

It's Hip to Be Seen

Take a hint from Woody Allen and Forrest Gump—success means showing up

by Sue Burch

Woody Allen once said, “80 percent of success is showing up.” It’s the same with public relations. To be noticed and find success along the way, we have to show up—for work, for classes, for office events, and yes, even for conferences. To be noticed matters.



photo by Brant Bender

AALL Past President Janis Johnston presents Roy Balleste, associate law library director at Nova Southeastern University, with the AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers Award in the New Member Division at the Association Luncheon during the AALL 97th Annual Meeting in Boston. Balleste was honored for his paper, “Law Libraries 2.0: AI-Based Agents, Predictions, Decisions and Design.”

The AALL Annual Meeting and Conference provides a myriad of public relations opportunities that promote our libraries, firms, schools, courts, and even ourselves. While most of our PR efforts are directed to those outside our profession, it’s just as important to take advantage of opportunities that involve our own colleagues. Successful librarians are on the scene and on the go all the time. Remember the movie *Forrest Gump*? Forrest seemed to show up everywhere! So it is with many of our librarian colleagues.

Being seen is an intriguing and easy marketing and PR phenomenon. It’s one that everyone can participate in regardless of status, library hierarchy, or involvement in a particular event. It’s also one that generally doesn’t require a lot of money, and it’s something that most of us do on some level—conscious or not. Haven’t we all found ourselves wandering down a hallway to some holiday food reception? That’s one of those unconscious forms of showing up.

Showing up can be as simple as putting in an appearance at an event. It can also be more involved and require some work, like volunteering to help at the registration desk, taking charge of collecting book donations at a conference, agreeing to attend an office reception so that the library is represented, or offering to write a report for a special task force.

Interestingly enough, you don’t always have to be present to show up. Have you volunteered to write a column for your chapter newsletter? Have you promised to send committee brochures to San Antonio next year for the Conference of Newer Law Librarians? Have you e-mailed a law librarian the handouts she needs for a presentation? If so, you’ve shown up.

Our members demonstrate this phenomenon at conferences in a variety of interesting and entertaining ways. In Boston this year we had 2,119 Annual Meeting attendees (according to AALL Headquarters’ statistics) and approximately 185 volunteers, 228 speakers, 74 programs, 52 planned eating events, 166 committee meetings, and hundreds of spontaneous groupings and discussions, dancing, and shopping sprees during those five days in Boston. In short, lots of AALL members showed up.

Why do we show up for these conferences year after year? First off, it’s a terrific way to support our Association, nurture our professional growth, and—intentionally or not—generate PR for ourselves and our institutions. Showing up at Annual Meeting programs encourages communication among our members and builds relationships. It’s also a way to lend your voice to what’s happening in our Association and help shape the future of our profession.

Who are some of these dynamos we see at all our meetings, working on committees, serving as officers, assisting with special projects, acting as mentors, presenting programs, and writing articles? Catherine Lemann, associate director of the Law Library of Louisiana, comes to mind, as does Roy Balleste, associate director of Nova Southeastern University Law Library and Technology Center. They are prime examples of AALL members who are always the first to volunteer for a job and then garner PR benefits for themselves, their libraries, and their Association. Their visibility generates goodwill, and they can be counted on to foster positive connections among our members.

A Model Member

Lemann has been a member of AALL since 1991. She works with Louisiana’s Supreme Court justices, attorneys, law students, and the public. Her busy new library in New Orleans keeps her working long hours. Yet despite the hectic work schedule, Lemann’s ongoing leadership role within three law library associations during the last 13 years is a tribute to her ability to show up and be counted when needed.

Seven Easy Ways to Show Up

1. Attend a meeting, conference, or event.
2. Volunteer to help at or coordinate a project.
3. Sign up for a committee or task force.
4. Contribute to your chapter, SIS, or association publications.
5. Present a program at a professional meeting.
6. Serve as an officer or committee chair.
7. Mentor a newer colleague.

Lemann has served on 10 AALL committees, currently chairs the Executive Board Governance Committee, and is in her third year serving as AALL's secretary. She's been president of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries (SEAALL) and the New Orleans Association of Law Librarians. Lemann is also currently a member of six AALL special interest sections.

Lemann believes that working for the Association is important and that the benefits of her Association work include, "networking, friendships, an opportunity to see different parts of the country, and also the opportunity to observe how a large non-profit organization runs," she says.

She is interested in the relationship between individual members and the Association. "[AALL members] bring their individual interests and concerns to the Association, but . . . we lose our own identities when we do Association work," she says. "Since I'm an officer, I represent the membership and want to work for the general good of the Association."

According to Carol Billings, director of the Law Library of Louisiana, Lemann is an excellent role model. "Cathy sets high standards for herself and works very hard to meet them," Billings says. "Her sense of responsibility to our library, our profession, and our society are extraordinary, and many of us benefit from our contact with her. Always eager to learn more, Cathy has become our library's foremost technology expert. Working closely with our court's IT department and technology committee, she is responsible for posting the justices' opinions on the court's Web site as soon as they are released—even if it means working late. Both that skill and her outstanding research ability have made her indispensable to our justices, staff attorneys, and court administrators, adding immeasurably to their good opinion of the library."

