

State & Court & County

Law Libraries

NEWS

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

JAZZ

FROM THE
CHAIR



WHY JAZZ?

Improvised musings with a design--that's Jazz—the American cultural form that so often consumes my total being—but that is also what I'll attempt to offer you four times this year in order to

stimulate SIS-related planning and activities. I'll beat our drum by reporting news of interest to state, court, county and governmental law librarians and by suggesting projects to be pursued. I'll also be heard blowing my horn about participation in activities directed at our mutual success. There's a lot of creative things being done in our law libraries that deserve better recognition. Did you achieve alternative or better funding? Did you interface successfully with other government or court agencies on a project? Did you design a better law library? I'll be exhorting you to answer, to jump on the stage offered by this newsletter, grab a microphone and crow about your best efforts. Please share your thoughts and deeds. Send your informative articles to Beverly Rubenstein and Rick Stroup, our stalwart editors, at the manual and electronic addresses listed elsewhere in this issue. By sharing your trials, tribulations and successes with other law librarians, we can, hopefully, all learn and grow.

FIRST SIGNS ARE GOOD SIGNS

I was quite elated to see the volume and quality of the volunteers for committee participation. You have some excellent chairs to work with in the persons of Anita Anderson, Publicity and Membership; Edgar Belfontaine, Trustees; Jackie Jurkins, Standards; Shirley David, Awards; Carol Billings, Nominations; and Anne

Mathewman, Strategic Planning. I look forward to some creative ideas and positive efforts from the committees. The Education Committee consisted of Gail Warren, Carol Billings, Hugh Treacy, Jon Stock and myself. We sorted through and prioritized some excellent program alternatives. At this time we can only wait to see which of our programs gain acceptance by the AALL Education Committee for presentation in Baltimore. On behalf of the committee, I wish to thank all individuals who submitted programs to address concerns over AALL, law library and court history and the breadth of the expertise of law librarians as reflected in the Baltimore 1997 theme "From Naragansett to Now: Covering the Waterfronts."

STATISTICS INITIATIVE

Those of us in the SIS who must present budgets for approval would benefit greatly from the compilation of comparative data covering staff size, collection size,



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user statistics and budgets for staff, books, computers and other purposes. Correlations between size, user demands and budget allotments could be used to assist budget advocacy. The inadequacies of certain budgets could be more effectively illustrated by comparisons to better funded institutions with similarly-sized staffs, collections and user groups. Academic law libraries have used the analyses of such statistics in their budget requests and documentation for decades. Because we typically face major budget cuts and revenue problems, we need this type of data to assert more effectively our needs to the respective "holders of our purse strings." We must effectively demonstrate to financial decision makers the budget dollars necessary to maintain collections and services at adequate or better levels. Therefore, I am recommending as a potential project for a grant proposal, the creation of a database on state, court, county and governmental law library funding and related statistics. Please send me your thoughts by December 1, 1996, on (1) what statistics should be collected, (2) what logistical problems we have ahead in collecting and collating the data, (3) who a grant should be addressed to in the law library, library and/or legal communities, (4) whether you think such a database has potential uses, negative and positive, and (5) any other thoughts that strike you about this idea. Please write or fax me your thoughts. By the next issue, I hope to have an e-mail address.

INTERACTING WITHIN OUR VARIOUS COMMUNITIES

The AALL Strategic Plan has resulted in increased interactions by individual law librarians with the library schools and with national, state and local library, bar and law-related associations. The recognition of our expertise and knowledge increases the value of our interactivity. More and more, judges, court administrators, government officials, public librarians and lawyer associations are recognizing the contributions law librarians can make. Maybe local public librarians need a legal research "teach in"; maybe the local bar association wishes to add a legal research and new technology component to its "bridge the gap" program; maybe local court departments and governmental agencies need some advice on how to maintain and update their libraries. These are but a few of the ways in which we can be of assistance in our library and legal communities. "The

National Conference on Legal Information Issues" in Pittsburgh presented an opportunity for dialogue involving attorneys, law faculty, judges, court administrators, government officials, legal publishers, law librarians and other information association officers. It is that same dialogue that each of us has daily opportunities to further recreate and stimulate. We can continue to mix and cooperate with our law and library partners and increase the respect for the knowledge and skills of law librarianship. That respect should come back to us in better funding and more opportunities for cooperative activities of benefit to our law library users. Your successes in sharing your expertise with others deserves recognition in this newsletter. Your ideas in forming partnerships also deserves coverage in this newsletter. Again, send your thoughts and descriptions of your efforts to Beverly and Rick, the editors, for communication to the members of our Special Interest Section. I'll conclude this first set of meditations with the repetition of the 1994 admonition of a former SIS chair and a colleague of ours, Anita Shew, Butler County Law Library, Hamilton, Ohio (*SCCLL Newsletter*, v. 20, no. 3, Spring 1994 at 2): "Make it one of your professional goals to be a more visible presence in your law library and legal communities this year." 

--Frank Alan Herch,
Clark County Law Library

