

## Random Thoughts on How a Few Years (Or More Than a Few) Affect Your Perspective on the Annual Meeting

**by Carol Bredemeyer**

There they are with their CONELL ribbons—our newest members. Like we used to be. Some are away from families for the first time. For some, it was their first plane ride. You remember how it was—the meeting was so big. You didn't think you'd ever get to know people and have as many people to talk to as some of the members. The Annual Meeting site is so much more spread out now. 1992 (San Francisco) was the last meeting where all the exhibits and meetings were in one hotel. The lobby bar is no longer the hub of activity it once was. But at least now you know the pace of the meeting, what happens when, and that everyone skips a program slot now and then to go sightseeing, shopping, or library touring.

Up for 7 a.m. meetings. Out with the Dancing or Charades SISs till you dropped. Now you wonder why your feet hurt all the time and no pair of shoes is comfortable enough to wear all day and evening. And why do these activities take so much more energy now than they did 10 years ago?

Vendors no longer sponsor evening hospitality suites, but sponsor more lavish events (some of us remember AALL before there was a West party). You might get some great “freebies” at the Exhibit Hall booths, but you might also have to sit through several products demonstrations to get them.

The Annual Meeting becomes a chance to reconnect with those you've met over the years. Meeting new people is still important, but it's just as important to keep up the early friendships. (See Margie Axtmann's column in the July issue of AALL Spectrum; she mentions the friends she's had dinner with on Tuesday night during the meeting for 20 years). And, yes, some of those friendships started in CONELL. Former AALL Executive Director Bill Jepson always said that the annual meeting was the highlight of any association's year. Even though AALL has many other activities going on during the year, the Annual Meeting is still the place where members gather face to face to begin new planning

cycles for activities and celebrate the successes of the past year.

It's still possible to come back from the Annual Meeting energized about your job and the profession and full of new ideas. As our years of experience lengthen, our expectations of the Annual Meeting change—not necessarily for better or worse, but different. And haven't we always heard that change is good?

Those new members who came to Philadelphia this year? They'll be back—without the CONELL ribbons, with new friends, and a year of experience. They'll also start comparing the Minneapolis meeting to Philadelphia; the Orlando meeting to Minneapolis and Philadelphia and so on and so on....

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