

# AUTOMATOME

The Newsletter of the Special Interest Section on  
Automation and Scientific Development (SIS/ASD) of AALL

VOL. 8 no. 2

June 1989

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

S. Blair Kauffman  
University of Wisconsin

As my term of office rapidly comes to a close, I am proud to report some of the significant achievements we have been able to accomplish together. We began this year with two goals. One was to create mechanisms for involving the membership more in the day-to-day activities of the section. The other was to get the SIS to take a more active role in recommending AALL policy within our special interest area. We have progressed on both fronts but still have room to grow.

Perhaps the most significant step made towards expanding SIS membership involvement was the institutionalization of contested elections begun this year. At this point, I am afraid many of you are likely to recall that I was the last Chair to be selected through a non-contested election process. At any rate, some of us then realized that a more broad-based system for selecting officers could benefit the SIS, and we began expanding the system  
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c/o Richard Leiter  
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by appointing a Nominations Committee last year, who selected candidates to be elected at the SIS Business Meeting. This year we took this process one step further and used mail ballots to elect officers prior to the Business Meeting. Our intent is to give the majority of members, who are unable to attend the SIS Business Meeting, a voice in determining SIS leadership. These processes are now written into our SIS by-laws.

Members serving on this year's Nominations Committee are Jim Hambleton, Haynes & Boone; Marcia Koslov, Wisconsin State Law Library; and Kristy Elam, St. Louis University. They deserve special thanks for their help in selecting a first-rate slate of candidates.

Additionally, the official organs of the SIS have benefited from increased membership involvement over the past year. Our newsletter editor, Richard Leiter, has done a commendable job editing the Automatome for the past two years, and he was able to keep it going despite a switch in jobs that took him across the country mid-way through his term. Letters and calls from section members expressing their keen interest in Automatome helped inspire Richard to keep up his editorial work, despite the additional commitment this required while breaking into a new job. The interest generated in the newsletter can be seen from the increase in unsolicited articles submitted by SIS members over the past year. Richard has now decided to finally retire as newsletter editor, and one of our tasks will be to keep the momentum going by finding another committed editor to fill his shoes. If you have a special interest or talent in newsletter editing, please let me or another SIS officer know. As Richard will tell you, the experience can be rewarding, and the position is critical to the SIS.

The SIS has also expanded its educational activities this year, by sponsoring a special microcomputer workshop prior to the AALL annual meeting in Reno. This workshop is being co-directed by two members of the SIS and will involve a number of SIS members as faculty. West Publishing and Mead Data lent critical financial support to this workshop, which has further helped to assure its success (perhaps we should admit both organizations as honorary SIS members).

The microcomputer workshop has generated a substantial amount of interest from the AALL membership, and at this writing it appears as though we will reach our capacity in participants. We view this as an important educational outreach program of the SIS--to assist AALL members to effectively use computers in their work--and would like to build upon this program in the future, by offering similar workshops in conjunction with other annual and regional meetings. In this regard, the SIS has already accepted an offer to

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repeat the workshop next Fall at the Midwest Regional Meeting, scheduled for October in Chicago. We might now begin thinking about offering more specialized, intermediate level workshops in conjunction with next year's AALL, in Minneapolis.

In addition to our preconvention workshop, the SIS is once again sponsoring its annual update program, reviewing computer hardware and software developments over the past year. This popular program is being rerun with the proven team of moderator Richard Leiter, consultant Bob Walton and law librarian extraordinaire Jim Hambleton. It is scheduled for Tuesday morning, at 10:30. Try not to miss it.

Perhaps our educational and publication activities help in some small ways to influence policy, but some of us have felt the SIS should take a more active role in assisting the entire AALL in taking a policy position in areas of special interest to our members. This year, President Margaret Leary assisted us in this regard by requesting our advice about a matter of compelling interest to the entire library community: the distribution of government information in machine readable format. This request was stimulated by SIS member Carol Ebbinghouse alerting us to the U.S. Supreme Court's plans to begin distributing its decisions in machine readable format, a decision which was being made without the benefit of input from the law library community. In response to President Leary's request, we drafted a letter outlining the policy position we thought it appropriate for the AALL to assert. The AALL Executive Board approved of this policy statement, and our letter was sent out with minor changes under President Leary's signature. This letter to the U.S. Supreme Court is reprinted in full in another part of this newsletter.

