

AALL Spectrum

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AALL Spectrum Submissions

Article ideas for the following issues must be approved by the editorial director by the following dates:

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Errata:

In the May 2009 issue of *AALL Spectrum*, author Meg Butler's name was omitted from the lead page of the article "Academic Achievers." *AALL Spectrum* apologizes for the error.

from the editor

Four W's and H

I sit now on the porch at my daughter's house, enjoying a San Diego jazz station, my nth cup of espresso, and the dull roar of the freeway in the distance. I'm alone at the house with the animals, all of whom sleep quietly, except for Hedwig the parakeet. He sometimes feels compelled to sing along with the music.

Compelled, as in driven forcibly to do something. I keep wondering what I'm compelled to do. Some of the answers that come to me: ask questions ("Why do we do this or that in the library world?"); consider different ways of looking at a problem; save the reader time; make the world a better place; laugh; increase the revenue for my library; and solve problems.

So, I thought about an organized way of problem solving when a solution is not immediately seen. One possibility is to analyze the situation by writing a narrative about it, as if it were a journalism story. Address the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the matter, and in the process you may find a fresh way of looking at the situation:

Who does this rule or policy affect? (Everyone or only a specific set of people?) *What* does the rule or policy address? (Budget, access, collection maintenance?) *Why* does the rule or policy exist? (Ask why multiple times with this one—just like a young child.) *When* does this rule or policy affect the user or the staff? *Where* does this rule apply? *How* does it meet the objectives? (Are there alternatives, perhaps less broad, to accomplish the goal?)

Here's an incomplete example (because it doesn't ask the questions enough times): Libraries have rules regarding food and drink to protect books and furniture. Why do these rules preclude all drink and all food in all areas of the library? Could there be types of drinks or food that would be okay in all areas of the library or just some areas of the library? Well, maybe if we can minimize the damage of spills or rings on the furniture by limiting drinks in approved containers to certain areas of the library, provide coasters, and keep an ample supply of paper towels handy. How could this approach change library staff interactions with users? Perhaps it would encourage less of the

stereotypical librarian rule enforcement by changing the "NO FOOD OR DRINK" stage whisper to a gentler reminder of "please, drinks only in spill proof containers in the 'drink' area."

That brief analysis begins the process. What additional limits might be needed? Should we also limit the types of materials that can be near the drink, such as inexpensive books or volumes replaced annually? Should drinks be prohibited near electrical equipment? And so on.

Does this suggested analysis approach work for you? Please let me know on the *Spectrum* blog by adding to the food/drink example or sharing your own analysis on a different issue.

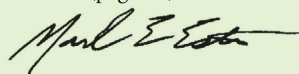
Speaking of the blog, if you read a book that you feel other law librarians should also read, please consider submitting a review of it. E-mail me at Mark.Estes@acgov.org for more information.

This issue of *Spectrum* marks the penultimate issue of the volume year and once again offers an eclectic collection of articles ranging from bibliography to rights, as well as the announcement of the winners of the Joseph L. Andrews (page 17) and Marian Gould Gallagher Awards (page 16).

Also in this issue: Paul George provides some highlights of the upcoming Annual Meeting (page 10); Katherine Coolidge, author of a 2005 *Law Library Journal* article, reflects on the *USA PATRIOT Act* and the responsibilities of each of us to be compelled to protect our rights and freedoms (page 23); Hillary Baker writes about how the economy affects all types of law libraries (page 14); Greg Lambert presents a perspective on online discussion lists and new tools that meet the needs of law librarians to communicate and share ideas (page 8); Duane A. Strojny uses six degrees of separation as an analogy for self-promotion (page 7); Evelyn Ma writes about building a foreign language collection at Yale (page 18); and Yasmin Morais explores how one can maintain a healthy work-life balance (page 20).



by Mark E. Estes


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