

State, Court & County Law Libraries

NEWS

Newsletter of the State, Court & County SIS of the American Association of Law Libraries

Chair's Chit Chat Financial Management: Fact or Fiction?

If you were charged with the task of pitching a story about financial management in a state, court, county, or other government law library to a Hollywood producer for development as a major motion picture project, would your story be a comedy, a drama, or a tragedy?

If your life as a financial manager is anything like mine, the answer will probably be that on any given day the story's complexion may have a different focus than it did the previous day.

All of us face common threats to the continued financial viability of our libraries. Income streams have failed to keep pace with the escalating costs of provid-

ing library service. The legislature or other governing bodies which control our funding, face major resource allocation issues of their own that make getting their attention for law library issues a challenge. The mergers and consolidations in the legal publishing industry have been followed by dramatic and unparalleled price increases. The demand for access to legal information services from

all segments of our libraries' user base continues to grow. In particular, the rise in demand for access to public law library service by self-represented

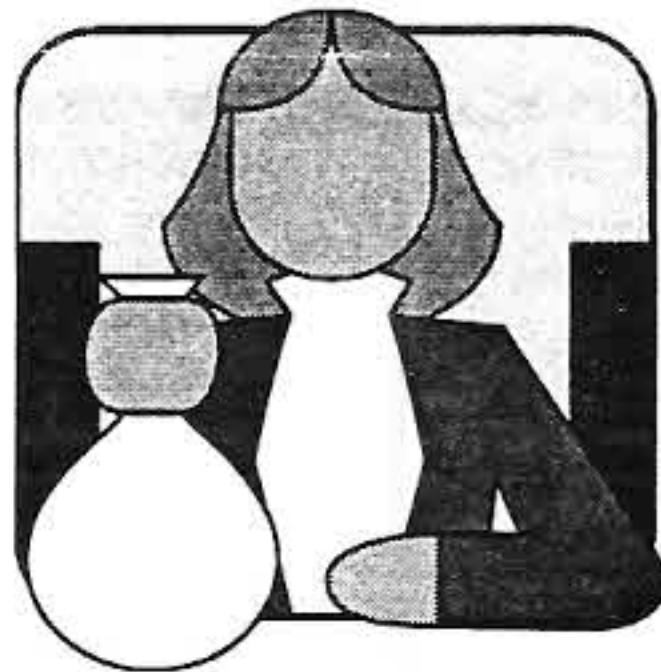
litigants has grown exponentially in the last decade.

Are there common strategies which we all might find helpful?

Locally, each of us does have an array of resources at our disposal. We sometimes overlook a fundamental principal of how organizations function. Management theorists

write about relationships within organizations which are premised on the exercise of influence by those within the organization who do not possess final authority or the power to command. Defined as the "law of reciprocity," this principle is founded on the universal belief that one good deed deserves another.

To make the exchange process effective, the influencer (the law librarian in this script) needs to think about the person or department to be influenced as a potential ally, not an adversary. The influencer must know the views and situation of the potential



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ally. The influencer must be aware of the goals and resources the potential ally may value. The influencer must have a clear understanding of the exchange situation itself, so that win-win outcomes can be achieved. Finally, the law librarian seeking influence must have a clear understanding of what the library really wants, what elements are central to the goal, and what can be jettisoned.

I personally haven't given up hope that one of those stock movie characters, a hero on a white horse or a fairy godmother, will come to my rescue to resolve my library's financial management issues. At the same time, I know that if I can approach my quest for financial stability within the framework of the reciprocal exchange model, I may find that my colleague in the budget office, or the bar association, or the library board will become the hero or fairy godmother my library needs.

A Tale of Two Cities: Part II

The Chair's column written for the *SCCLL News* winter issue focused on the story of how a financial crisis in our libraries brought together two county law librarians from different parts of the county. The column described how we shared information and strategies. Since the publication of that article, I have heard from county law librarians across the country who are facing similar financial challenges.

