized competencies in management; reference, research, and client services; information technology; collection care and management; or teaching.

Annual Meeting

The most visible and comprehensive educational event for AALL members is the Annual Meeting. Typically, close to 2,000 members gather to participate in several days filled with a wide range of offerings. Recent Annual Meetings have featured more than 60 individual workshops and programs selected by the Annual Meeting Program Committee.

In addition, since 2006, special interest sections (SISs) have had an expanded ability to simultaneously offer more specialized programs geared to the needs of their members. At the same time, vendors offer Exhibit Hall programs and demonstrations to update attendees on their latest products, and many members gather in small groups for roundtable discussions, leadership training, and other specialized programs. This dizzying array of choices covers all of the Competencies of Law Librarianship.

Education in Addition to the Annual Meeting

AALL’s continuing education program is experiencing a renaissance, thanks largely to a comprehensive review that has taken place during the last few years. This review culminated with the 2005 Education Summit, at which AALL Executive Board members and representatives of SISs and chapters worked with a facilitator to develop new directions for the program.

Several tangible results that are already in effect include the hiring of Education Manager Celeste Smith at AALL Headquarters and the development of a grants program, which encourages “grassroots” development of educational programming.

The highly successful AALL/BNA Continuing Education Grants Program has awarded 26 grants since October 2006, resulting in a wide range of creative programs developed by chapters, SISs, and individuals. Other focuses of the program include the use of technology to make programs available to a wider audience. Currently 44 audio and video programs are available in the “Members Only” section of AALLNET.

Another emphasis is on sharing of information, which has resulted in the development of the Calendar of Events and Speakers Directory on AALLNET.

Publications

Our two primary publications, *AALL Spectrum* and *Law Library Journal*, also provide education, through both practice-oriented and scholarly articles. Recently much of the Association news and reports have been transferred from these publications to AALLNET, making even more room for substantive articles. Much excellent educational material also originates with SISs and through research grants, the Call for Papers program, and the AALL Publications Series.

Library School Programs and Recruitment to the Profession

One of my major priorities as president is to ensure that AALL develops a comprehensive, long-term strategy for recruitment and development of law librarians. The Special Committee on Developing Law Librarians for the Future is focusing on this goal and working with other related committees, especially Recruitment, Mentoring, Membership, Placement, Scholarships, Grants, Diversity, and the Leadership Development Special Committee, to develop creative approaches to achieve this goal.

To encourage student attendance at our Annual Meeting, the Executive Board approved a reduction to \$100 for student Annual Meeting registration, effective with the 2006 conference. As part of its review of the Strategic Directions, the Executive Board decided at its fall 2007 meeting to ask the Scholarships and Grants Committees to assess their need for funding. Once that information is received, the Board Finance and Budget Committee will look into funding sources and strategy.

What’s Next?

Just as our need for information and new skills is constantly changing, AALL must constantly update and expand our educational offerings. Our Continuing Professional Education Committee, Annual Meeting Program Committee, and various publication-related committees are constantly looking for innovative ways to meet the educational needs of our members. I think it is particularly vital that we develop ways to use technology to bring

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our programs to all our members, not just to those who can attend the Annual Meeting.

We may also need to partner with other organizations to meet the challenge of providing both the depth and breadth of training that is needed to keep pace with our rapidly changing, complex work environments.

Is AALL providing the educational opportunities that you need? What additional areas do we need to cover, and what delivery methods should we use? Please send your ideas to me, Education Manager Celeste Smith (csmith@aall.org), or the Continuing Professional Education Committee. Let's "get busy and find out how to do it!" ■