

PLL and SLA Legal Division

Meeting Our Needs in the 21st Century

by Mark Mackler

Clever readers with a knowledge of American history will remember the Haymarket Massacre, a violent attack by anarchists on the Chicago Police in 1886. What does this have to do with Program B-2? I had expected this particular session to be filled with bombthrowers and bombthrowing ... of the verbal kind, of course. Instead, the program turned out to be, in the words of one speaker, "warm and fuzzy."

All four participants—**Kathie Sullivan, Larry Guthrie, Barbara Silbersack, and Johanna Bizub**—kept things flowing smoothly. All were articulate and entertaining speakers. They were in basic agreement on a number of key concepts:

- All had memberships in both organizations.
- All recognized the importance of networking within both organizations.
- All agreed on the importance of organizational recruiting early on in careers.
- All recognized that both organizations are drawing on the same limited pool of volunteers, and that it's impossible for volunteers to effectively divide their efforts between both organizations.

One panelist asked the audience to think about something which I had never considered: Collaboration between the two organizations, either on a local or national level.

After the four speakers finished, the program was opened up to the audience, which, by the way, numbered fewer than 50. (I had anticipated that this program would have attracted an overflow audience.) Most audience members also had memberships in both organizations.

One audience member opened the door to a discussion of a most interesting topic. Apparently, programming procedures for the Special Libraries Association are completely different from AALL's. The various SLA divisions control what is put on at SLA, and fund their own programs. The SLA reaches out more for outside speakers than AALL does.

Along similar lines, one audience member stated that AALL has too many restrictions on its programming slots. SLA divisions can "do their own thing," while the closest analogy within AALL is "Hot Topics."

One audience member expressed his concern about the decreasing number of exhibitors, and asked what we could do to attract a broader range of companies.

Another comment from the audience was that AALL offers limited funding to obtain outside speakers, and that AALL offers absolutely no incentives for members who do the work of obtaining speakers and drafting proposals. While SLA is similar to AALL in this respect, the American

Library Association and Association of Records Managers and Administrators are not. Why not have reduced Meeting fees for those who make the extra efforts involved in putting on programs?

One audience member expressed his frustration with the "retreads" of previous speakers he's been hearing.

Toward the end of the program, Kathie Sullivan stated that we ought to prepare an article for joint publication in *PLL Perspectives* and *SLA's Legal Division Quarterly*. The article would feature a side-by-side comparison of the membership and program approval processes for both organizations.

The description in the Final Program listed a half dozen questions pertaining to which organization will ultimately represent private law librarians. To no one's surprise, the questions were not answered and there was no position that prevailed over any other.

Nevertheless, the program was satisfying and thought-provoking. I hope that some of the concerns, criticisms, and suggestions I heard will be addressed by both organizations in the near future. It will not be in the interests of either organization to ignore these issues.

Mark Mackler
(5mm@sonnenschein.com) is Librarian at Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal in San Francisco, California.

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