

**Proceedings of the Members' Open Forum
Conducted at the 99th Annual Meeting
of the American Association of Law Libraries
Held in St. Louis, Missouri
Tuesday Afternoon July 11, 2006**

¶1 **President Germain:** This forum provides members with an opportunity to raise questions and discuss issues without following the requirements imposed by parliamentary procedures. Action may not be taken during the Open Forum. However, issues may be raised and referred to the president for further action. I call upon Mark Estes who has agreed to moderate today's Open Forum.

¶2 **Mr. Mark E. Estes** (Holme Roberts & Owen, Denver, Colorado): If I could ask you all to just stand up and turn around. You've all been sitting except for a couple of standing ovations for quite a while. Perhaps if you stand and stretch, you won't actually leave.

¶3 Thank you, President Germain. I am honored to chair this Open Forum because I was privileged to chair the first such forum in San Francisco during Carolyn Ahearn's presidential year, 1992.

¶4 As Claire mentioned, the ground rules are very simple—there are no ground rules. We want to be polite. There are no parliamentary procedures, no barriers. We wish to encourage you to ask questions and pose suggestions. We do hope that we can begin to move these forums into more of a conversational format, though, where we can not only have an idea and even a complaint, but perhaps also a suggestion as well. To that end, I would suggest that there are some topics we might consider discussing if you don't have some of your own. Some of those that come to my mind are our strategic directions: leadership, advocacy, and education. Any other topics, of course, are fair game.

¶5 One other restriction: you must come to a microphone and say your name and your institution because we are recording this so that we can all see the responses ultimately. So first to the microphone please.

¶6 **Ms. Carol Avery Nicholson** (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina): It's interesting that my friend back here applauded me because he was very instrumental when I was president in helping me kick off the George Strait Minority Scholarship Endowment Fund, and we had a very successful fund-raising effort at that time.

¶7 Since I am now pretty comfortable with asking for money, I have a suggestion about how to ask for more money. I was very pleased to be reminded just now that this is only our ninety-ninth Annual Meeting because I would like to propose a scholarship fund be established in recognition of our centennial. Although it may seem a little bit late for that for this year, next summer will be our hundredth anniversary for the Annual Meeting, so it's not really too late. I would propose

that we consider establishing an AALL centennial scholarship fund so that we will have some permanent recognition of our Association achieving a hundred years of service to the law library community. At the same time, it will be a way to support our members in their future efforts.

¶8 **Mr. M. Estes:** I think that's a wonderful suggestion, and I'm sure we will hear from the Executive Board about that after its October meeting.

¶9 **Mr. Alvin M. Podboy** (Baker and Hostetler, Cleveland, Ohio): I was at a luncheon meeting with other large law firm directors, and we began discussing a survey that comes out annually that I haven't seen, that most of the librarians haven't seen. It's a Citibank Hildebrandt survey. We were talking about the survey because all of our managing partners use it to judge how large our law firm library should be, what our budget should be, and what our staffing should be. Someone asked how AALL could begin talking to the people who create this survey. I have no answer for that, but I'm asking the Board to please investigate it, see what you can do to, at least, get us in the batter's box to talk to these people. Thank you.

¶10 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you, Al. Anyone else?

¶11 **Mr. Robert Oakley** (Georgetown University Law Library, Washington, D.C.): I think Al raised a very interesting point, and it raises in my mind a parallel issue for the academics. We all know that one of the driving forces in our law schools today is the *U.S. News & World Report*. And we also all know that the amount of weight given to the library has declined in recent years so that now the library receives very little weight, whereas it used to be a more significant part of the evaluation scale. I've had a concern similar to Al's about how we might have some kind of voice or impact on changing that and perhaps restoring the weight of the library in the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking because I think that's one of the major reasons why we're seeing changes in funding levels and commitment to libraries around the country.

¶12 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you.

¶13 **Ms. Carol Billings** (Law Library of Louisiana, New Orleans, Louisiana). I know every year we really love being able to see our colleagues receive awards at the awards ceremony. I found it a bit unfortunate that this year there were programs opposite the awards ceremony that made it very difficult for some of us to attend. I think it unfortunately shows—I don't want to say disrespect—but a little less than the ultimate amount of attention being given to the award winners as well as to the poor souls who are on the programs that are opposite the awards. So I hope there will be given some consideration to scheduling that ceremony when there's no conflict. Thank you.

