

The Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D. C., 1939-1955

BERTHA M. ROTHE

During the proceedings of the thirty-fourth annual meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries Helen Newman reported to the Association one item of her many activities in this wise:

"On April 18, 1939, your Executive Secretary presided at the organization meeting of the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D. C., and was later elected one of the directors of this group at its meeting held on May 31, 1939." (32 L. Lib. J. 216).

These simple words mark the beginning of a group widely influential in law library circles, and professionally important to more than 100 member librarians employed in about 35 different federal, school, firm or other law libraries.

The statement does not, however, reflect the vast amount of work that was necessary to mold and hold together and develop so many people into a mutually cooperative group of members who help each other in reference, placement, and inter-library loan work, and who endeavor to raise the standard of law librarianship in Washington.

Bertha M. Rothe is Law Librarian, George Washington Univ. Law School, Washington 6, D. C.

The Law Librarians' Society is the product of the efforts of many people over the past 17 years—efforts which now must be deduced largely from faulty memories and impersonal, businesslike minutes of recording secretaries. Statistics are not of prime importance in the life of the Society, but it is interesting to note that of the 37 men and women who met for dinner at the Hotel Twenty-four Hundred that April 18, one-third are on the membership roster today. Still engaged in library work are Joseph G. Gauges, Charles H. Hallam, Lucille Holland, Winifred M. Ing, Anne Jensen, Wallace Jones, Helen Newman, and Ann Trittipio. Four of those present at the organizational meeting have recently retired: Mary B. Ladd, Lois Moore, Tilloah Squire, and Annie S. Wright. Mrs. Mary Virginia Lee Wenzel is still interested in the group, but is now legislative control officer of the Civil Service Commission. This key group has made many of the significant contributions of time and effort that have kept the Society growing.

One not knowing the history of the American Association of Law Libraries would probably guess that it was formed from pre-existing regional groups which desired the benefits of national organization. Instead of this, it was not until the Association was

strongly established in the 1930's that members of the Association began to organize the law librarians in their communities into local groups for mutual benefit. Shortly after the North Carolina law librarians organized under William R. Roalfe, Helen Newman at George Washington University Law School, Helen Boyd of the Social Security Board, and Matthew A. McKavitt of the U. S. Department of Justice, and a few others proposed to form a similar group in Washington. These efforts culminated in success when the 37 present at the Hotel Twenty-four Hundred unanimously decided that they should avail themselves of the advantages inherent in organization. Mr. McKavitt was chosen temporary president and Wanda Miller temporary secretary, to serve until a constitution could be adopted and regular officers elected. Included on the constitutional committee were Helen Boyd as Chairman, Virginia Brewer (Library of Congress), Joseph G. Gauges (United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals), H. H. Hackley (Federal Reserve Board), William H. Harrison (Supreme Court), and Helen Newman, who had attended a number of AALL conventions and had been editor of the *Law Library Journal* since 1934 and secretary-treasurer of the AALL.

Having once decided to organize, the group lost no time in meeting at the same place on May 10, where Miss Boyd presented for discussion the proposed draft of the constitution. A constitution not very different from the one in force today was framed, so the constitution committee was reappointed as the nominating committee

to choose a slate of officers and frame by-laws for the group, to be considered at a meeting on May 31. At this time the constitution and by-laws were read and adopted, and it was decided that all persons present at either the May 10 or May 31 meeting would be considered members upon signing the constitution at the October meeting. John T. Vance, law librarian of Congress, was elected president; Matthew McKavitt, vice-president; Mary Virginia Lee Wenzel, secretary-treasurer; and Wanda Miller, Helen Boyd, and Helen Newman were elected to the board of directors. Thus the group was formally organized as the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D. C. It is interesting to note that among the charter members were six of the future presidents of the group.

