

Institutes from the Point of View of a Director

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Although the request came to me to write of the American Association of Law Libraries Institutes from the point of view of a director, I have been fortunate in enlisting also the aid of William R. Roalfe and Ervin Pollack, who have given me the benefit of their wider experience, both with an A.A.L.L. Institute of which they were co-directors, and with local "workshops" at Chicago and Ohio State, which were the precursors of our Institutes.

The first A.A.L.L. Institute, held at the University of California at Los Angeles, June 30 to July 3, 1953, the week preceding the annual Association conference, was the brainchild of Lester D. Lopez, then law librarian at the University of Southern California. Some time before the Toronto conference of 1952, he had broached the subject to President-Elect Forrest S. Drummond, who in turn, with his customary enthusiasm, presented the proposal to me at Toronto. Although somewhat dubious as to finances and organization, I agreed to help out if Mr. Drummond would handle the details from the Los Angeles end, leaving to me only the "faculty" and "curriculum." I must state at once that Forrest kept his promise superlatively well, with excellent cooperation from Dean Dale Coffman and Librarian

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Setting up the Institute was an interesting process. It was felt by all that the Association as such was not equipped to do that job, and that an institution accustomed to extension work and short courses should sponsor it. The University of California at Los Angeles was selected and agreed to the sponsorship. Its Extension Division handled publicity, registration, fees and living accommodations for registrants. The facilities of the new and excellent Law School building were put freely at our disposal, and proved admirable. The sponsorship by the University added its prestige to that of the Association in appealing to registrants and their employing institutions, and also insured the Association against financial loss. Since everybody concerned was rather fearful of the turnout for this new and untried venture, this last seemed quite important to us. As it turned out, the University reaped a small gross profit, but risked a loss, and we were all most grateful to it.

This gave us seven months to prepare, a process akin to fighting our way out of a featherbed. No one knew who or how many would come, or what they would want in the way of a curriculum, or who the "faculty"

would be. It was decided to ask. So a publicity release announced the projected institute and stated our problems. All who thought they *might* attend were asked to send in their names, without obligation, and state the subjects in which they were most interested as topics of study and discussion. Many responded, and their names served as a future mailing list. Later, the University circularized the entire Association membership.

The results were interesting, both as to the personnel responding and their requests.

It was soon evident that, dictated by the character and accomplishments of the "pupils" in attendance, the Institute was to be in effect a continuation school for experienced librarians. (This was also true of the second Institute, held at Northwestern in 1955.) Most registrants held responsible executive positions in well organized law libraries, and many were head librarians of some of our largest and most important libraries. The curriculum, based upon the requests of the responding group, would have to be on a level governed by the capacities of this superior group.

The topics requested, with singular unanimity, were the fundamentals of law library administration. Our students wanted the Institute to serve as a clearing house of information and a refresher on the basic materials and techniques of their daily tasks. The curriculum was made up from the topics receiving the most votes.

Since the greatest emphasis in requests was for a thorough going over of law books and their use, this was scheduled for three of the five morn-

ing sessions. (Sessions were of four hours each, of which legal bibliography occupied the first two hours for these days.) There was an extra session on teaching of legal bibliography—the aims, organization and content of the course. As part of this general topic, Prentice-Hall, Inc., and Commerce Clearing House, Inc., gave illustrated lectures on the theory and use of loose-leaf services or reporters.

Next in importance was reference work: The approaches to the law in bar, government, office and school libraries; special reference materials; how far to go in answering questions of law; how legal reference techniques parallel and how they differ from other fields in the various types of law libraries. Circulation routines—open and closed stacks, rules, fines, extent of service to be rendered—fit in well with this topic.

Book selection was high on the list of requested topics, and was covered in our curriculum. Parts of two sessions were devoted to it: criteria, aids, standard lists, faculty or library committee participation, allotment between books and serials, etc.

Technical services were covered by one session on order and accession and by two on cataloging. In connection with order work, Mr. Piacenza persuaded various manufacturers of visual serial record checking systems to exhibit their product. Cataloging was discussed by a panel, and covered such topics as routines, aids, manuals, subject-heading lists, special problems encountered, organization of professional, sub-professional and clerical tasks, costs, and physical equipment.

Finally, there was a free-for-all dis-

cussion of how to run a law library: staff organization, personnel relations, what is good service, and the like.

The selection of the faculty was difficult, partly because Los Angeles was so far from other centers of law libraries, and even more so because we were all so anxious to do a good job that there was some reluctance to embark upon the preparation of lectures and materials which were bound to be subjected to searching analysis by a thoroughly competent group. On the other hand, two factors combined to make the task of selection easier. First, Los Angeles is a center in its own right of important law libraries of varied types, which have attracted outstanding personnel, and several of these librarians consented to participate. Second, the distinguished roll of registrants for the Institute supplied several ideal faculty members who agreed to double in brass by discussing their specialties.