¶14 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. I note that we're talking collectively as if we were talking to the Board. Yet it occurs to me that some of what we are talking about are things that we individually or somewhat collectively could also undertake on our own. We need to remember that we as individuals are far more empowered than we believe. The vendors spend money here not because they like to have a big party but because they recognize the value of our input and our voice. We have a

collective voice. We need to remember to use that by simply paying attention and writing a letter to the editor, creating our own survey, finding ways to define the social economics and metrics that we want to measure. And if it is a question of it needing to be some third party to make it real, we could buy it. That is, we could contract to have it done, couldn't we? So can't we do some of these things?

¶15 **Mr. A. Podboy:** Mark, I just wanted to point out we large law firm directors did talk about doing that. We did say we could form our own survey, we could do all of that. But I guess the thing that really gets to me with this Citibank thing—and it's been pointed out by Ann Long over here—we don't even get to see it. We're not allowed even to be privy to anything that is in this thing. Yet they come back and they tell us, "You're overstaffed, your budget is way out of sight." You're right, we could get together to draft our own survey. Maybe it would be the right approach for us to do that and then try and get it to the Citibank people or the Hildebrandt people. But I believe one of our vendors might even own Hildebrandt right now.

¶16 Honestly, as you pointed out, the parties and everything are terrific. Maybe they would be open to letting us get on the floor with this. But you know, it's just the way that it is done, the fact that we have no input. And you know, you're right, I shouldn't be asking the Board to do it. But it is our Association. It's my Association and the rest of us.

¶17 I look at the Board as being at least an engine to get it to work. At least if we could think about it and maybe even have a town meeting about it some time, or at the program that you're going to have on leadership, we could have people talking about it there and looking at other ways to do it. It wasn't meant to be a Board solution, but at least to think about it.

¶18 Because until this was mentioned on a conference call, I had never even heard about it, and I like to think I'm at least in the loop on a lot of things. But then I found out you can't even see this bloody thing. So I thought I'd raise it. Thank you.

¶19 **Mr. M. Estes:** No, no, thank you. I don't mean to suggest that anyone is stepping away and throwing up their hands. It's that I want us to talk about solutions, as Al was, that we can bring to the table and to the Board.

¶20 **Ms. Carol Bredemeyer** (Northern Kentucky University, Salmon P. Chase College of Law Library, Highland Heights, Kentucky): Al, you're right, we could do our own survey, but then we'd be accused of just serving our own interests. I think what we have to do is to try to get a place at the table where they decide what questions to ask and teach these people what kinds of questions that they need to ask to get the most accurate information. Then it is an outside organization that doesn't have any self-interest in the product. But we do need to be at the table when they're talking about how they're going to do it.

¶21 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. I'm anticipating a member of the State, Court and County Special Interest Section making a similar sort of remark about the surveys affecting them. I will be disappointed. Any other remarks, concerns, suggestions?

¶22 **Mr. Eugene M. Giudice** (Chicago, Illinois): Good afternoon. I'm a library student in River Forest wrapping up my education. Two comments. First off, for those schools that are teaching librarianship, and specifically law librarianship, I know there are a set of guidelines and a body of knowledge that students need to walk out with. Is it possible to start thinking about formal accreditation of law librarianship education so that hiring managers know what they're getting when they're getting a law librarian out of one of these schools?

¶23 The second question is about the survey regarding staffing and budgets. Can we use the leverage of some of our larger vendors, such as West and LexisNexis, who have deeper pockets than some of us here and might be able to put some, for want of a better word, pressure on them. Because in my mind the vendors' future is tied with us. If there are no law librarians, the future of the vendor might be at stake also. So their futures are tied with us.

¶24 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you.

¶25 **Ms. Kathleen Carrick** (Case Western Reserve University Law School Library, Cleveland, Ohio): It strikes me that we're in the hands of other people who evaluate us and they really don't know what we're about. Going back to what Bob Oakley was saying, the one thing that they look at about academic law libraries is how many books we have. And we all know how silly and stupid that is.

¶26 I know for myself and many other academic libraries, our deans force us to erroneously save materials at a cost of thousands and thousands of dollars every year because of the volume count and because of the *U.S. News & World Report*. So it seems to me that we are really at the hands of very many people. The firms are in the hands of partners. All of us in academic libraries know that the law school deans hate that standard, but they're stuck with it. Some of them are as frustrated as we are about it.