Those who signed the constitution, automatically becoming charter members, are:

M. A. McKavitt	Mary B. Ladd
Helen Newman	Julia E. Brittain
W. H. Harrison	Ann Trittipio
W. H. Balderson	Lelah E. Stewart
Richard V. W. Adams, Jr.	Lois Moore
Wallace A. Jones	Tilloah Squire
Winifred M. Ing	Mary Virginia Lee
O. Willard Holloway	John B. Howard
Kady E. Edelson	May F. Darnall
Lucille Holland	Anne Jensen
Virginia W. Brewer	Eloise S. Blake
Annie Shelor Wright	Ruth C. Ringo
Lucile Donovan	Annabelle McIntire
John T. Vance	Beatrice Lawlor
Adelaide Hasse	Hazel H. Fort
Rose E. Saidman	Estelle Flynn
Marjorie P. Staffeld	Elizabeth Zalokar
Helen Holmes	Joseph G. Gauges
Marjorie M. Freund	Wanda Miller
Minnie Wiener	Helen Boyd
William J. Mould	Charles E. Travers
Rebecca L. Notz	Helen R. Lally
Francis D. Scott	Charles Hallam, Jr.

Various committees on law library science, publications, membership,

union catalog of unpublished federal legal material, immediately set to work. Seven new members were gained by the end of the year.

In January, 1940, the same slate of officers was re-elected to serve a second term.

The next year saw Joseph G. Gauges as president, Helen Lally as vice-president, Mary V. Lee as secretary-treasurer, and Rebecca Notz and Wanda Miller on the board. In May, 1941, the office of secretary-treasurer was separated, with O. Willard Holloway becoming treasurer. Election to membership became dependent upon approval by the board, rather than by the members assembled.

In November, 1941, Helen Newman suggested the possibility of the Society's becoming a chapter of the AALL, since more than one-half of the members were also members of the national association. Accordingly the Society drew up a petition for Miss Newman to present at the December meeting of the executive committee of the Association. This was the second application for a chapter by a regional law library group, North Carolina's being the first. Two years earlier, when the recommendations of the committee on the Roalfe expansion plan were adopted, the constitution of the AALL was amended to provide for the formation of official chapters by 10 or more Association members. The petition of the Washington Society was approved in June, 1942, at the thirty-seventh annual meeting.

In 1942 Joseph G. Gauges was re-elected president; Helen Newman became vice-president, Winifred Ing secretary, and Lelah Stewart treasurer. In

1943 and 1944 Helen Newman served as president of the Society, Wanda Miller as vice-president, Anne Jensen as secretary, and Ann Trittipio as treasurer. Rebecca Notz and Mary Virginia Lee Wenzel and Charles Hallam served on the board. The first president, John T. Vance, who had made two recent trips to Latin-American republics, spoke at the January meeting about his 24,000 mile trip, the purpose of which was to visit various library collections and observe the general culture of the South Americans on behalf of the Library of Congress and the coordinator of Inter-American affairs. This was Mr. Vance's last meeting, for he died that spring.

The war years saw several AALL members stationed in Washington during their period of service, or employed here and taking active part in Society activities. Among them were Mildred Dager, Lewis Morse, Ervin Pollack, and William R. Roalfe. Of new members welcomed during this period, the Society is indeed fortunate to have retained Elizabeth Finley and Miriam Vance on its membership roster.

Meetings during these years reflect everyone's preoccupation with the war. There were addresses on the War Production Board, military libraries, an austerity dinner, etc. On May 18, 1943, one of the special attorneys in the War Department, Eldon James, spoke about the work of his office, the transportation corps. At the next meeting, in September, Dr. James was re-introduced to the group as the newly-appointed law librarian of Congress!

In the fall of 1944, as a result of a talk on the growing importance of

legislative histories, a committee was appointed to compile a Union List of Legislative Histories in government and other law libraries in and around the District of Columbia. This committee, which was to serve for many years, was composed of Mrs. Margaret James, chairman; Charles Hallam, Mrs. Rebecca Notz, Minnie Wiener, and Mrs. Annie Wright. Lucille Holland later served on the committee also. This marked the beginning of a project which culminated in the publication of the Union List, first in the *Law Library Journal* in the November 1946 and June 1947 issues, and later in pamphlet form.

