

AALL Spectrum

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from the editor

By Mark Estes

Bookends

“It’s a small world after all!” Years ago, a trip to Disneyland with our two-year-old daughter involved multiple trips on the It’s a Small World ride. For years after that, I broke out in a cold sweat at the thought of taking that ride again. Fast-forward three decades to a return trip to Disneyland and another ride through It’s a Small World, but this time with our two granddaughters, aged one and three and a half, one on each side of me in the boat. I would have gone again.

In the time between those two rides, many things happened: I helped raise our daughter, moved four times, changed employers twice, and changed job responsibilities untold times.

More broadly, the world changed, becoming more complex and changing ever more rapidly. Law firm libraries expanded and shrank in physical size and physical volume count but not in the range of services provided. The Library of Congress completed the KF schedule, and some public libraries dropped classification schemes in favor of bookstore-like displays. The number of legal specialties grew, as did the format of legal information, while the number of legal publishers shrank.

Much about AALL changed too.

The year before my first interminable ride, Jack Ellenberger was the second law firm librarian president of AALL (and the second Covington & Burling law librarian to serve as president). Since Ellenberger’s term, three law firm librarians have been elected AALL president. AALL also held the first contested election for vice president/president-elect because of a petition candidacy. After the election, the membership amended the bylaws to require two nominees for each position on the Executive Board. Later, the Nominations Committee and process became more open, excluding from membership on the Nominations Committee current members of the Executive Board, excluding members on the committee from nomination for one year, and charged with “present[ing] a slate that, if elected, would maintain a balance on the Executive Board of members by library type, geography, sex, and minority representation to the extent possible.”

From two business meetings during the Annual Meeting, a constitution and bylaws, and snail mail voting, the Association moved to one business meeting at the Annual Meeting, streamlined bylaws, and electronic voting.

The committee appointment process, which had seemed closed and limited to those known by the incoming president—often meaning that the committee membership remained the same for years—changed to establish a nonrenewable term on the committee and a requirement that each committee include someone who had not served on a committee (except when the committee required specialized expertise, like the Copyright Committee). Now the president has an Appointments Committee to “provide the Vice President/President-Elect and others as necessary with a network of members

who have both an in-depth knowledge of the organization and broader contacts than one person might reasonably be expected to enjoy. This committee’s networked resources are intended to facilitate its ability to provide lists of potential candidates for committee appointments” so that “where possible, the committee membership will reflect a balance of geography, library type, years of experience and other demographic factors. Obviously, in a small committee, representation of all factors is not possible. Moreover, because committees perform tasks which transcend geographical boundaries and library types, rigid adherence to balance, while preferred, is not required.”

The Association’s print communication tool, *AALL Newsletter*, which used to be published four times per year with no ads or photos, morphed into a glossy print magazine issued nine times per year and is available in print and electronic formats. It is now also archived and searchable on the members-only section of AALLNET (thanks to a partnership with William S. Hein & Co.).

Discussions about topics of interest to the members took place at the business meeting constrained by *Roberts Rules of Order*. In 1992, from a comment made by Camille Broussard, I suggested to then AALL President Carolyn Ahern and the board that we hold an “open forum” after the business meeting where members could raise



questions and concerns without stating them in the form of a motion but which would become part of the official record of the Annual Meeting. The early years had extensive comments at the open forum, but more recently the quantity dwindled to fewer than a half-dozen. Now, almost 10 years after the first open forum at the Annual Meeting, there is an electronic open forum for members to raise concerns about the Association and law librarianship.

My two It’s a Small World rides bookended half my life and a time of upheaval, of increased complexity in the challenges law librarians face, with the changes and complexities increasing ever faster. Generally, we as a profession and an Association have coped exceptionally well, demonstrating our abilities to find solutions to new challenges while improving the customer service experience. We can continue that success through discussions on the new open forum, continuing education, professional Association activities, laughter, and play to nourish our creativity so we can carry and share the childlike joy I rediscovered with my granddaughters.

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Correction: In the December 2011 issue’s “Washington Brief,” page 4, the chart is titled “Enacted Bills.” However, none of the bills listed have been enacted into law. *Spectrum* regrets this error made during the editing process.