

# The HUB

Convention Newspaper



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Boston

## Janis Johnston Reflects on a Marvelous Year

Interview by David Bachman

**Janis, thank you for making time for this interview.**

David, It is my pleasure! I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to share some thoughts with our members about the marvelous year I've had!

**As you approach the end of your term as AALL President, what has struck you the most about the past year? Were there any major surprises?**

I've been most impressed by the vitality and commitment of law librarians. I've been part of the profession for a long time and started this year feeling pretty confident that I understood what makes law librarians tick. But this year I've have met so many new colleagues both here and abroad, and time and again I've encountered the depth of commitment we have to the highest quality service and to open access to legal information. I have been profoundly impressed by the quality of people our profession attracts. I do have to say that I have been surprised by how rewarding the experience of being AALL's president has been. I knew being president was an important way to make a difference to a profession that has added so much to my life, but I didn't know I would experience so much personal satisfaction in leading the Association. While it has taken a lot of time and energy, I've really enjoyed the experience and feel very enriched by it.

**What have been the biggest accomplishments for the association during the past year?**

I think our biggest accomplishment is completing AALL's pledge to raise \$100,000 for the George A. Strait Minority Scholarship Endowment. It

speaks volumes about our commitment to our profession that we have reached our goal and done it a year ahead of schedule. We've also made significant progress in redesigning our continuing education program. And probably the biggest accomplishment of all has been the new thinking we are embracing about making AALL a more strategic organization, but more about that later.

**What have been the personal highlights for you?**

I have really appreciated the opportunity to meet so many fascinating people and travel to some very interesting places. Getting to meet new law librarians is always interesting and fun, but I've also enjoyed meeting many other people in my capacity as AALL's representative to other organizations. And I must say that while I've spent what seems like weeks sitting cramped up in airplane seats, I have had the rare opportunity to visit some amazing places this year.

**In your article in last year's conference newspaper, you wrote, "Between now and Boston, I and the Executive Board will be hard at work on keeping AALL relevant to the changing needs of law librarians." Can you speak to the changing needs that have been the focus of your efforts to keep AALL relevant?**

Our profession has been undergoing changes for a while now and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight! All of our organizations have become more business-like with a heightened focus on the "bottom line". Meanwhile service demands rise as our budgets shrink. Doing more with less and less has become the constant in our era of change. It's a time that requires us all

to be more creative and innovative in meeting these challenges. In light of these changing realities, this year the Executive Board has been rethinking much about how we do business. We're working to make AALL more nimble, more flexible to enable our Association to respond more quickly to all these changes in our workplaces.

**Given the theme of this year's meeting, how will the meeting address the global aspects of the legal information environment?**

I think you will find the theme runs throughout the educational programs, the social events, and the exhibit hall. Gail Warren and this year's Annual Meeting Program Committee have done an excellent job of selecting programs that will help us work successfully in our global legal environment. Our plenary speakers focus especially on legal information in a worldwide context. And we will have some attendees from abroad to help us all build our international network of colleagues.

**What are you most looking forward to at this conference?**

That's a hard question! I am looking forward to seeing old friends, being in Boston, learning lots of new things and celebrating another great year in our professional lives.

**At the annual business meeting, are there one or two issues that you would like members to be thinking about?**

Well, I hope that we'll all make time to attend both sessions of our business meeting to gain a better understanding of how the Association is progressing. I hope members will come to the open forum with substantive issues to raise for all of us to consider. This is every member's chance to contribute through their comments to the future of AALL.

**One of the themes in your *Spectrum* columns has been the importance of spotting trends and anticipating change. How good a job is AALL doing helping members to keep up with current trends and anticipate new ones?**

I think AALL has done a fairly good job in spotting trends, but this is where the Association really needs to step up for the welfare of our members. The Executive Board has spent a great deal of time this year in thinking about our next round of strategic planning. We're coming to recognize

that strategic planning is an ongoing process not something done every three or five years. And that the Executive Board's role in this strategic process is to be constantly looking at the external trends and factors that influence the lives of our members. In many ways this is a new role for the Board, and I think, a very exciting one. As a result of the Board's work, every AALL member should be better informed about the changes ahead.

**In one column, you noted that AALL is a mature association that needs to become "a more nimble organization than we have now." In what ways does AALL as an organization need to change?**

In that same column, I talked about how organizations have life cycles just as people do. But rather than slip into a graceful old age, AALL has the opportunity to continue to reinvigorate itself. My sense is that we need to spend less time on process and more time on getting the outcomes we need. And if, as I mentioned above, we going to have a Board that is more externally focused, then the Board is going to have to delegate more authority to our committees and SISs. That means we're going to have to develop broader and deeper leadership for the future.

**When promising young people ask you about law librarianship as a potential career, what do you tell them? Is this a good time to enter this profession?**

I tell them law librarianship is an extraordinary career choice. It is intriguing work demanding a high level of skill and commitment. But even more than that, you can always be proud that you've chosen a career that plays a vital role in sustaining an open, democratic society. Is now a good time to become a law librarian? Yes, it is! There are many lots of opportunities in all types of law libraries.

