



How AALL Can Energize, Explore, and Evolve

You probably know by now that the theme of our upcoming AALL Annual Meeting in Portland is *Energize • Explore • Evolve!* But what do those words really mean, and how did we come to use them as the theme?

I'd like to say they came to me in a dream, or in a sudden flash of inspiration, or something equally profound, but the fact is, they were the result of brainstorming with the Annual Meeting Program Committee. I talked to the committee about what I thought was important for AALL and for our members, what I hoped to accomplish as president, and the directions in which I wanted to see AALL move in the future. I was especially concerned about recruitment and mentoring of the next generation of law librarians.

The committee listed various words and phrases in an effort to catch that spirit, and eventually *Energize • Explore • Evolve* rose to the surface. Certainly there are other words that could have been used, but I felt like these did capture the essence of what I thought should be our focus. So, while they're the theme for the Portland Meeting, they've really been the theme all year long, and I hope they will continue to be emphasized in the future. I'd like to examine what each of them means, not just for individual law librarians, but for our Association as well.

Energize!

I've often heard members say that they find the Annual Meeting to be energizing. We're immersed in new ideas, both from the programs themselves and from our interactions with our colleagues. And while it may sometimes be hard to keep that energy going when we return home and face our inboxes, nonetheless the ideas remain and help us to approach our work in new ways and hopefully with renewed enthusiasm. Our continuing education program has been energized in the last few years by the development of the AALL/BNA Continuing Professional Education Grants Program, which spreads the energy and new ideas of our members by providing funding for grassroots development of programs and the opportunity to try out a wide range of topics and delivery methods.

I also believe that our profession and our Association can be energized by the entry of newer members. Many of us are of the baby boomer generation, and our time as leaders is drawing to a close. Therefore, it

is critical to recruit and train the next generation of law librarians, who will bring to AALL and to law librarianship their energy and new ideas. The

Leadership Development Special Committee has planned our first annual Leadership Academy, to be held this fall. Designed to help develop new leaders for the profession, members in the early stages of their careers are encouraged to apply.

We can also be energized by wider participation in AALL by all our members. The Involving All Our Members Special Committee is seeking ways to energize our profession by encouraging participation by a wider range of members.

Explore!

The Annual Meeting is a tremendous opportunity to explore new educational offerings or new leadership roles. The one certainty in our profession these days is change, so we law librarians must constantly explore new approaches to serve our users. Last year AALL explored a new, compressed schedule for the Annual Meeting, designed to provide the education and networking that is so important to our members, while at the same time limiting costs and members' time away from their offices and families.

AALL is exploring new ways to reach our members as well. This year we've developed a monthly e-newsletter and made a variety of "virtual" continuing education options available to those who cannot attend the Annual Meeting. In the next year we hope to explore more ways that technology can help improve communications among AALL members. The Developing Law Librarians for the Future Special Committee is exploring new and more effective ways to recruit, mentor, and develop new law librarians.

Evolve!

Evolution is never easy. It seems to imply that something must be left behind, and to some extent this may be true. Obviously, we law librarians would have been left behind by the legal profession if we insisted that all legal information had to be in books. AALL as an association also has to constantly evolve and move with the needs of its members. During an Executive Board retreat a few years ago, the presenter talked about the life cycle of associations. Organizations can eventually die if they don't find ways to reenergize their operations and recapture the enthusiasm of their members. More than 100 years old, AALL is clearly a "mature" organization, but

yet it endures, and according to this year's member survey, more than 76 percent of members are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their membership in AALL.

But we know that AALL cannot stand still. Along with many positive comments about AALL received in the survey, there was criticism as well. The Executive Board takes members' comments very seriously and has been carefully reviewing the survey results and thinking about ways that AALL can evolve to better meet member needs. This is a challenge because, of course, not all members agree about which directions we should take. The board tries hard to balance competing interests and look at issues in a strategic, "big picture" way.

A major topic of discussion this year has been vendor relations. Some members believe that AALL is not effective in dealing with vendor issues or that our acceptance of vendor financial contributions affects our ability to advocate for our members. The Executive Board has been exploring this difficult area and evolving new approaches to vendor communications and relationships.

Sometimes unexpected circumstances require us to evolve more quickly than we had anticipated. The sudden death last fall of our long-time Washington affairs representative, Bob Oakley, made us realize we need to plan for the future of the Washington Affairs Office, and perhaps a new model for handling our advocacy efforts will evolve. The Washington Affairs Office Review Special Committee will thoroughly examine the role and operation of the office and make recommendations to the board about how we can best ensure its future.

Exploration often leads to additional evolution. The changes in our Annual Meeting schedule last year presented new challenges in how to avoid conflicts and how to provide adequate time for discussions at our Business Meeting. Some new approaches have evolved and will be tried in Portland. No doubt this evolution will continue for several years to come.

What does all this mean to you? As law librarians, we must constantly energize ourselves through continuing education and networking, explore new approaches to bringing information to our users, and evolve our skills. Likewise, AALL must energize, explore, and evolve new ways to support your efforts. It has been a tremendous privilege this year to serve as AALL president and to help AALL and its members energize, explore, and evolve. I look forward to seeing you in Portland! ■