

AALL

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Spectrum

AALL: Maximizing the Power of the Law Library Community Since 1906

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We've all experienced it. In academic libraries, students ask you what you are doing over summer break. Or at cocktail parties, a guest asks what you do, and when you respond that you are a law librarian, you are met with a blank stare or an empty, "Oh, really?"

A large part of what we do is invisible and unknown to the outside world and even our patron community. Do you think the average law professor, firm partner, or judge knows what a cataloger does? Are they aware of the diverse jobs, responsibilities, and accomplishments of their law library staff?

Law librarians' public relations efforts are often limited to the law library or library community.

However, *we* already know how great we are. Instead, law librarians must strive to reach those outside of our ranks for a number of reasons, including job security, compensation, and the library's current and future role within its larger organization.

Why Spread the Word?

Job security. How can anyone value your talents if they don't know about them?

In the popular press, countless stories have rung the death knell for libraries, proclaiming, "It's all on the Internet." If the power players in your organization—whether they are deans of law schools, partners at law firms, or judges within courthouses—don't know law librarians' diverse talents and skills, your job is not so secure.

Equitable compensation. Studies, articles, conference programs, etc., have proved it: Those with the word "librarian" in their titles do not receive as high a salary as those without it, even when the job descriptions are remarkably similar. If the skills and talents that law librarians bring to the table are readily apparent, negotiating salaries will be easier.

Decision making. Ever had a decision made by your employing organization that made no sense to you (i.e., canceling all journal subscriptions because you have Westlaw and LexisNexis access)? Law librarians need to have a role in the

direction of their employing institution, whether it is a law school, firm, or government agency. If your profile within your organization is high, you are less likely to be cut out of the decision-making loop. You must market the value of your opinion by demonstrating your unique skills and talents to those in decision-making positions.

Recognition. One thing law librarians—and librarians in general—do not excel at is bragging. Did you or one of your coworkers receive an award or honor recently? Was your article recently published, or were you nominated for a leadership position within the professional librarian community? Not many law school deans, law firm partners, or judges are likely to read law—or general—librarianship publications regularly. You must let your organization know about these honors. Use the library's or organization's intranet, newsletter, or word of mouth to spread news of your professional achievements.

Getting Attention

How do we educate our patron community and supporting institutions to demonstrate our value? After all, we have degrees in library science, not marketing. We must simply take advantage of the wealth of public relations and marketing resources readily available.

Become familiar with the AALL Public Relations

Committee's Statement on the Value Added to Organizations by Law Librarians (www.aallnet.org/committee/pr_statement.asp). Use the statement within your own workplace. Distribute it to a managing partner, law school dean, etc. And take a good look at it yourself. Use the ideas set forth in the statement when advocating for your budget or an added staff position.

Read *AALL Spectrum*. Every issue includes a column—such as this one—about public relations. Recent columns covered such topics as the role of public service initiatives, involvement with state library associations, and fundraising and development. Use these columns for a regular dose of fresh ideas and to renew enthusiasm for marketing your library and yourself. You can view collected columns online at www.aallnet.org/committee/pr/prcolumn/index.htm.



Take note of award winners. Nancy Carol Carter (left) accepts the Excellence in Marketing Award for Best Campaign at the 2003 AALL Annual Meeting. The University of San Diego School of Law won for "Celebrating Books," an exhibit about how books change lives and shape minds. The exhibit featured works from 50 authors and commentaries from readers who described how these books have impacted their lives.

Toot Your Horn

Law Librarians Should Communicate the Value of Their Profession Outside of its Ranks

by Stephanie Burke



Take note of award winners. Each year at the AALL Annual Meeting, the Public Relations Committee announces the winners of the Excellence in Marketing (EIM) Awards. Use the winning law library public relations campaigns for inspiration. This year, the EIM winners included academic as well as public law libraries. You can see the past winners, from 1998 to date, online at www.aallnet.org/committee/pr/eim/awards.htm.

Check out other resources available on the Web. At the Public Relations Committee Web site (www.aallnet.org/committee/pr/resources/index.htm), you'll also find links to an abundance of public relations resources. Other library public relations sites include Gale Publishing's Free Resources for Marketing in Libraries (www.galegroup.com/free_resources/marketing/), developed by Gale's marketing department, and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' Management and Marketing Section (www.ifla.org/VII/s34/somm.htm), where you can learn about marketing ideas from libraries around the world.

In addition to these resources, take a look at other libraries' Web sites. Often, you can read the library's newsletter or

see other examples of how your fellow librarians share library and librarian success stories. For example, take a look at the Cornell Law Library Web site's *Library Highlights* (www.lawschool.cornell.edu/library/INFORMATION/highlights/), which lists the library's, as well as individual librarians', accomplishments.

Suggest some reading material. Leave copies of AALL special interest section and chapter newsletters in places where they will be seen by those within your organization who may not be regular visitors or users of the library—a current magazine rack, lunch or break area, or any location where people congregate informally. Most newsletters are available for free on the Internet (see a list at www.aallnet.org/committee/cone/). Also, use your organization's own internal newsletter, intranet, or e-mail updates, by submitting announcements about awards, publications, and other accomplishments by library staff.

These ideas just scratch the surface. Look for PR examples outside the library community, too. Use all methods available to spread the value of law librarians to the outside world. And, the next time you're at a cocktail party and are asked what you do for a living, stand tall and explain the value of law librarianship.

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