



Public Relations Through Community Relations

*Serve Others While
Promoting the Profession*

by Cindy Spohr

Public relations for law libraries is not just limited to touting the benefits of law librarians within their institutions and the legal profession. Some law library organizations have extended their public relations campaigns into their local communities, recognizing that community relations is an essential aspect of public relations.

In fact, many AALL chapters have already reaped the rewards of community relations PR. By volunteering their time and coordinating community outreach projects, the chapters not only shape the public's image of their profession but contribute to the betterment of their local communities. Here are some of the local projects that AALL chapters have participated in.

Southern California Association of Law Libraries' Inner City Youth Internship Program: A Project of Community Partners

The Southern California Association of Law Libraries established an internship program in 1992 for qualified inner-city students to work in private, public and academic libraries. The program exposes students to the inner workings of libraries, trains them with new job skills and familiarizes them with professional work environments. Participating employers are recruited from the legal community.

Between 1993-2001, the SCALL Inner City Youth Internship Program placed 73

students in summer internships at 22 host sites. "I feel that it's a great opportunity to begin to develop a working background. Plus, if [students] are interested in law, this program will help them to learn new aspects of the career," said Marcelino Francisco Juarez, a 1999 intern at the Los Angeles County Law Library.

The SCALL Inner City Youth Internship Program Committee won the 2000 AALL Spirit of Law Librarianship Award. The award honors law librarians who use their law library skills to make meaningful contributions to social concerns.

For additional information on the SCALL Inner City Youth Internship Program, please go to the SCALL Web site at <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/scall/>.

Law Librarians of New England Service Committee

Formed in November 2001, the Law Librarians of New England Service Committee charge is as follows: "Recognizing that law librarians have unique skills to offer to the New England community and to foster a spirit of cooperation among the membership, the Service Committee shall identify, publicize and promote volunteer and community service activities for the members of LLNE. In addition, the Service Committee shall assist the Executive Committee with distribution of any funds to charitable or other nonprofit institutions, consistent with the LLNE bylaws and constitution."

The LLNE Service Committee was very active in 2002 and 2003. Their law librarians participated in the Walk for Hunger to raise funds to alleviate hunger in their community. During the holiday season, the LLNE members coordinated book drives for America Reads in Boston and the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford in Hartford, Conn. In January, LLNE members served meals at a homeless shelter. They also participated in the Prison Books Project in February, sorting and packaging books for prisoners.

For more information about the LLNE Service Committee, please go to the LLNE Web site at <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/llne/committees/service.htm>.

Law Library Association of Greater New York Pro Bono Committee

The Law Library Association of Greater New York Pro Bono Committee helps provide quality legal research to lawyers representing indigent clients on a pro bono basis.

Created in 1990, the committee has worked with many charitable organizations and law departments. It developed an important alliance with the Bar of the City of New York's Public Service Committee. The LLAGNY Pro Bono Committee works with attorneys on pro bono cases who have no association with law firms or no regular access to law libraries. In addition, the committee assists pro se patrons directly.

One of the committee's biggest projects was providing background research for Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Sylvia Siegel, then chair of the LLAGNY Pro Bono Committee, was instrumental in providing Spielberg's foundation with research that allowed the inclusion of Holocaust survivors' interviews in the Holocaust Museum's displays and archives.

For more information on the LLAGNY Pro Bono Committee, please go to the LLAGNY Web site at <http://aallnet.org/chapter/llagny/probono.html>.

Atlanta Law Libraries Association Community Affairs and Outreach Committee

The Community Affairs and Outreach Committee of the Atlanta Law Libraries Association provides opportunities for its members to volunteer in public service projects in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

The committee planned and assisted with several public service projects in 2002–03. In the fall of 2002, the group assisted the Young Lawyer's Division of the Georgia Bar Association with a suit and work clothing drive for a "back-to-work" program in Georgia. Similarly, the committee participated in a toiletries drive for homeless women and children in Atlanta in the spring of 2003. In both cases, the Atlanta law librarians marketed the drives within their firms and provided donation sites for the needed items.

In March 2003, ALLA members volunteered at the Atlanta Food Bank's Product Rescue Center. Members inspected, sorted and packed donations of nonperishable food for the Food Bank to supply to more than 700 nonprofit agencies in metropolitan Atlanta and northwest Georgia.

In addition to public service projects, the committee sends monthly e-letters to members informing them of various individual opportunities in which they can volunteer their time.

For more information about the ALLA Community Affairs and Outreach Committee, please go to <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/alla/committees.htm>.

These chapter programs are only a small sampling of the community relations projects undertaken by AALL chapters. Their volunteer efforts are well-regarded within their communities and demonstrate how law librarians work on the local level to provide a positive public relations image for all law librarians.

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