

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

LEGAL HISTORY & RARE BOOKS SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION (LHRB-SIS) ANNUAL REPORT

2013-2014

In the summer of 2014, LHRB-SIS celebrated its Silver Jubilee. During the twenty-five years since its founding at AALL in Reno in 1989, LHRB has grown from a handful of legal history and rare book aficionados to a vibrant SIS which:

- produces a well-regarded newsletter (*LH&RB*) noted for its substantive articles, as well as a journal (*Unbound: An Annual Review of Legal History and Rare Books*);
- sponsors an annual graduate-level legal history writing competition (The Morris L. Cohen Student Essay Competition);
- produces educational programs of consistently high quality and intellectual merit (often featuring noted scholars and experts from beyond the AALL community) for presentation at AALL's Annual Meetings;
- markets itself to AALL Exhibit Hall visitors with an intellectually appealing, well-stocked, and well-staffed table, which attracts considerable traffic; and
- hosts events to encourage networking among its members, and to open the world of legal history and rare books to all who express interest.

Officers. The officers of LHRB-SIS for 2013-2014 were Jennie C. Meade, Chair; Sabrina Sondhi, Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect; Michael Widener, Immediate Past Chair; and Kasia Solon Cristobal, Secretary/Treasurer. In the online elections (conducted March 31-April 6, 2014), Kasia Solon Cristobal, was elected Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect, and Laurel Davis was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

Membership. LHRB counted 209 members in August, 2014, up from 203 in 2013, and less than the 220 members of 2012. Anecdotal information and general observation has shown an increase in interest among librarians in legal history, rare books, and LHRB, and the membership increase perhaps in a small way corroborates what we have remarked.

The Morris L. Cohen Student Essay Competition. Sponsored by LHRB and Gale Cengage, the Cohen competition (<http://www.aallnet.org/sections/lhrb/Cohen-Flyer-2014-revised-extended.pdf>) was introduced in 2008-2009 to encourage scholarship in legal history, rare books, and legal archives, and to introduce students to AALL. The competition consistently attracts outstanding submissions from graduate students in law, history, and library science programs. In 2013-2014, the Cohen Committee received fourteen submissions, and chose as the winner “White Slavery in the Northwoods: Early Sex Trafficking and the Reformation of Law in the Late Nineteenth Century,” submitted by Bonnie Shucha, Assistant Director for Public Services and a law student at the University of Wisconsin Law Library. Ms. Shucha presented her paper July 13 at the Morris Cohen luncheon. The runner-up essay, authored by Emily Ulrich, graduate student in the Medieval Studies Program at Yale University, was “‘Commoning’ the English Common Law Treatise: Investigating Three Fourteenth-Century Copies of the *Britton*.”

LHRB Programs/Meetings/Events, San Antonio 2014. LHRB members produced varied programs, matching LHRB’s traditionally strong educational presence at AALL. *The Accidental Archivist: Creating Archives on a Shoestring Budget* (proposer Sabrina Sondhi) was a well-attended and popular program which explored the fundamentals of assessing existing materials as potential archives, as well as cost-effective means of processing them. *The Civil Rights Act of 1964: Celebrating Its 50th Anniversary* (proposer Joel Fishman) featured speaker Sanford Levinson, Professor of Law at the University of Texas and one of America’s leading constitutional law experts. LHRB-SIS chose this program as its independently-produced program for 2014. This program provided an unusual opportunity for our membership to hear Professor Levinson speak, and despite a slot near the end of the meeting when many AALL attendees have departed, attendance was strong.

LHRB’s first annual legal history meeting featured Professor Michael Ariens of St. Mary’s School of Law, who conducted a lively interactive session on Texas legal history. The meeting filled the room to capacity, and the book signing for Professor Ariens’ award-winning *Lone Star Law: A Legal History of Texas* was extremely popular.

For the second year, LHRB presented the Rare Book Cataloging Roundtable after its migration from TS-SIS. It remains a “must-attend” for rare book catalogers and librarians.

LHRB sponsored two ticketed events: the Morris L. Cohen Student Essay Competition Presentation and Luncheon, and the LHRB Reception, held at Mexican Manhattan on July 14. There was no charge for either event. Although both events were “sold out” very early (we set a cap of 30 for the Cohen luncheon, and a cap of 40 for the reception), there were many “no shows” at both events, and an examination of the ticket rosters shed light on a possible reason. Many of the ticketholders were not LHRB members (in the case of the Cohen luncheon, only 8 of the 30 – 27% - were LHRB members) who likely signed up early for a “free meal” with little

interest in the events themselves. These ticketholders lost nothing when they later decided not to attend, but LHRB members were prevented from attending, and LHRB-SIS was left with large bills to pay for food ordered but not eaten. In light of this experience, LHRB voted to discontinue providing a *gratis* lunch for the Cohen presentation. Arrangements for the LHRB Reception will be reviewed for next year, with a view to considering payment or partial payment by attendees.