Before closing, I want to assure skeptics that our rationale for removing elections from the Business Meeting had nothing to do with attempting to keep the crowds away; however, I can report that last year's attendance was up, and this year we have ordered plenty of refreshments to keep us alert. We are also planning a short educational program in conjunction with the meeting and believe that all attending will find their time well spent. Mark your convention calendars now:

Automation & Scientific Development SIS  
Annual Business Meeting  
1:15 - 2:45 p.m.  
Sunday, June 18, 1989  
Bally's Hotel & Casino -- Rialto Room

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We will be planning our program for 1990, in Minneapolis. We will also be looking for a new newsletter editor and contributors. Ideas and energy are welcome. You are also welcome to just come and listen. The program should be enlightening and the refreshments refreshing.

See you in Reno,

S. Blair Kauffman, Chair

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**MEETING REMINDER**

Automation & Scientific Development  
More than Just a Business Meeting

AGENDA: Our SIS meeting this year will be more than just another business meeting. Oh yes, you will hear reports from our treasurer about our financial status (quite sound!), and you will hear reports from our Chair about the newly elected officers (all top rate!), and we will all get a chance to discuss program ideas for next year and struggle about what to do with the newsletter, but this year we will also be adding a new dimension to our meeting. This new dimension will be an educational component, organized around a topic of interest to most of our members and designed to take advantage of the small group setting typical of our business meetings. The topic planned for discussion is:

"Beyond the PC: Integrating MacIntoshes into the Law Library"

The discussion will be led by several law librarians who have successfully blended the use of MacIntoshes into their law libraries. Refreshments will be served.

TIME: The meeting is scheduled for:

Sunday, June 18 at 1:15 - 2:45 p.m.

No other important meetings are scheduled at this time. There will be absolutely nothing else worth doing. Scratch all other plans from your calendar.

PLACE: We will meet in the beautiful:

Rialto Room, Bally's Hotel & Casino

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**LETTER FROM MARGARET LEARY TO CHIEF JUSTICE REHNQUIST  
REGARDING DISSEMINATION OF S.Ct OPINIONS IN MACHINE  
READABLE FORM**

March 20, 1989

The Chief Justice of the United States  
The Supreme Court of the United States  
One First Street N.E.  
Washington, DC 20543

Dear Mr. Chief Justice:

The American Association of Law Libraries has a great interest in the Supreme Court's proposal to disseminate opinions in electronic format. The Executive Board of the American Association of Law Libraries has asked me to convey the following comments to you, and to offer our assistance in working for a fair and cost-effective way to implement the excellent idea of distributing the Court's opinions in electronic form.

We applaud the Supreme Court's decision to streamline distribution of its opinions in electronic format.

However, we are concerned about the danger of creating a society of information-haves and information-have-nots. New methods of opinion dissemination should further the goal of providing equal access to the law, particularly current opinions of the nation's highest court. A method which would impede that goal should be rejected.

Proposals to make Supreme Court opinions immediately available in machine-readable format--to news services, legal publishers, and other members of the information industry--appear worthy if access is for all on an equal basis. However, any dissemination not also providing free, or reduced cost, distribution to libraries for their users could widen the distance between the information rich and the information poor.

Many libraries could not afford even modest access charges of .15 [sic] per thousand characters--the same as .30 [sic] per printed page--which mounts annually to several thousand dollars. The charges would be burdensome to libraries because the costs are only part of the total expense of training, and

communications costs will also rise. Commercial enterprises, such as UPI, New York TIMES, and Mead Data can recover the added costs from customers, who will find the charges reasonable for more timely access to the opinions.

The alternative to receiving the information from the Court is to go through a commercial intermediary, such as West or Mead Data; but the rates for these services are even higher, driven up by search enhancements that many libraries may not want. Some libraries merely want to provide access to the text of the opinion for their users.

A solution to this problem is to require the distributing organization to provide electronic opinions free to non-profit organizations willing to make the opinions available for free to their users. This is the principle of the Title 44 provision for depository libraries. Public library networks, academic libraries, and others could download the opinions to their own systems with minimal enhancements for their end-users: concerned citizens with no customers from whom to recover costs.