Officers for 1945-1946 were Mrs. Huberta Prince, president; Wanda Miller, vice-president; Anne Jensen, secretary; and Charles Hallam, treasurer; with Helen Newman, Ann Trittipio, Joseph Gauges and Dr. Eldon James on the board of directors. Work on the Union List, and on another important activity of the Society, study of the job classification of law librarians in the federal service, progressed.

In 1946 Mrs. Prince was reelected president; Charles Hallam became vice-president, Lelah Stewart secretary, and Lillian McLaurin treasurer. Timely speakers this year included Lieutenant Commander Charles Horsky, officer in charge of the Washington office of the United States chief of counsel for the prosecution of Axis criminals, whose subject was the Nuremberg trials, and the Hon. George T. Washington, then of the U. S. Department of Justice, whose topic was the World Court. Col. Mary Agnes Brown, WAC commander in

the Pacific area, spoke about her overseas experience. The group also viewed colored sound films of the Operation Crossroads bomb explosion on Bikini atoll. The Hon. Harold M. Stephens, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, was elected the first honorary member, and continued so until his death in 1955.

The year 1947-48 was Mrs. Prince's third term as president, with Charles Hallam, vice-president, Amy Jennings secretary, and Marie Drolet treasurer. At this time Helen Newman's ability as a law librarian was signally recognized by her appointment as librarian of the Supreme Court of the United States. She is the first woman to hold the office, and the fourth librarian since the position was first established in 1887.

In 1948-49 Charles Hallam became president, Elizabeth Finley vice-president, Dorothy Allport secretary, Marie Drolet treasurer; and Lois Moore and Joseph Gauges were elected to the board.

In the late 1940's the committee on law library science under the chairmanship of Lillian McLaurin recommended sponsorship by the Society of an experimental Legal Research Clinic. This clinic was held in the Library of Congress Law Library for seven weeks, beginning in April, 1949, with members of the Society conducting the lectures.

In May, 1949, the Society entertained members of the AALL special committee on "Class K" at dinner, and then asked them to "sing for their supper." Elizabeth Benyon, Catharine Campbell, Thomas Dabagh, Elizabeth

Forgeus, Julius Marke, Dr. Miles O. Price, and William R. Roalfe were welcomed.

The Society celebrated the beginning of its tenth year with a tea at the campus home of Dr. Paul Douglass, then president of The American University. The tea honored the newly-elected president of the American Association of Law Libraries, our own Helen Newman. The next meeting had as its honor guest Lawrence Keitt, the new law librarian of Congress.

Officers elected for the 1950-1951 term were Mrs. Rebecca Notz, president; Lois Moore, vice-president; Mrs. Eleanor Stewart, secretary; and Mrs. Ella C. Thomas, treasurer. Elizabeth Finley, John Earner, Joseph G. Gauges, and Charles Hallam served on the board. During this year the Union List of Legislative Histories was published in its revised form. Mrs. James and the other members of her committee had assembled 1,300 compilations from 31 libraries, the histories ranging from the fifty-ninth through the eightieth Congresses.

Lois Moore, another of our charter members, became president for the 1951-1952 term, with John Earner as vice-president, Rose Saidman as secretary, and Bertha Rothe as treasurer. Elizabeth Finley, Philip Hazelton, Joseph Gauges and Mrs. Rebecca Notz acted as board members. Miss Moore for her second term had as vice-president Lawrence Keitt, as secretary Bertha Rothe, and as treasurer Miriam Vance. Francis Dwyer, Elizabeth Finley, Lillian McLaurin and Mrs. Rebecca Notz were the board members. From 1951 on the Society experienced a great growth in its member-

ship, with about 35 members added during these years. Members of other chapters were able to share in the informative addresses given at the meetings, since several of them were published in the *Law Library Journal*. Under the chairmanship of Miriam Vance a survey of government libraries was conducted, to find the grade spread of positions in Civil Service. The law library science committee, with Miss Lillian McLaurin as chairman, undertook the project of attempting to establish a legal reference training course at the Catholic University School of Library Science. Although this did not prove feasible, such a course was given at the United States Department of Agriculture Graduate School from 1954-1955, with about 20 students. It is hoped that this course may be given at regular intervals, with the intention to supply trained assistants for law libraries in the area.

