

'Volunteering'

by James E. Duggan

October 17, 1997, was a fateful day in the Duggan household. No, I didn't win the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes (although I'm convinced that perennial prettyboy Dick Clark has somehow fixed the contest so that law librarians never win ... we certainly have all the magazines we could ever want, and besides, the greeters in the prize patrol vans with the flowers and champagne would probably be turned

away at the door of the library because of the "no beverages" rule). And no, I didn't become the latest in a long line of

"thirty-somethings" to have a body part pierced (although I've often wanted to pierce "the corporate veil," especially at Microsoft). What did happen however, is something that I'd been dreaming of since library school, and is part of my overall plan for AALL domination. Yes, I became an AALL Chapter President.



Now many of you are probably thinking, "How can this be? Isn't this the same Duggan who not only ran for and lost an SIS Chair election, but also an SIS Council Chair election? The same Duggan who consistently writes those 'unfunny and lightweight' AALL *Spectrum* columns" (actual criticism overheard at a *different* Chapter's annual meeting)? "The same Duggan who accidentally dipped his tie in the ranch salad dressing while on the dais at the Annual Meeting's closing banquet last year? The same Duggan?" As much as I'd like to suggest that the Duggan in question *might be* one of the other two AALL members named Duggan (Wendy and Tom, both wonderful people), alas, I must admit that, yes, I'm *that* Duggan. And when the Mid-America Association of Law Libraries (200 members from nine Midwestern states) Nominations Committee asked me to run in its uncontested election for President, I jumped at the chance.

I remember October 17 well. It was a cool but crisp Friday morning outside the Embassy Suites Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska, site of the 1997 MAALL Annual Meeting. The business meeting



was almost over when outgoing President Judy Morgan passed the newly purchased gavel to me. I have never been so nervous at a Chapter meeting.

Doubts and questions circulated through my brain: "What if something goes wrong during the year? Am I doing the right thing? Have I taken on too much?" And most importantly, "will there be enough refreshments at the hospitality suite?" Fortunately, I survived with the help of all of the great volunteers who gave their time to work on the many Chapter committees, and I was even able to eat my way through the closing banquet with a clean tie.

Volunteerism is the mainstay of any professional organization. Without people willing to take on the extra work of committees, task forces, programs, and officer positions, AALL would quickly become a stagnant organization, unable to generate new ideas or programs to help serve its members. While I had very little trouble getting people to volunteer for MAALL committees this year, I know from conversations with other Chapter Presidents and SIS Chairs that finding people to join a committee or even run for office is often extremely hard. Recognizing this, AALL President Judy Meadows has appointed a special committee on volunteerism chaired by Donna Bausch to look at ways to encourage and reward people who volunteer for AALL, its Chapters, committees, special interest sections, task forces, and caucuses. We need to do whatever it takes to provide ways to make it easy for AALL members to get involved, and to stay involved in what is, essentially, our common purpose.

The benefits of volunteering have definitely outweighed any minor inconveniences for me. I've gotten to know an awful lot of very nice people on various committees and taskforces. I've learned about committee dynamics, and who gets things done and who doesn't. I've gotten to suggest policy, and was even offered a job! (when I chaired the Placement Committee). Fortunately, my current job has the flexibility to allow me to become more involved than other types of jobs. Not everyone has this luxury. If you can, however, I'd urge you to volunteer next time AALL, your Chapter or SIS needs your expertise. It has certainly made all the difference for me. (Plus, I get to wear colorful ribbons at meetings!...).

James E. Duggan, Southern Illinois University School of Law Library, Mail Code 6803, Lesar Law Building, Carbondale, IL 62901-6803 • 618/453-8791
• fax: 618/453-8728 • duggan@siu.edu