**What's next for Janis Johnston?**

Well mostly I've been focused on getting through Boston! But I have given some serious thought to what comes next for me. I have a lot of work back at the office just waiting for my attention. I also have some writing I want to do. This year has been so educational and thought-provoking for me. I now need to take some time to digest all this and explore some of these new ideas. And I plan to relax, take a vacation, and re-acquaint myself with family and friends!

### The Anarchist in the Library: The Future of Global Information Politics

by Sharon Persons

A cultural historian and media scholar, this year's first plenary speaker, Siva Vaidhayanathan, is the author of *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and How it Threatens Creativity* (New York University Press, 2001) and *The Anarchist in the Library* (Basic Books, 2004). Vaidhayanathan earned a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin after working for five years as a professional journalist. He has taught at the University of Texas, Wesleyan University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He is currently Director of the undergraduate program in Communication Studies in Culture and Communication at New York University.

Mr. Vaidhayanathan is scheduled to speak 3:00-4:00 PM, Sunday, July 11, 2004 in the Hynes Convention Center Ballroom AB. He will also sign copies of this book directly following his presentation.

## Vendor News

## Docket Database Provides Unprecedented Wisdom

By Chris Hayes

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts—that's the easiest way to express the value of a docket database.

Most attorneys, librarians and paralegals learned about precedent setting databases during their professional training. Most aren't aware of docket databases, but many are learning now.

The docket database has greatly enhanced case preparation, client development and law firm decision making. It has made possible the immediate access to statistics and trends that were never compiled or searchable.

More specifically, the docket database has: (1) unlocked hundreds of man-years of legal experience and expertise, (2) provided unprecedented insight into legal processes, and (3) provided statistics on legal trends.

Historically a young lawyer passed the bar and proceeded to learn under the guidance and tutelage of a more senior attorney. The associate's exposure to the legal world was limited by the expertise, savvy, opportunities and resources—or lack thereof—of the employing firm.

The docket database has changed that. Today, any attorney can gain an insider's look at cases other than his or her own. Case information is plentiful, indexed and

readily available.

**Experience online.** When preparing a case, an attorney can unearth the wisdom buried in previous cases. Concerned about opposing counsel's track record in cases like yours? Wondering whether a particular motion will find favor with the judge? Need to vet opposing counsel's expert witnesses? An online search of cases similar to ones own can provide those answers in minutes.

**Insight for the asking.** When preparing for trial, an attorney can gain advanced knowledge of what to expect in the courtroom. Want to review all of the judge's orders in cases like yours? Want

to see how opposing counsel typically paces a case? The docket database contains the index to finding the history of rulings, the preferences of judges, and the litigation patterns of attorneys.

**Trends to guide the way.** When looking to grow professionally, an attorney can identify the practice areas and legal issues that are emerging. Is opening an office in California or Northern Virginia a good idea? Should you add a new IP attorney in Dallas? Litigation Trend Reports, which aggregate cases from the docket database by region, law firm, nature of suit, etc., can help make those decisions.

After only five years in existence, the

docket database has become a major support tool for most law firms. Not to consult it is to overlook a wealth of information, insight and wisdom. Learn more about the docket database from CourtEXPRESS at Booth # 420.

Chris Hayes is CEO of CourtEXPRESS, whose online web services and court experts stand ready to ensure speedy receipt of dockets and documents from federal, state and local courts in the US, international courts and tribunals, Freedom of Information requests, government agencies, and published articles. For more information, call (800) 542-3320.

## Service Matters at West

Behind West's premium products stand more than 1,000 West Customer Experience Operations employees, working every day to provide premium customer service. We recently caught up with Denise Lynch, vice president, Customer Experience Operations at West, to talk about how West is listening to customers and working to provide service that meets and exceeds customers' expectations.

**Q: Why is quality service impor-**

**tant to West's customers?**

**A:** When customers purchase a product from West, they expect that it will provide them with thorough, up-to-date legal research tools and information. They also expect to receive products or passwords in a timely manner; to have easy access to a customer service representative if they have a question about the product; and to have accurate billing and return processes. The product they purchase is the cake;

but high-quality customer service is the icing on the cake. We're working to listen to our customers, to understand what challenges they encounter around service, and we're implementing programs to ensure "Service Excellence" at every point in the process.

**Q: What are some current Service Excellence initiatives within West?**

**A:** We currently have training, recognition and other initiatives in place to achieve world-class service in our call centers. We also are focusing on ensuring that customers receive products in an expeditious manner. And, we are looking at ways to make billing documents and processes more accessible and easy-to-use.

**Q: How are these service improvement initiatives part of West's culture?**

**A:** At West, we put the customer at the center of all that we do. We consistently strive to improve our customers' experience with our company. Keeping the needs of the customer at the center of our work and focusing on their satisfaction is part of our culture at West. We're bringing together colleagues from around the business to organize around providing service that meets and exceeds our customers' expectations, to ensure that our customers enjoy the full value and benefit of our products.

## Placement Services At the Meeting

Located in the Boston Marriott Copley Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Simmons Room, the Placement Office has information about positions and candidates seeking positions. Candidates and employers may still drop off resumes and job announcements. Interview rooms can be reserved on a first-come, first-serve basis. **To maintain candidates' privacy, access to resumes is given only to employers who have positions registered with the Placement Office.** Staffed by Placement Committee volunteers, the office is open Saturday, 12:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.; Sunday through Tuesday, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.; and Wednesday, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.

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