LH&RB. Despite the sudden onset of a serious illness, *LH&RB*'s editor, Mark Podvia, produced two issues of *LH&RB*. Mark's professionalism was highlighted by his determination to issue the newsletter in the face of personal adversity. *LH&RB* is considered by many to be the most substantive newsletter of the SIS community.

New Committees/Committee Revival/Staffing Committees. To ensure continued smooth operations, especially during the Annual Meetings, we established two new committees, revived a "dormant" committee, and reviewed each existing committee to make sure staffing for each was adequate, adding members where necessary.

New Committees:

1. Outreach Committee – Chair, Elizabeth Hilkin
Charge: Manage and implement LHRB's promotional activities at the Annual Meeting, including event planning, the LHRB table, signage, and other initiatives relating to LHRB outreach.
2. Rare Book Cataloging Roundtable Committee – Chair, Susan Karpuk
Charge: Organize and manage the Rare Book Cataloging Roundtable at the Annual Meeting, working with the Outreach Committee where necessary to publicize the event.

Revived Committee:

- Publications Committee – Chair, Scott Pagel
Charge: Spearhead, review, and provide advice about print and electronic publication projects of LHRB-SIS.

Staffing Existing Committees:

All existing committees were staffed to the levels requested by their chairs.

Committee meetings. The following LHRB committees convened meetings before the LHRB Business Meeting: Executive, Education, and Cohen. New and heretofore inactive committees did not meet.

Approval of amended bylaws. AALL approved the amendments to the LHRB bylaws passed unanimously at the 2013 Business Meeting. The purpose of the amended bylaws was to set the Secretary/Treasurer’s term at two years and to make clear that the Secretary/Treasurer could serve consecutive terms, and that although a Chair is not eligible to serve consecutive terms, s/he may serve nonconsecutive terms. The amendment is as follows:

“Article V. Officers and Committees.

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Section 3. Terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect each shall serve a term of one year. The Secretary/Treasurer shall serve a term of two years. The Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect shall succeed the Chair at the end of the term in which he or she serves as Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect. The Chair becomes Immediate Past Chair for a term of one year upon completion of his or her term as Chair.

The Chair and Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect may serve nonconsecutive terms of office. The Secretary/Treasurer may serve either consecutive or nonconsecutive terms of office.”

Twitter: @lhrbsis. LHRB-SIS’s Twitter account was up and running in July in time for the Annual Meeting, thanks to our new Outreach Committee, in conjunction with our Webmasters. During the Meeting, notices of our programs and events were posted as alerts, and a photo of our Cohen winner at the LHRB table appeared. To date the account has 275 tweets and 52 follows, and is fast becoming a “go-to” spot for legal history and LHRB notes.

SIS promotional efforts. LHRB’s table in the Exhibit Hall was replete with legal history materials: library special collections brochures, copies of *LH&RB* and *Unbound*, rare books exhibition brochures, booksellers’ catalogues and more. LHRB also staged a competition which awarded LHRB memberships to the two librarians (one CONELL attendee, and one “regular” member) who successfully guessed the identity of our life-size cutout of a famous figure in legal history. We also had some fun with edible “bookworms” and LHRB Silver Jubilee flair. Most important, the table was staffed at nearly 100% of the Exhibit Hall hours of operation by knowledgeable LHRB members who were happy to answer questions and share information.

LHRB budget considerations. The sole regular source for SIS budget replenishment is SIS annual member dues. As a “small” SIS, LHRB’s limited budget continues to be of concern. The basic costs to the SIS of presenting programs are high, and engaging the outside speakers who enhance our programs generates additional cost. This encourages program proposers to retain AALL member-speakers, rather than expand beyond the boundaries of the organization to introduce scholarship and expertise not available within (“Beyond Boundaries,” anyone?). LHRB remains committed to providing the best programs possible, and to raising the necessary

funding. With the aim of allowing LHRB's coffers to build, LHRB-SIS is taking the following steps:

- promoting the benefits of LHRB membership to attract new members;
- ending the practice of providing gratis meals and receptions to publicize LHRB activities;
- monitoring closely the cost of programs with outside speakers;
- since AALL is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization, encouraging charitable donor participation with LHRB to assist in augmenting available funds.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Jennie C. Meade
Chair, Legal History & Rare Books Special Interest Section
2013-2014