Please let me know how AALL might help you with this project: we have many experts in our Association, including a Section on automation and one on government documents. We would be happy to comment on any proposals and can react quickly.

Sincerely,

Margaret A. Leary  
President

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### **REVISED ASD-SIS HISTORY**

by

Michael Petit

Secretary/Treasurer ASD-SIS

University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

This is the new ASD-SIS history that will be included in the SIS Handbook:

The Automation and Scientific Development Special Interest Section is an outgrowth of a Special AALL Committee established in 1972 with Peter

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Nyeum as the first Chair. At the 1976 AALL Convention in Boston, the Committee petitioned the Executive Board for special interest section status. The Executive Board approved creation of the SIS at its December 1976 meeting in Houston. The ASD-SIS was officially created at the Toronto meeting in 1977, when the exiting Committee voted to dissolve itself in favor of the new SIS. Bernard REams, Committee Chair, became the first Chair of the SIS.

Initially created to serve as a watchdog to the industry as it relates to law libraries, its mission is now directed towards surveying the development of software designed for law libraries, and conveying information on automation developments of interest to law librarians. ASD-SIS has also sponsored numerous programs at AALL annual meetings.

The Section's newsletter, Automatome, highlights new ideas, equipment, and programs in the fields of automation and scientific development. Automatome is published irregularly, and is sent to all members of the Section.

#### Chairpersons of ASD-SIS:

Bernard Reams	1977/78
Tom R. Heitz	1978/79
John Christensen	1979/80
Robert Grundy	1980/81
Jenni Parrish	1981/82
Duncan Webb	1982/84
Thomas M. Steele	1984/86
S. Patricia Rempel	1986/87
Laurel Wendt	1987/88
S. Blair Kauffman	1988/89
Jamie Niss Dunn	1989/90





**FINANCIAL REPORT, ASD-SIS**

As of February 28, 1989

Balance on September 30, 1988		\$5,387.43
Income:		
Dues	\$50.00	
Income to 2/28/89		+\$50.00
Subtotal		\$5,437.43
Expenses:		
Postage	\$236.95	
Photocopying	\$232.62	
Expenses to 2/28/89		-\$469.57
Balance on February 28, 1989		\$4967.86

Respectfully Submitted  
 Michael J. Petit  
 Secretary/Treasurer  
 ASD-SIS

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**EDITOR'S TOME**

by Richard Leiter

Littler, Mendelson, Fastiff &amp; Tichy, San Francisco

**LAW SCHOOL COMPUTER LAB PROGRAMS: ARE THEY DOING THE JOB?**

Let me begin by saying at the outset that I don't think that law school computer labs are doing the job. What is the job, anyway? The general reasons given for the existence of computer labs in law schools is generally a two parter: some say that computer labs help law students as lawyers because the times are changing and, goodness, everyone knows that lawyers need computers; the other rationale is that access to the computers in the law school will somehow facilitate law students' legal education.

I will deal with each rationale in turn. I believe that there are some critical errors in judgment existing among those who have founded, funded, and planned these programs.

Teaching computers as a "practice skill."

Computers are machines. They are brilliant stars in the field of human technology, they are marvels of invention, without peer. However, we must be responsible consumers of these expensive machines. We must also be realistic about their roles in our lives. The computer's abilities are such that it is uncomfortably common to hear about certain functions that they can perform described in terms that almost make it sound as though lawyers are the ones "taking up space" in the modern law office.

A wise man once commented that the computer revolution reminded him of the electric motor revolution, of earlier this century. Electric motors, when first invented were envisioned as the epitomy of the labor saving device. Futurists predicted a world in which each home would be equipped with a single large motor which would drive all of the appliances any house could possibly want. In fact, as we all know, that vision did not occur. But we do have thousands of electric motors in our houses: in the blow dryer, the can opener, the refrigerator, in our adding machines, printers, cars, watches - one can hardly look at a corner of the modern world without seeing an electric motor at work. Depending on your definition of what a computer is, you are likely beginning to see the point: computers are cropping up everywhere. Computers are, like electric motors, becoming more and more specialized. In libraries, we now have computers for dedicated CALR functions, automated library functions, cataloging, CD-ROM, etc. While many of these functions are performed on PC's, the PC's themselves are functioning as specialists. There is a gradual evolution away from the general all-purpose computer toward the specialized single-, or double-, or triple-function computer. Ultimately, when you want to do word processing, you may end up buying a hard-wired word processor with built in networking and fax capability.