I have also heard from law librarians in Ohio and California who are working collaboratively within their own states to address problems with their statutory funding sources. This spring, county law

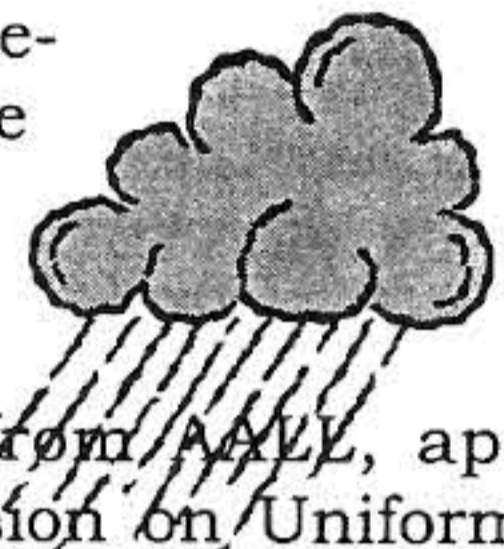
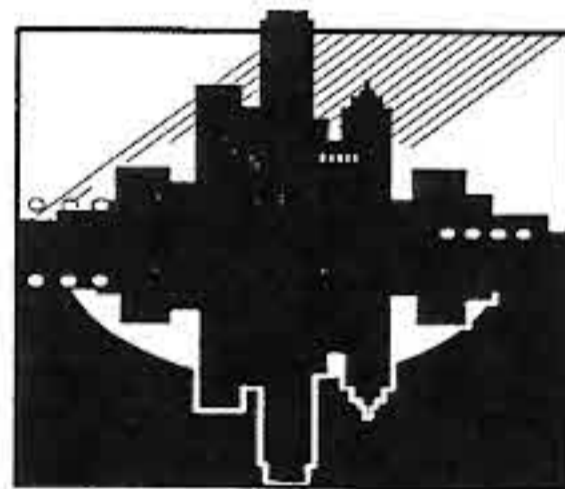
librarians in Washington lobbied unsuccessfully for passage of a bill to amend our statute to provide an additional funding source. We plan to return to the legislature next year. Other county law librarians have made similar efforts with their legislatures without success.

Most of us are working with statutory schemes which were created at the turn of the century. While the schemes may be different from state to state, few provide enough diversity of revenue sources to ensure a growth rate which parallels the growth of our operating costs.

On one of those rainy Seattle days waiting on the bus for traffic to clear, an idea of the "what if" variety developed. *What if* SCCLL, with help from AALL, approached the Commission on Uniform State Laws. *What if* we prepared a proposal for the Commission on Uniform State Laws. *What if* we could present the Commission with a draft of a model county law library funding statute that contained a series of options for funding a county law library. *What if* the Commission did draft such a model. *What if*, armed with this negotiating tool, individual jurisdictions secured the allies needed to bring about legislative change in their state.

If this proposal sounds like more than the ravings of a librarian caught in the rain too long, give me a call at (206) 296-0940 or send me an e-mail at jean.holcomb@metrokc.gov. Stranger tales have been told.

Jean Holcomb, SCCLL Chair
King County Law Library, Seattle, WA



Tips for Conducting a Successful Anniversary Fundraiser

If your law library is anything like ours, you're dealing with continual budget cuts, decreasing government contributions, and plummeting filing fee revenue.

We are all looking for new sources of revenue to make up for these losses. Have you considered holding a special anniversary fundraiser? When the Alexandria Law Library celebrated its 20th anniversary in October 1998, we saw an opportunity not only to raise money, but to tout our new and improved services. What follows is a brief description of the steps we followed in planning the fundraiser.

When the Anniversary Committee (myself and three members of our board of directors) met for the first time in February 1998, we mapped out a clear goal for the money which would, hopefully, be raised. We expected that donors would want to know in advance how we were planning to spend their money. Some items are more appealing to donors than others. For example, donors are more willing to make a contribution if they know it will buy a specific item, such as a particular set of books in their area of practice. Or, they can make a donation towards a specific piece of office equipment, such as a computer, printer, or fax machine. In both of these cases, you can inexpensively recognize their donation with a small name plate placed on the item. In our case, the goal was an endowment fund to provide income during the lean years ahead. Since it was our 20th anniversary, we set our fundraising goal at \$20,000.



The next order of business was to develop a timeline. This key step kept us on schedule throughout the months leading up to the actual anniversary date. At the first meeting, we also brainstormed about

specific ways to raise the money. Suggestions included a direct mail campaign to attorneys and local businesses who use our facility, a donation-per-plate anniversary dinner complete with notable speakers, and a raffle with prizes such as a free weekend at a local resort. After

Results of SCCLL Election

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Jenkins Memorial Law Library

Philadelphia, PA

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Director and State Law Librarian

Alabama Supreme Court and State Law Library

Montgomery, AL

BOARD MEMBER (1 yr. term) - Alison Alifano

Director of Library Services

New York County Lawyers' Association

New York, NY