The faculty was made up of the following:

Director and leader of legal bibliography discussion . . . Miles O. Price.

Reference work . . . John W. Heckel, reference librarian, Los Angeles County Law Library. Ernest H. Breuer, librarian, New York State Law Library. Robert W. Lewis, librarian, O'Melveny and Myers, Los Angeles, California.

Book selection . . . Lester D. Lopez, law librarian, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

Order and accession . . . Louis Piacenza, librarian, School of Law, University of California,

Los Angeles, California. Lester D. Lopez.

Cataloging . . . Frances K. Holbrook, chief cataloger, Library of the School of Law, University of California at Los Angeles. Helen Jane Jones, chief cataloger, Los Angeles County Law Library.

Materials prepared and distributed included a paper on law office libraries by Mr. Lewis; on government libraries by Mr. Breuer; on book selection by Mr. Lopez; on international law materials by Mrs. Florence F. Zagayko, of the Columbia University Law Library; and two on federal and state legislative materials by me.

During the week preceding the opening of the Institute, the faculty held frequent conferences in order to coordinate efforts and iron out difficulties, and on the morning of June 29, 1953, we were awaiting with considerable trepidation the onslaught of our students, as yet a strictly unknown quantity. In planning, we had hoped for 30, but advance correspondence and reservations indicated less than 20. We had 53, from Hawaii to Massachusetts, from Florida to Canada, and we were all very happy about it. We were pleased by the number, certainly, but even more so by the quality of our students, as already noted. I, personally, was happy to see so many former students of my Columbia University Summer Session courses, back for another ordeal with me.

It proved a strenuous week. The four-hour morning sessions were long and tough, but interest remained high throughout and there was no difficulty about attendance or promptness. It

developed at once that most of our registrants would welcome an additional afternoon session devoted to legal bibliography at the most elementary level—which in fact developed into a laboratory exercise on how to teach the subject, with everybody joining in.

The Institute ended with a luncheon tendered by the University and attended by all students, faculty, Dean Coffman and Professor Harold E. Verrall, chairman of the library committee of the School of Law. Diplomas were awarded, and a good time was had by all.

The second Institute was held from June 28 to July 2, 1955, at the library of the sponsoring School of Law, of Northwestern University, in Chicago. Its organization, sponsorship and curriculum corresponded so closely to that of the first Institute as to need little additional comment. Topics stressed included book selection, order work, continuations, cataloging and the physical arrangement of a library. It was intended to divide the instruction into elementary and advanced classes, particularly in cataloging, but here, again, the character of the registrants—experienced people, including librarians of some of the largest collections—resulted in much more stress on advanced work than on elementary. The faculty was considerably larger than at Los Angeles, and numbered the following:

Co-Directors . . . Ervin H. Pollack
and W. R. Roalfe.
Elizabeth Benyon, School of Law,
University of Chicago.
Frances Farmer, School of Law,
University of Virginia.

Dorothy Klofkorn, Library, School of Law, Northwestern University.
John C. Leary, Library, American Bar Research Center, Chicago.
Betty V. LeBus, Library, School of Law, Indiana University, Bloomington.
Charles A. McNabb, Library, Chicago Bar Association.
Nancy E. Miller, Akron, Ohio, Public Library.
Herta S. Prager, Library, School of Law, Northwestern University.
Francis J. Rooney, Library, School of Law, Loyola University, Chicago, Ill.
Kurt Schwerin, Library, School of Law, Northwestern University.

Excellent mimeographed syllabi were supplied as the basis of the study of each topic, as follows:

Book selection, by Ervin H. Pollack.
Book selection in a bar library, by Charles A. McNabb.
Selected basic works in English and foreign comparative law, by Kurt Schwerin.
Order work procedure, by John C. Leary.
Continuations.
Introduction to cataloging, by Nancy E. Miller.
Advanced cataloging, by Ervin H. Pollack.
Physical arrangement (including plans), by Francis J. Rooney and Betty V. LeBus.

There were 72 registrants from 25 states, the District of Columbia, Hawaii and Canada, a healthy growth indeed from the 53 of the first Institute. There were both morning and afternoon sessions each day. A most useful

feature was the workshop on book selection. Stressed here were the needs of individual registrants, who were enabled to make a good start on selection problems of their own libraries.

