

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 27, 2004

TO: Victoria Trotta, President, American Association of Law Libraries
Members of the American Association of Law Libraries Executive Board
Karen Brunner, American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting
Program Chair
Susan Fox, Executive Director, American Association of Law Libraries

CC: Mirela Roznovschi, Chair, Foreign, Comparative and International Law
Special Interest Section
Don Arndt, Special Interest Section Council Chair

FROM: Cindy May, Chair, Technical Services Special Interest Section (TS-
SIS), on behalf of the TS-SIS Executive Board

SUBJECT: Creating effective AALL annual meetings for technical services
librarians

BACKGROUND

Over the years, AALL technical services law librarians have repeatedly voiced our concerns about the structure and content of the annual meeting and its relevance for us. We have filled out program evaluations and surveys; spoken to programming chairs, members, and liaisons; and written letters to programming and education committees. Just within the last fourteen years, AALL has changed its programming structure many times, and the number of guaranteed SIS program slots has fluctuated up and down. But repeatedly, perhaps due to the turnover in the Annual Meeting Program Committee's membership, our concerns have apparently been lost, forgotten, or perhaps never successfully conveyed to the incoming chair and committee.

As the current chair of the Technical Services Special Interest Section (TS-SIS), I am now writing at the request of the Executive Board to express our dissatisfaction with the structure and content of the AALL annual meeting.

I have consulted with many of my TS-SIS colleagues in preparing this memo. We believe that AALL must recognize and accommodate the needs of technical services librarians— in acquisitions, cataloging, collection development, preservation and serials. The issues and proposals discussed here spring from our strong dedication to this branch of law librarianship, and our belief that we as an Association can and should do better in providing continuing education opportunities for our technical services colleagues.

WHY THE URGENCY NOW?

Our need for sufficient time to meet in committee has become particularly urgent now because work is progressing on a new third edition of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, due in 2007. The international changes that are being discussed could have dramatic implications for legal materials and law catalogers, as well as major financial impact on cataloging departments.

ISSUES

- 1. Programming priorities**
- 2. Scheduling flexibility**
- 3. Timing of ALA Representatives' reports**

DISCUSSION

1. Programming priorities

Last year, the TS-SIS Education Committee submitted ten worthwhile program proposals, of which only four were approved. Only two of the programs we ranked in the top four were approved. Programs are important to us, and if our allotment of them is to be limited, then we ask that our top priority choices be honored. Although we value broadening our horizons by attending programs outside our direct field of interest, when relevant programming drops below the fifty percent line, institutional accountability is at issue. It becomes difficult to justify the substantial expense of the AALL annual meeting to our institutions when most of the programs we attend are not related to our positions.

2. Scheduling flexibility

Meetings are as important to TS-SIS members as programs, particularly to those more senior members who are working to influence national policy. The meeting format is simply more appropriate for discussing national and international developments and how to respond to them. Consequently, given the current program structure, we often find our must-attend sessions scheduled for early morning, noon, or late afternoon.

“No conflict” rule

The current "no conflict" rule for the plenary sessions, "open" exhibit time, and Monday luncheon leaves huge gaps of prime time (e.g., Monday from 11:45 to approx. 4:15) during which neither meetings nor programs can be scheduled.

Lack of ability to establish regular standing committee meeting times

Currently TS-SIS cannot establish regular standing committee meeting times of sufficient length, held at reasonable hours, to conduct the business we need to conduct. On the other hand, ALA's Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) has standard meeting times for its major committees (CC: DA, MARBI, SAC, etc.) so that members can plan their schedules well in advance.

The 2004 AALL Boston Meeting illustrates program and meeting problems

- On Sunday, B-3 was the only technical services-related program offered. The important time slots for most catalogers were the 4:15-5:15 OCLC Committee meeting and the 5:30-6:30 Technical Services SIS business meeting.
- On Monday, C-3 was the only program pertinent to technical services. Technical services meetings were confined to 7:00-8:45 am, 10:15-11:30 am, and 5:15-6:15 pm. If a technical services committee needed a full hour and forty-five minutes to complete its business, 7:00am was the only alternative.
- On Tuesday, Programs F-2 for acquisitions and F-5 for cataloging were the sole technical services offerings, yet our meetings could only be scheduled 7:00-8:45 am, 11:45-1:00, and 5:15-6:15 pm. Again, for committees that required a large chunk of time, another 7:00am meeting was required.
- The **only** time slot for meetings on Wednesday was 7:00-8:45 am. Program H-3 was offered for cataloging and Programs H-2 and I-1 for acquisitions.