¶27 But I have been told by so many deans that as long as that standard is there, you're going to have to spend all that money so that we will have met that one silly criteria. That is hurting us with the value of our collections. In Cleveland, Al and I presented a program, and maybe the most important thing that we decided was that we were all the frustrated—the academics have the same materials and the firms are cutting. And the firms look to the academics. Academics would love to get rid of some of the materials that we're forced to keep so that we could go out and enrich our collections and then be more helpful to the firms. It's really very frustrating. But I think it crosses all the different types of libraries—we all are being evaluated by people who are using old standards. We're all frustrated trying to figure out how to get to the deans, how to get to the managing partners.

¶28 I'm not sure how we do go about doing that. But I think one person can't do it alone. It has to be something that comes up together as a group, whether it's our Executive Board or—I hate it—another committee. But I think it's one of the big issues that we're faced with today. I don't see that we're really doing that much about it. So thanks.

¶29 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. Carol.

¶30 **Ms. C. Nicholson:** I'm also on the ABA Law Libraries Committee, and currently we are looking at the ABA questionnaire and coming up with a number of recommendations for changes to the ABA questionnaire. And one of those recommendations is that we stop reporting volume counts. That recommendation will be forwarded to the ABA Questionnaire Committee. We would hope that after that there will be a period of comment available to library directors and the deans. When that point is reached, we strongly encourage all library directors to talk to their deans and get them to support the concept of dropping the volume count.

¶31 **Ms. Cossette Sun** (Alameda County Law Library, Oakland, California): I want to get back to Carol's first remark about establishing the centennial fund. I have looked at the AALL Web site quite a bit. I see very good publicity on getting money from members from their estates when they pass away. I feel that all of us in this profession can contribute quite a bit while we are still alive. So I just want to pass this message to the Executive Board to see if there could be some kind of publicity or some kind of push to get members to contribute. I think some of us are able to do that. I don't see any kind of publicity to solicit funds from our membership.

¶32 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you.

¶33 **Ms. C. Billings:** At the luncheon yesterday, when our president introduced the VIPs who were being sponsored by a number of chapters and SISs, I know we all thought it was great that they were there. But I thought it was unfortunate that there were not more chapters and SISs who had brought VIPs.

¶34 I think those of us who have been involved in that program have seen great value when we get back home because the people we've taken have been so enthusiastic about all of you whom they met and were so impressed by. We had the president of our friends group here this year. When she left a little while ago, she was just so enthusiastic. Everybody was wonderful to her and vice versa. And I know we're going to receive value from that. So I just hope more groups will take advantage of the great opportunity that the Association has given us to do that kind of thing.

¶35 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you.

¶36 **Mr. A. Podboy:** I'll get up again, Mark. But this is about State, Court and County SIS, and I'm not a member of that. I was hoping one of my State, Court and County Group friends would get up here. It's along the lines of what Kathy and I have been saying about advocacy and the challenges we face. The thing that bothers me and where I'd like to see us advocate is for funding for our state, court, and county libraries. We're in a serious, serious problem in Ohio. They want to cut out our libraries. We've got funding issues, and I don't know what we can do about it. You know, I'm a precinct committeeman in my state, I've worked with that. I've worked with a supreme court justice on his campaign for election. But aside from those little things, what can we as an Association or as individuals do to advocate for proper funding for our state, court, and county libraries? Thank you.

¶37 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you, Al.

¶38 **Ms. Regina L. Smith** (Jenkins Law Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania): The Jenkins Law Library is the oldest law library in the United States. It is both a county law library and also a membership library. There are a number of things that the State, Court and County Law Libraries SIS, which is the smallest in AALL, has done for its members. One is a silent auction that Judy and I started about five years ago, and we raise \$3000 to \$4000 a year in scholarship money. We're fortunate in that we have members of the section who may have received another scholarship and they'll turn their scholarships back so that someone else can have it so they are able to come to the meetings.

¶39 There's a smaller group within that organization that's called the Membership Libraries, and it includes any library that charges a fee either for borrowing or entering. That group conducts a survey similar to what Al is talking about—we do it on our own, but it's a much smaller group obviously—that asks for information about what's happening with that library. We share the information, and we have really been able to better our libraries through that effort. It's been very successful.

