

## When you last changed jobs, what surprised you most about your new job?

\*The following responses are available on AALLNET only. For the responses published in the February 2009 issue of *AALL Spectrum*, please see the issue in its entirety.

“In 2000 I left the familiar world of law firm librarianship to join the reference staff at SMU Dedman School of Law in Dallas. I had worked in law firms for most of my professional career, first as a reference librarian and later as a library manager at a 100-plus attorney firm in Dallas. Thus I was well aware that I would encounter new challenges in academia, and I was looking forward to the opportunity to broaden my knowledge base beyond practice-oriented issues.

“At SMU, each reference librarian serves as a liaison to his or her assigned faculty members. I was excited to learn that two of my faculty were criminal law scholars, as I had dealt only with civil law issues in law firms. As luck would have it, one of my first assignments was for one of the criminal law professors, and it required some fairly complex research strategies. I called the professor to discuss the project and asked if he needed the results before the close of business that day. Obviously taken aback, he advised that if he could get some feedback in the next two weeks, it would be great. I was stunned. Two weeks?! The research assignment cycle in my previous job ranged from minutes to maybe a couple of hours max. Needless to say, I have had my share of “rush” projects here, but more often than not results are requested in increments of days, as opposed to minutes. Who knew?”

- *Laura Justiss, collection development librarian at Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law Library in Dallas*

“Of course, the last time I changed jobs was 11 years ago, when I became a reference librarian in the Coleman Karesh Law Library at the University of South Carolina School of Law. The thing that surprised me most was the latitude that I had to “grow the job” according to my abilities and interests. There were things that had to be done, such as reference, teaching, and research assistance, but I had all the space I needed to create projects and develop my own niche.

“The second most surprising thing was the immense amount of collegial support that I received. Both surprises turned out to be constants. Eleven years and one mutation later, this is still the most fun and fulfilling job I’ve ever had.”

- *Rebekah Maxwell, associate director for library operations at the University of South Carolina Coleman Karesh Law Library*