3. Timing of ALA and MARBI Representatives' reports

Although the ALA and MARBI representatives' reports don't rank high in terms of programs, they do rank high as meetings. We converted them to programs several years ago, even though we don't regard them as programs, because we didn't have enough meeting time to accommodate them. For the second year running, the half-hour slots we had requested for these reports were relegated to Wednesday afternoon, the final day of the annual meeting. There is no time after these sessions for representatives and TS-SIS members to discuss the reports or formulate responses for our representatives to take back with them to the next year's meetings. As a result, we often are able to respond only on a reactive basis to proposals which affect law cataloging. AALL pays expenses for our representatives to attend ALA meetings, but those representatives' reports end up getting scheduled so late in the conference that attendees must make a substantial financial and time commitment to stay until the very end of the conference in order to hear them. The reports were missed by everyone who opted to return home on Tuesday or Wednesday in order to save on the cost of lodging.

AALL Annual Meetings lengthy and costly

Current scheduling of conference activities requires attendance Saturday through Wednesday, making ours one of the longest and most expensive professional conferences around. By contrast, ALA ALCTS technical services / cataloging programs and meetings are held Saturday through Monday; the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) entire conference runs a half-day Friday through Sunday. Many technical services librarians cannot afford to be away five days (could actually be seven days depending on travel time), which is what is required now to attend our very important representatives' reports.

SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS for the SAN ANTONIO MEETING

- **Respect our TS SIS programming priorities**
- **Schedule our committee meetings during prime time**
- **Schedule AALL representative reports on Sunday**

We propose the following short-term solutions for the 2005 San Antonio meeting:

1. That the AMPC respect the priorities that TS-SIS assigns to our program proposals, ensuring that the programs we consider most important to our members make it through the selection process.
2. That the longest committee meeting slot (1 hour and 45 min. in Boston) be scheduled within 9-5 "prime time," so that we aren't obliged to attend 7am meetings on three consecutive days.
3. That the ALA CC:DA, SAC and MARBI representatives' reports be scheduled for Sunday, so those leaving the meeting on Tuesday or Wednesday can attend, and so members have time to discuss and act upon the reports or set up task forces for further study.

PROPOSALS for 2006 and BEYOND

- **Recognize the functional diversity within law librarianship**
- **Develop autonomous, independent Special Interest Sections**
- **Abolish the "no conflict" rule**

Recognize the functional diversity within law librarianship

We ask that AALL recognize that different areas of librarianship have different training and professional needs. Law catalogers are actively involved in helping to forge national policy. We also have a responsibility to teach newer, less experienced colleagues about the complexities of cataloging codes, the MARC format, and alternative metadata schemes. These are not topics that readily appeal to a broad audience, yet they are vital for the continuing

education of law catalogers.

Develop autonomous, independent Special Interest Sections

It may be time for AALL to acknowledge the need for several "tracks" within the annual meeting to address the diverse continuing education demands of its members. Not every type of library function requires the same type of programming or committee meetings. AALL could delegate to the Special Interest Sections more time to schedule meetings, programs, discussion groups, or mini-workshops as they see fit. Committees, Special Interest Sections, SIS committees, and Roundtables would be able to schedule regular meetings during the same time slots every year, at a reasonable hour and of sufficient length to conduct their business.

Law catalogers are one group that could benefit from a separate track system. We tend to accomplish our national-level work on committees or task forces, where we either are responding to national cataloging changes or proposals, or we are trying to create our own proposals that recognize the uniqueness of legal materials. Many of these issues are complex, and cannot be discussed effectively via email or telephone. We need to take advantage of annual meeting time for these discussions.

Abolish the "no conflict" rule

In order to provide more time for SIS scheduling autonomy or to establish different "tracks" within the Annual Meeting, the "no conflict" rule (see page 3) could be abandoned or modified.

Pre- or Post-Conference meetings not a viable option

Scheduling an extra day either pre- or post-conference would not only marginalize us, but in practical terms is not an option in today's economic climate. Our meetings are already very long (see page 4).

CONCLUSION

TS-SIS is not alone in these concerns. The Foreign, Comparative, and International Law SIS has been frustrated with conference scheduling as well, and there may be other sections and committees that share our discontent.

We look forward to working with you in our joint commitment to ensure that this Association remains a strong and relevant leader in continuing education for all law librarians. We have every expectation that our concerns can and will be appropriately addressed by this Executive Board.

Thank you for your consideration.