

E-1: At the Crossroads: Law Firm Management Speaks Out About Their Law Library Expectations

by Tom Duggan

A busy Monday afternoon in Washington, D.C., was the setting for an educational program (coordinated by **Hazel Johnson**, Reference Librarian, McGuire Woods Battle and Boothe) designed to give law firm librarians insight into what their institutions' administrators expect from the law library of the future. The panel members—a law firm administrator (**Karen Knab**, Executive Director, Sutherland Asbill and Brennan, Washington, D.C.), a law firm managing partner (**Perry L. Glantz**, Managing Partner, Holland and Hart, Denver, Colorado), and the chair-elect of the ABA Section on Law Practice Management (**Gary A. Munneke**, Pace University School of Law Library, White Plains, New York)—did, indeed, speak out, and the audience listened.

We did not, however, come away with the same message. The final program summary stated participants would be able to assess and compare law firm management expectations, and analyze the implications of educational, management and training needs for the law librarian. This member of the audience, however, was surprised by some comments made by the panelists during the question and answer forum that seemed to prevail during the majority of the program. Although the theory behind the program

was well thought out and, judging from the size of the audience, appealed to a large number of AALL members, it appears that the panelists made one mistake. They began by admitting to a fairly large group of law librarians that they "did not know what you [the librarians] do." As one can imagine, it didn't take long before the original program agenda went out the window, and two of the panelists found themselves besieged with statements and questions from private law firm librarians, justifying their existence in every sense of the term.

Karen Knab and Perry L. Glantz quickly became aware that their audience was vocal and articulate in relaying its impressions of the relationships between law firm administration and library professionals. Several members stood up and proudly relayed stories of how they do market their libraries, themselves, and their resources, not only to the attorneys within their organizations, but also to administrators and other staff. Others rebuked Knab's notion that private law librarians feel secure in their jobs simply because they have a captive audience in the ranks of the firm legal staff. The panelists graciously responded, offering additional advice on how to further reach the eyes and ears of administrators, including publishing articles in law practice

management periodicals, hosting in-house training, and developing electronic newsletters highlighting library assets and activities.

Again, the purpose behind this program was to provide an opportunity for librarians to hear firsthand what administrators in a typical law firm expect from them on several levels. The panelists no doubt had good intentions of relaying to the audience the expertise gained from their many combined years in the area of law firm management. Their efforts to proactively plan and conduct an open dialog session are sincerely appreciated and they are to be applauded for their willingness to do so. But their comments and responses left me wondering if they did their homework and researched the law library profession and what its professional development focus has been in recent years. Whether or not they did, they hopefully came away with the realization that AALL members have worked diligently to acquire the tools and skills in order to market ourselves and our resources, and to become specialists and experts in the information resource management and allocation.

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