The point is, learning about computers has a lot less to do with practicing law than a lot of other practice skills such as research, writing, legal economics, public speaking, negotiation, and others. The computer is a tool that can help facilitate the business of practicing law, it does not help one practice; although, arguably, CALR and particular database applications in litigation support do. But, the question I would like to pose is two fold: First, why computers over the other important practice skills? and, Second, are we actually teaching them these applications?

Many computer labs in existence in law schools around the country do little else with their equipment than teach fundamentals of DOS and word processing. Many law schools subscribe to CALI (Computer-Assisted Legal

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Instruction) program discs, and instruction on how to use them are also given.

If the point of having the computer lab is to train law students how to cope in the real world, shouldn't all of the various functions of computers in law offices be covered? Shouldn't billing programs, litigation support, and docket programs be covered as well as word processing - the aspect of computer application in law that the lawyer is least likely to use in practice? What's more, why is it that perhaps 90% of the law school computer labs in the country contain only IBM-PC's and a DOS environment? In the real world, how many law practices use IBM-PC's? Aren't there also Apple Macintoshes used in law firms, or WANG, or other types of computers that should be studied in order to better equip the law student for life after law school?

If we settle for simply having a room full of computers and wordprocessing, CALI, and Lotus 1-2-3 software available, we might as well have a room full of fancy, high-tech typewriters, with a couple PC's dedicated to CALI applications, and one in the corner for Lotus. And if we settle for more, a complete introduction to computers and their application in the law office, we are doing so, and calling it "practice skills," at the expense, perhaps, of real, practical practice skills as mentioned above.

#### The computer as assisting the student in the education process.

The only ways that computers help law students in law school is in their usefulness in interactive educational programs, such as CALI, and their use as wordprocessors. As stated above, if they are used as wordprocessors, why choose PC's? Why not train students to process words on the simplest, most elegant, most powerful word processor available, the Macintosh, instead of the labor intensive, and irritating world of PC-DOS? In this case, the point is to produce neat looking papers and outlines, and for that purpose the Mac works great and is extremely maintenance free.

As far as CALI goes, they have chosen the IBM-PC world, so the best use of these programs is to load all of your programs onto a hard disk and set it up on a program like the Norton Commander that will boot up to a menu that will let the student use the programs with as little aggravation as possible.

Does all this enhance the student's educational experience? It doesn't hurt, except insofar as it fails to actually provide the student with the entire learning experience that is possible with computers.

#### Solutions.

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Those librarians with responsibility for computer labs or who manage libraries with computer labs would be well advised to evaluate their programs to see if they are actually accomplishing the needs of their students. In many cases, what may be called for is a redefining of goals for the law school computer lab.

We should be proud of our accomplishments. Tremendous resources have been used to bring computers into the law school environment. We have exposed many law students to computers in ways that they might not have been were it not for our computer labs. However, we have not gone the extra mile. We have not always educated our students about the full range of computer applications that might be important to them. The one type of computer application that they need to know, and that they will actually use in practice is CALR, but law students come out of law schools with terrible CALR skills. When law student enter law firms, either as lawyers or as clerks they still have to be trained in how to use the computers and systems that the firm uses. There is much more that can be taught, and should be taught.

#### Farewell.

This is my fifth and last Automatome and it has been a rewarding experience to have served the section as editor. Being editor of a newsletter like this is a wonderful privilege. I hope that there is someone else out there who is willing to take on the responsibility of producing the newsletter for the benefit of our membership. Automatome is an important forum for comments about developments in technology that affect law librarians. It can be about news in the world of high technology in law libraries and it can be about comments on the state of technology in our business.

Over the past three years we have had articles about new products, techniques, and news of exciting new developments. Be involved. If you are interested in becoming the new editor, please contact me at Littler, Mendelson, Fastiff & Tichy, 650 California Street, 20th Floor, San Francisco, California 94108, or call 415-433-1940, or attend the business meeting at this year's annual meeting.

I want to thank all those of you who have contributed to the newsletter over the years. Your contributions made my job all the more easy, and all our section members and newsletter readers benefited from your time and effort. I look forward to continuing to serve the section in other ways.

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