

Planning for Minneapolis in 2001: The Process Starts NOW!

by Kathie J. Sullivan

Time marches on. You may have just returned from the Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, but the planning for the Minneapolis meeting in 2001 started months ago! **Now is the time to be preparing your program proposals that are due August 14.**

Bob Oakley announced the theme of the 2001 Meeting during his visit with MALL (Minnesota Association of Law Libraries) in May. Bob explained that this theme was intended "to provide members with an opportunity to learn more about the profound changes going on in our profession, from changes in legal publishing to changes in our libraries and the nature of our jobs." He said that he hopes members will leave the conference with the skills to manage those changes effectively and to emerge as leaders in their own organizations, as they deal with these far-reaching developments.

The theme, "2001: New Realities, New Roles," was selected after much careful thought by the members of the Annual Meeting Program Committee (AMPC). Some of you may wonder how a theme is selected for each Annual Meeting. In this case, Bob and I started discussing possible theme ideas for 2001 during the Washington, D.C., meeting in 1999. We were sure of a couple of things. First, we wanted to have a concept as the basis for the 2001 Meeting theme that would suggest some of the important issues that all law librarians are dealing with. Second, we also wanted to involve as many member groups as we could in the program planning. We were aware of recent business literature talking about the "blur" of our inter-connected economy as well as the changing expectations of information seekers. We knew that, as librarians, we all face many challenges as we rethink our libraries, redefine our positions and duties in our parent organizations, and reinvent our profession. We thought we could combine some of the current thinking in business and information-related fields with our own realities and examine our changing roles. The AMPC met as a group in February and, in a true example of group consensus, we arrived at our concept and knew the issues that defined it. The next step would be to publicize the theme, have discussions with various member groups, and encourage the program proposal process.

The program proposal process has always felt like a rushed task to members, but you don't have to wait until the last minute to plan for next year. Some of you may have started thinking about future programs as you looked at the Philadelphia Preliminary Program and identified unfulfilled needs (however hard to believe that notion seems!). Some of you may have seen a program from another organization that you feel AALL members should know about.

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Or you might see an area that needs to be followed up from a previous Annual Meeting. Or you'd like to explore, in depth, a listserv discussion you monitored. The sources of inspiration are out there if you look around. If AALL is the one meeting you attend on a fairly regular basis, it's up to you to make sure it has quality educational programs of

interest to you. After all, if a topic interests you, chances are good it will also interest some of your colleagues. Think outside your comfort zone and learn about something new by planning a program on it!

What are the mechanics of proposing a program? You know the theme and some of the thinking behind the actual naming of the theme, but how do you translate that knowledge into a program that others will want to attend? First things first. If you were in Philadelphia, you might have attended the Annual Meeting Program Committee Open Forum and discussed program planning. If you missed that meeting, you might have heard something about the process from a listserv, SIS or Committee, or Chapter members.

If you missed all of those opportunities, you can go to AALLNET (<http://www.aallnet.org>) for the 2001 "Program Planner's Handbook." It looks sort of intimidating at first, because it is rather long, but much of it consists of explanations of the theme, how to prepare your proposal, examples of good and bad proposals, and the actual blank proposal forms. The text reads very quickly and is packed with how-to information on constructing your proposal and excellent tips on making it a strong one. There are also lists of concepts grouped by AMPC as "tracks" to illustrate the selected theme.

Many of these concepts are repeated across the tracks but that was done on purpose. "New Realities, New Roles" almost demands that we be flexible and fluid, that we look at the same concept from different points of view. Keep this in mind as you develop your proposal. When you do start to fill in your ideas on the proposal form, you will probably have gaps. Perhaps you are not so good at dreaming up a catchy program title or you are unsure of what format the program should follow or you would like another speaker, but just cannot think of anyone. Don't worry. Use the people resources available to you!

Contact a member of your Chapter board, of your SIS, or of the AMPC. Your goal is to get some helpful input on your program idea. Don't wait! Proposals are due August 14 and the timeline for selecting programs is very tight. AMPC members are listed in the *AALL Directory & Handbook* and any of them can be phoned or sent an e-mail message. They have all had extensive program planning experience so they are invaluable resources. Proposals by any individual are of course welcome, but the collaborative route to submitting proposals is stressed because those that have been reviewed by several people in advance

typically have a better chance of being accepted: many minds and suggestions do make for stronger proposals. And there is an additional benefit. If your proposal is accepted and it has already endured some scrutiny, it is likely to require much less "tweaking" as it moves along to presentation in Minneapolis.

We all want to attend quality programs at the AALL Annual Meeting. That may sound simple,

but it cannot happen without your help. Strong proposals must be put forward. So get to work on your program proposals for next year right now and have a say in defining what our "New Realities, New Roles" really are for librarians in 2001.

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