Lemann's leadership and tireless work on behalf of her profession are well known to many of her colleagues. In fact, in 2001

she received the Spirit of Law Librarianship Award, an award given to those who have used their positions and skills as law librarians to make meaningful contributions to social causes. Lemann was honored for her work with AIDS Law of Louisiana. She was selected for this award not only for her dedication to low-income victims of HIV/AIDS, but also for her extensive research on the legal issues faced by the victims of the virus, as well as for her continuing legal education programs, which teach lawyers how to research these issues.

A New Powerhouse

Roy Balleste is a newer member of AALL, having joined in July 2000.

That hasn't kept him from quickly making an impact on the Association and his library.

Like Lemann, his position requires great skill and dedication when working with law students and faculty, the legal community, and the general public. While helping to oversee the daily activities of the law library and technology center, he's also responsible for helping the faculty incorporate

information technologies into the research components of their courses. In addition, he assists his director, Lisa Smith-Butler, with long-range planning, collection development initiatives, and reference work.

"Roy is a terrific asset to our library," Smith-Butler says. "He is a 'go to' person. I can hand off any assignment to him and know that it will be properly handled, completed in a timely fashion without complaints, and that he will keep me advised of any problems that crop up. His enthusiasm is exciting and energizing for the entire staff."

Besides his duties at Nova, Balleste will also teach law librarianship this fall at the University of South Florida School of Library and Information Science. In addition, Balleste is a member of two other law library groups—SEAALL and the South Florida Association of Law Libraries. He serves as co-Web master for SEAALL and helps keep the SEAALL Web site up-to-date. He was also responsible for local

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AALL Secretary Catherine Lemann, associate director of the Law Library of Louisiana, addresses Annual Meeting attendees during General Business Meeting 1 on July 12. Lemann has participated in ongoing leadership roles within three law library associations during the last 13 years, demonstrating her ability to show up and be counted when needed.

photo by Bryant Beaulier



arrangements Web site information for the 2002 and 2003 SEAALL annual meetings.

Balleste's AALL work includes a recent appointment to the AALLNET Advisory Committee this past July and membership in AALL's Computing Services Special Interest Section and Foreign, Comparative, and International Law Special Interest Section. At the 2002 AALL Annual Meeting in Orlando, Balleste volunteered to serve on the Local Arrangements Committee. He understands the importance of showing up and making a commitment to his profession. "I like working with other people and learning from them," Balleste says. "I want to know what's going on in the Association and share information with others."

As a new member, Balleste has already begun making a remarkable impact sharing information with his colleagues and making valuable contributions to the profession. At this year's Annual Meeting he presented three programs: "Designing Artificial Intelligence-based Agents for Your Reference Desk"; "Translating the World Wide Web: Selecting and Using Web Site Translation Software"; and "Writing for Fame and Fortune: AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers." Balleste clearly is a prodigious, intellectual, and imaginative researcher.

Promoting professional literature is an important Association activity. To do that, obviously, our members must write. Not only is Balleste writing and presenting, he is winning awards. The AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers recognizes the scholarly efforts of established, new, and potential members of AALL. Balleste's paper, "Law Libraries 2.0: AI-Based Agents, Predictions, Decisions and Designs," was selected as the 2004 best paper by a new member. "Roy's paper examined how quantum mechanics, physics, and law librarianship fit together," says Frank Houdek, editor of the *Law Library Journal*. "Roy must be passionate about the profession or a little crazy."

Balleste is passionate about his library, research, and AALL. His latest article, "The International Status of Jerusalem: The Legacy of Lasting Peace," will appear in the Fall 2004 issue of the *Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico Law Review*. In four years he has made significant scholarly contributions to the law library world's professional literature, has presented programs at national meetings, is serving on a national committee, is teaching library school classes, and has volunteered his time and energy as a chapter Web master and on an AALL Local Arrangements Committee. His interest in and work for the profession have resulted in some remarkable accomplishments. Balleste is an AALL member who knows how to show up.

The Rewards of Showing Up

It sounds easy—showing up—yet not everyone does it, nor understands how important it can be. Those librarians who have found success in the library world and in their professional association work have discovered many intangible career and personal rewards by showing up—invitations to speak, appointments to a special task force or committee, promotions, awards, honors, and probably most importantly, personal satisfaction and the respect of their colleagues. Some of their contributions may go unnoticed, but the public relations effect of their work is substantial, and all of us benefit from their efforts.

Those who seem to always get the job done, no matter how small or large the project, are held in high esteem by their colleagues. Deans, judges, and managing partners know which librarians give unstinting effort to all they do. Their initiative and resourcefulness help make them successful, and the result is tremendous

good will, trust, and an ever-increasing leadership role in their institutions. AALL also benefits from their achievements. Successful public relations efforts by law librarians result in many more opportunities to showcase the value we bring to our institutions, and these kinds of positive PR activities elevate the prestige and stature of all law librarians, as well as our Association.

AALL's stated purpose is, "to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information." Showing up is one way to achieve those objectives. It's also a way to support and inspire our colleagues and become valuable and successful law librarians. Besides, it's something everyone can do. So, be like Forrest Gump—show up! ■

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