

AALL Spectrum

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jodonnell@aall.org

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Mark E. Estes

mark.estes@hro.com

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AALL Spectrum Submissions

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AALLNET: www.aallnet.org

Advertising Representative

Innovative Media Solutions
320 W. Chestnut Street
P.O. Box 399
Oneida, IL 61467
Telephone: 309/483-6467
Fax: 309/483-2371
E-mail: bill@innovativemediasolutions.com

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from the editor

Silly Rules

Look at my picture. I look well over 21, don't I? Yet recently a waitress carded me when I ordered a beer at an airport restaurant. When that first happened to me, I said, "In that case, I will leave. Please tell your management they have a ridiculous policy. Do you know of any place else in the airport that may not card clearly-legal drinkers?"



by Mark E. Estes

The manager seemed to appreciate my frustration and did direct me to another restaurant—one that is associated with a brewpub. Incidentally, it had a better beer selection, too!

I suspect restaurant management adopted such a broad policy: "Card anyone who orders alcohol," in response to a warning or fine for serving someone underaged. Unfortunately such an approach offends other customers like me. A better, and more customer-friendly, approach trains the servers to card only when in doubt.

Rules are important. We're law librarians, in part because we like rules. We must remember though that we exist to serve. If the rule, as applied, creates a negative customer experience, then we need to rethink the rule or how it is applied.

Early in my career, out of frustration at not being appointed to AALL committees, a few of my friends and I almost started a new newsletter. Our promotional material described it as:

DULL: Disgruntled Unhappy Law Librarians. Irregular newsletter edited collectively by several newer law librarians. Hard-hitting commentary, satire, and cartoons that skewer the establishment for ignoring the energy and enthusiasm of the newer generation of law librarians.

A great concept, but unfortunately we never got enough copy to publish even the first issue. Why? Because we got too busy at work—and we did finally get appointed to committees.

We wanted to work, to serve on committees so that we could

contribute to our profession. Later we learned another reason: working on committees provides an opportunity to practice in a relatively risk-free environment

the skills that we need on the job. Additionally we met people from other libraries who could and did help us solve our customers' information problems.

So, please answer AALL Vice President Cathy Lemann's call for volunteers (www.aallnet.org/press/announce-20080908.asp). Encourage your colleagues to volunteer—especially those newer to the Association. Practice pointer: increase the likelihood of your appointment by expressing a preference for a committee but then also indicating your willingness to serve on any committee.

If you don't get appointed and you do find yourself frustrated (and perhaps disgruntled), I encourage you to find a way to express yourself. Frankly, I hope you consider submitting an article idea for *Spectrum*.

This month's issue features a review by Scott Snipes of a new law journal (page 18); Mark Bernstein espouses customer service to prevent obsolescence (page 20); Julie Jones discusses a communication audit as a tool to improve the effectiveness of public relations efforts (page 12); Judy Esrig examines records management at four law firms (page 24); Ryan Saltz describes his prescription for a successful second-time Annual Meeting attendee (page 32); Yumin Jiang and Georgia Briscoe report on implementing federated searching at the University of Colorado (page 10); Charley Dyer reports on efforts to improve the delivery of legal services to pro se (page 28); and Stephen Young writes about the challenges of teaching American legal research in Poland (page 14).

mark.estes@hro.com
aallspectrum.wordpress.com