Fees for both Institutes were \$30, but at Northwestern those so desiring could register for individual topics, at lower fees. Matthew Bender & Co., Inc., gave two \$75 "scholarships" to the Los Angeles Institute, and Oceana Publications did likewise for both Institutes, the selection of donees having been made in each case by the Association. Shepard's Citations, Inc., sent two staff members both to the Los Angeles and the Chicago Institutes.

The conduct of classes in both Institutes was informal, as was to be expected, considering that there was no essential differences in caliber and experience between most of the "faculty" and "students." This does not mean at all that it was lackadaisical, for it was not. There was very careful preparation for each class and the work throughout was of high order. But there were no speeches from the throne and there was an animated and healthy give and take at all times. These people, on both sides of the desk, were deadly serious—this was no junket, but a meeting where everybody wanted to learn something.

The assigned task of this paper was to record impressions of the Institutes from the point of view of their directors. Perhaps the following may be of some value to the directors of future Institutes—there is no doubt in our minds that the Institutes have proved their worth up to the hilt and that they must go on and on. The following comments are a synthesis, as I un-

derstand them, of the views of Ervin Pollack, W. R. Roalfe and myself.

1. THE INSTITUTE IS A CONTINUATION SCHOOL.

In the very short time available, the job of the Institute is not to offer a full course of instruction in law librarianship. It does, however, take a large group of working law librarians of diversified background and positions, and subjects them to a sort of aerating process in which ideas which have been permitted perhaps to sag and channelize on the job are shaken up and perhaps realigned in a stimulating atmosphere of mutual give and take, aided by competent discussion leaders. In addition to offering concrete instruction, the Institute helps re-orient and re-animate. It also helps registrants to keep up to date on new developments.

2. THE STUDENTS.

The students really determine everything else about the Institute. They have proved to be a diversified group, in both professional training and experience, and this has presented curriculum difficulties. On the whole they have been mature, well equipped and holders of responsible positions. More so than the average of those attending annual Association conferences, they have been librarians of important law libraries. There has been, on the other hand, a group lacking in any formal training in law books and their use, and it is our feeling that in future Institutes these people must receive more attention. How, we do not

know, but perhaps through parallel courses at an elementary level. I tried this in afternoon sessions on legal bibliography at Los Angeles, but as noted above, it ended up as a round table on teaching legal bibliography, participated in by people who knew more about it than I did. The experience at the Northwestern Institute in offering elementary instruction was similar.

A fair number of registrants were among those who never or seldom attend the annual conferences. Some of these did not wait over for the conferences following the Institutes, but immediately returned to their jobs. I was told by them at Los Angeles that their employers were willing to pay for out-and-out instruction, but not for ordinary conferences. This is worth thinking about.

The directors are all agreed on the eagerness and industry of the students. They came to work and learn, and did.

3. THE CURRICULUM.

Formulation was made difficult by the diversity of student backgrounds, but not as much so as might perhaps be expected. Topics included were selected by advance vote of prospective registrants. This should be done well in advance, to permit the faculty to work up materials and lectures. There should not be too many topics: Better to cover a few well than more, sketchily. The level is determined by the students and tends to be advanced rather than elementary. We all feel, however, that provision should be made somewhere for elementary instruction. Perhaps Bob Roalfe's sug-

gestion that the national Institutes emphasize advanced work and leave the elementary to the local association "workshops" is the answer. The Association certainly ought to offer something to those who lack basic training but can not afford the six weeks at Columbia or the year at the University of Washington.

4. THE FACULTY.

Perhaps it is self-importance on our part, but all three directors to date agree that the faculty makes or breaks the Institute. Members must have prestige to command respect, knowledge to draw upon as gained by extensive experience, and they must be able to teach. Since it is all an arduous labor of love on their part, selection is difficult. It is to be expected that most will come from the same geographical area as the site of the Institute, but there should be in addition a leavening of those of national prominence from other areas. Selection should be made at least a year in advance of the Institute, if possible, to allow time for preparation of lectures and materials.

The director must coordinate and reconcile. There were co-directors at Chicago, which, as was to be expected from those so serving, worked perfectly.

5. SPONSORSHIP OF FUTURE INSTITUTES.

The first two Institutes, both experimental in almost every respect, required the organizing and guiding hand of a sponsoring institution equipped for such work. The nature

of the Institutes requires that there be provided an excellent law library available to registrants, and that there also be reasonably priced living accommodations nearby. I suggest that, as experience is gained, future Institutes may present a possible source of revenue to the Association, and be-

lieve that this aspect should be explored.

Speaking for one director, I can say that the Institutes are a lot of work, but that the results are worth it. As so often happens, the director probably learns more than any other participant.