¶40 The librarians within our group know a lot about legislative advocacy. I've been following a fee bill that would increase our funding because 75% of it comes from filing fees. Well, filing fees haven't gone up in several years. That means I have a flat income. When I left work on Friday, a bill had just passed the legislature, we're ready for the governor to sign it. I hope he's doing it while we're away. And within seven days they will begin collecting larger filing fees. But I worked on that with members of the bar association to see that it happened.

¶41 Likewise, most of the other state librarians (and some of the county law librarians within their states) play a very active advocacy role. I do agree with what Al said that many of our members pay their own dues because they don't work for a firm or they're not with an academic institution. It is difficult for them to attend this meeting. Some of them don't even join AALL because of the dues. They simply can't afford to join the Association. So something such as perhaps a reduced rate may help the membership increase.

¶42 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. Cathy, you're next.

¶43 **Ms. Catherine Lemann** (Law Library of Louisiana, New Orleans, Louisiana): I am the current chair of State, Court and County Law Libraries SIS. Just to let you know one of the initiatives that we're starting this year, periodically we publish standards for appellate court libraries, and those were published last year under the leadership of Maryruth Storer. We're going to start again on the County Law Library Standards—Larry Meyer is chairing that committee and Kathleen Sasala from the Cleveland Law Library Association is on it. She was recommended to me because she is so interested in county law libraries and a proponent for them.

¶44 The County Law Library Standards can be used by county law librarians throughout the country to demonstrate what materials should be in their libraries

and to use with trustees or the courts or whoever governs the library to show what level of funding is needed to maintain those libraries.

¶45 The State, Court and County Law Libraries SIS is also in the process of adopting a new strategic plan that builds from our previous plan which emphasized education and advocacy. We're continuing those efforts which are in line with the AALL strategic directions.

¶46 So we're trying. I would also like to reiterate Regina's remarks about the cost of attending this meeting and even joining this Association. Many of the county law libraries are single person operations that may not be open all times of the week. They may be open ten or fifteen or twenty hours. A few years ago, Mary Alice and I were privileged to attend the Oregon County Law Libraries semiannual meeting when we attended the Westpac meeting in Eugene, Oregon. Thinking about the law librarians who were there, you know the name Jacque Jurkins and you probably know the name Laura Orr. But you don't know the names of the other people that were there because they can't afford to belong to AALL. We in State, Court and County are searching for a way to reach out to these nonmembers and support them. If anybody has other ideas, please let us know.

¶47 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. We are out of time. But because Judy Meadows was standing, she can have the last word.

¶48 **Ms. Judith Meadows** (State Law Library of Montana, Helena, Montana): I wanted to respond to a couple of things that were said. Al talked about advocacy for different entities, and I wanted to remind everyone that the Board has made a significant contribution to advocacy by supporting the Government Relations Committee's advocacy training that is held every Saturday preceding the Annual Meeting. We don't have a limit on the number of people who can come. I think the training is very important in encouraging us as individual libraries and chapters to advocate at the local and state level for funding and other important issues.

¶49 This year we extended the advocacy training to an afternoon session and tried to recruit new law librarians who have only been in their positions for a year or two. We asked chapters to suggest names and will continue to do that next year. So think about it.

¶50 And in one other short response, to the library student who talked about our effect on library education, I've got a couple of suggestions. One is that our Association has approved core competencies for law librarians, and those can be used by both library schools and potential employers and us as individuals to see how well we stand up to what we expect of ourselves. The other possibility is that you can volunteer with the American Library Association to serve on accreditation teams for library schools, and you don't even have to be a member of AALL to do that. I've been on several teams myself and I found it very valuable. If a library school has a program that specifically addresses special librarianship of some sort, they do tend to seek out someone from that profession, whether it's medical or law. Margie Axtmann also has served on a number of these panels.

¶51 **Mr. E. Giudice:** Thank you.

¶52 **Mr. M. Estes:** Thank you. And to honor our time commitments elsewhere I must apologize to our member standing at the microphone that I'm not going to let you speak. Thank you for attending. Thank you for your comments, your participation, your applause. I look forward to next year. (Applause.)

[Whereupon the Open Forum concluded at 4:15 P.M.]