From 1953 to 1954 Lawrence Keitt carried on the tradition of having the law librarian of Congress serve as president of the Society. His officers were Lillian McLaurin, vice-president; Bertha M. Rothe, secretary; and Miriam Vance, treasurer. Kathryn White Harron, Anne Jensen, Lois Moore and Francis Dwyer served as members of the board. In the fall of 1954 Lillian McLaurin assumed the presidency, with Miriam Vance as vice-president, Pauline McAllister as secretary, and Joseph A. Daly as treasurer. Harry Bitner became the new Librarian of the United States Department of Justice, and was welcomed into the membership in November.

The Civil Service Commission at

this time undertook to rewrite its position-classification standards for the Library and Library Assistant Series positions. Since law librarians in general were dissatisfied with the standards proposed, in that they did not sufficiently recognize law as a subject specialization, both the national and local committees on civil service positions cooperatively drafted new law library classification standards for the Commission. Among those who worked on this during the spring of 1955 were Harry Bitner, William Crouch, Francis Dwyer, Mrs. Madeleine Losee, Lillian McLaurin, Mrs. Huberta Prince, Miriam Vance, and Walter Zeydel. To date no results of the work are known.

One of the Society's most gala occasions was the reception at Anderson House in September, 1954, in honor of L. Quincy Mumford, librarian of Congress. A second publication of the Society was placed on sale, the Supplement to the Union List of Legislative Histories. The Society hopes to continue this contribution to legal literature. Another one of its continuing services to libraries is cooperation with the Matthew Bender project of microcarding legislative histories. Particularly active in this field have been Mrs. Huberta Prince, Elizabeth Finley, Clayton Gibbs, Winifred Ing, Mrs. Madeleine Losee, Mrs. Dorothy McLean, and Mrs. Velma Reaves. Since our Society is strategically located for rapid availability of federal materials, it should continue actively in developing new services on federal material to librarians farther from the Capital.

Officers elected for the current year

include Bertha M. Rothe, president; Winifred M. Ing, vice-president; Mrs. Velma Reaves, secretary; and Marvin Hogan, treasurer. On the board are Anne Jensen, Lillian McLaurin, Kathryn White Harron, and Walter Zeydel. In September the Society gave a farewell party at the Officers' Club at Fort McNair for Lois Moore, retiring librarian of The Tax Court of the United States and author of the *Tax Court Digest*. At this meeting the Society was honored by the presence of three of the national officers, Carroll Moreland, Margaret Coonan, and our own Elizabeth Finley. Plans for the immediate future included a speech on John Marshall for the January meeting, given by Dr. Walter Jaeger of Georgetown University, and a talk on the General Accounting Office by Frank Weitzel, assistant comptroller general of the United States, during the month of March.

Throughout the years the Society has had ample reason to be proud of all its members, many of whose accomplishments are passed over in this brief history. It is not amiss, however, to mention individual members who have engaged extensively in legal writing. Active in the field of legal reference and bibliography have been Harry Bitner, Francis Dwyer, Rebecca Notz and Walter Zeydel. Lois Moore's *Tax Court Digest*, a most ambitious project, has already been mentioned. Among contributors to the *Law Library Journal* have been Helen Boyd, Elizabeth Finley, Matthew McKavitt, Helen Newman, and Huberta Prince. Werner Ellinger has contributed much to the development of law cataloging, and George Walker to compi-

lations of federal legislative hearings. Madeleine Losee has recently compiled a very lengthy legislative history of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, and Dr. Vladimir Gsovski has throughout the years helped to increase our understanding of Slavic law.

In summation, however, what seems most important is the fellowship that has developed among law librarians in the Washington area, the realiza-

tion that we are united not only by social ties but also by educational and cultural aims. To some extent we have achieved the purposes for which we were founded—the promotion of law librarianship and the fostering of a spirit of cooperation among the members of the profession. Those who have preceded us have set high standards to which we dedicate ourselves anew.