

AALL Spectrum

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Errata

In the December 2008 issue of *AALL Spectrum*, in the sidebar on page 10 of the article, "The Case for Collaborative Tools," the headline states that the tools for long-distance collaboration are free. While many of the tools listed are free, some of them charge a fee. *AALL Spectrum* apologizes for the error.

from the editor

Slicing Your Pieces of the Pie

I like pie. I especially like pie as an analogy for a non-expandable resource, like an annual budget or attention. First and foremost, there is only so much pie; once baked, you can't make it any bigger.

I first heard pie used in the financial context by the chief operating officer of a large law firm. He used it to vividly portray the persuasion a law firm librarian must make to the COO to spend more money on a new project or service: there's only so much money to distribute as profit to the partners/shareholders after all the bills are paid.

If the library increases its spending, then there is less money to go into partner pockets. To approve a major unplanned expenditure required convincing him that it would either save or generate more dollars by changing and improving other processes or activities.

I've used the pie in describing my library budget to an information vendor. My library book and computer research budget is a pie—for me to give you some more of my pie I must make another information vendor's piece smaller. Hearing that broke the usual sales pitch. The vendor either suggested ways I could save money elsewhere or quickly ended the call. That meant I added a new information resource or returned my attention to matters other than listening to a sales pitch.

Motorcycle safety instructors use a pie analogy to vividly portray concepts important to new and experienced motorcyclists. Riding safely requires dividing attention to ever-changing conditions while scanning for threats. Anger, day-dreaming, or fatigue consume some of that attention and thus increase the motorcyclist's risk.

This month I've realized that the attention pie also applies to change and learning new things. Some psychologists place changing jobs and moving as very high stressors in life. Having done both recently, I realized that almost every one of my routines is changed. My desks at the office and at home are different, the kitchen is different, my shaving stuff is in a different spot in the bathroom, and the arrangement of my clothes is different (only the contents of my

dresser drawers are the same). I'm forced to change and re-learn neural pathways for the routines plus the higher level tasks of a new job.

Many of these changes involve mundane and commonplace activities.


But, until the new patterns become habits, my mind must spend attention doing what used to be a habit. This should prove instructive to us when implementing new procedures in the workplace and asking our users to learn a new research tool. Consider: when we plan a new system or select a new research tool, we engross

ourselves in it. We adapt to it just fine, and quickly it feels fairly normal, even routine, to us.

What we must remember is that we don't know all the things that weigh on our end users' minds—pressures of the job, home life, children, bills, community involvement, and so many other things that we cannot know but nonetheless do exist for them. Thus, we must plan multiple paths to learning for our users so that they can fit this new piece of life into their own puzzles within their abilities to do so—and not just on our time frame.

This issue of *AALL Spectrum* should help you slice your pie better. The "Member to Member" question relates to changes: "What surprised you most about your new job?" (page 39). Also in this issue, Judith Welch Wegner, a co-author of the Carnegie Foundation report, *Educating Lawyers*, discusses the challenges facing librarians (page 20). Meg Butler explores AALL's roles in the larger world (page 28). Monice Kaczorowski and Holly Pinto discuss the importance of understanding personality types to improve communication (page 18). Devin GawneMark and Sarah Nichols focus on the benefits of librarian-vendor partnerships (page 24). And Robert Linz writes of efforts at the Colorado Supreme Court Library to expand library services to judges across the state (page 10).

Enjoy your pie.



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by Mark E. Estes