



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**



## **CONVERSATION WITH THE AALL BOARD MEMBERS DURING THE 2018 TS-SIS BUSINESS MEETING**

- Femi Cadmus, AALL Vice-President/President-Elect
- Jean Willis, AALL Treasurer
- Meg Kribble, AALL Board Member and AALL Board Liaison to the SIS Council

### **Q: WHAT EXACTLY IS THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF AALL? IS THE ORGANIZATION IN WORSE FINANCIAL SHAPE THAN IT'S BEEN IN?**

Femi Cadmus: OK, this is Femi here. I am going to take that question and first I am going to thank you Lauren for organizing this meeting, I did not realize that this is your first virtual meeting so I feel especially honored and privileged as do Jean and Meg I am sure to be here this afternoon. I hope that our conversations will throw light on some of the dark areas or some of the mysteries that people have been encountering with AALL finances.

So, I will say that I am really happy to report that AALL is in excellent financial shape. Our annual revenue for the past 10 years has averaged about 3.5 million. Our reserve accounts average the same and if you include all of our investments and endowed funds, we are at about 5.1 million for a ten-year period. To put this in context, in 2009 our revenue was 3.3. Today our revenue is 3.5. Our revenue account (sic), ah, our reserve account was 2.7 and today it's 4.1 million. And so, we are talking about millions of dollars. I always like to bring this home to our libraries and our contexts, and our situations. So, even when we see increases, we still have to factor in all kinds of inflationary trends, expenses do not remain stagnant, and so we have to be judicious and diligent in the way we are approaching our finances. So, yes we are in excellent shape and we want to continue to remain in excellent shape.

Lauren: Thank you, Femi.

### **Q: WHY DID LAST YEAR'S CONFERENCE LOSE SO MUCH MONEY?**

Jean Willis: This is Jean. Thank you for having me here. As a long time TS-SIS member, it is exciting to be at your board meeting online. I am not sure where the information came through that you saw that last year's conference lost money. I'm not sure how that came out, but the annual meeting in fact did not lose money last year. The annual meeting income is one of the three major sources of revenue for AALL and that includes dues, annual meeting revenue, and Index for Foreign Legal Periodicals revenue. Last year, at the Austin meeting, the net revenue was over \$669,000. We had budgeted, and we had hoped, and we had budgeted for a net revenue at around \$780,000. So, we were off in our budget projections, but we did



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

make money. The reason why we were a little low in our budget projects was because it was due to a lower number of registrations for Austin over Chicago

**Q: WHAT OTHER COST SAVING MEASURES ARE BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE BOARD?**

Femi: Again, I always like to bring this home. We have revenue, we are in excellent financial shape, but we always also plan strategically, and we do that in our libraries. If you are a manager of finances in your library, you're always looking to plan for the future and that is what AALL and the executive board has done. To give a history of this, in 2014-2015, we decided to evaluate all the programs and services that we had. And a result of that was that we discontinued a couple of things. We discontinued the vendor relations position. There was a funded vendor relations position. It wasn't a full time one, but we discontinued that. We discontinued the print Law Library Journal. We discontinued the print member directory. We also discontinued funding, as you all know, for the 10 representative positions. And what we were doing was trying to make sure that anything that we were undertaking was aligned with the strategic plan and would advance the profession and the association optimally. We have done all kinds of things, and continue to do all kinds of things, to save money.

I will say at the board level, we are doing more virtual board meetings and we have shortened the amount of time that we spend in Chicago. We are very cognizant of the fact that we need to continue to undertake cost saving measures. I will say that the headquarters, steered by Kate Hagan, has been very judicious too. And even though we are not aware of the inner workings of the staffing there, there have been staffing decreases also at the headquarters level. I will say that, as we even (sic) am back on cost saving measures, we're also cognizant of the fact that that is not the only way to save money. You need to generate revenue. So, we also explore avenues for generating revenue. As Jean has mentioned, our two (sic), three main revenue streams are member dues, the annual meeting, and the Index for Foreign Legal Periodicals and Books. Those are the three main revenue streams. But we've added things like the well-attended Competitive Intelligence Workshop that generates revenue. We also expanded, so not necessarily creating revenue programs, but has the potential for creating revenue like the daily *Know It AALL* which is the daily newsletter and we are going to start taking ads for that. We have implemented the body of knowledge. We have increased the advocacy efforts to support the importance of open access to legal information in a democratic society. We have upgraded the website as you may have noticed. And so, It is really a balance where we are adopting cost saving measures so that we can feed the money into the strategic plan for the association which will advance the profession and advance our credibility as legal information professionals in the context in which we work. I could go on and on about the cost saving measures, there are many of them, but that we are all cognizant about them and we are always talking about them at the board meetings and more importantly, like I said, we are exploring ways to generate



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

revenue beyond the three revenue streams that we have.

**Q: WHAT'S THE BEST WAY FOR THE AVERAGE MEMBER TO UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZATION'S FINANCES? THE BOARD BOOKS ARE REALLY HARD TO READ!**

Jean: The board books can be challenging to read, but that's what the board works from. And it is kind of a pain in the butt, I agree with you, but I've spent a long time with that, familiarizing myself with that and with the budgets that are in the board book, that is the main source of the financial statements, including the form 990, which is also available to members. Another source is the Treasurer's Article, which just came out in the May/June edition of the *Spectrum*. It is on page 10 and that also gives you some good financial info. I know that everybody cannot go to the conference, but I also give a brief update on the finances at the conference at the Business Meeting. I believe that is recorded and available in the *Law Library Journal*.

**Q: WOULD A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A FUND TO SUPPORT THE CATALOGING LIAISONS, ONE THAT CAN RECEIVE DONATIONS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP-AT-LARGE, RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THE BOARD?**

Jean: If an SIS wants to submit a request to the board for the creation of a fund, that can receive donations, they can do so using the board agenda form that is sent to AALL leaders prior to each board meeting. So, that is entirely within your ability to do that within the Tech Services SIS. It is probably too late, well it is too late now, for the July meeting, but you can consider that for the November meeting. If approved, the board would announce the creation of a new fund and throughout the year, AALL encourages members to contribute to all of the established funds. They do that through the various newsletters that we have and that fund would be part of that communication. They wouldn't be left out. And then, of course, you as Tech Services SIS could talk it up as well and encourage TS-SIS and OB-SIS members to contribute, which you do, I know for the Marla Schwartz fund. You do that very well, so you already have that skill set in place. For a fund to be endowed, that is your next question, and I think I'll just segue into that, it does require a minimum of \$50,000 dollars. So, the fund would have to be built up to that point. At which point it could become an endowed fund, and I believe, but I don't want to say for certain, that I believe that some of the other endowed funds that is what they did and then turned them into endowed funds. This is because without that amount of money on which to earn interest, there would not be enough revenue generated each year to fund the purpose. So, it will be a process to get it to become an endowed fund.

Femi: If it is the prerogative of the TS-SIS to submit an agenda item and if it is going to be endowed, it has to be a minimum of \$50,000 so that it can generate revenue.



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

**Q: IS THERE A WAY THAT THE BOARD COULD ASSIST IN PROMOTING OR GETTING THIS FUND OFF THE GROUND?**

Answered by Jean above.

**Q: WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO ENDOW A FUND LIKE THIS?**

Answered by Jean above.

**Q: ONE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING ISN'T ENOUGH... IS THERE A DIFFERENT FORMAT TO HAVE THIS MEETING OR A WAY TO HAVE MORE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP OF AALL?**

Meg: We think it is very unlikely that we can fit in another business meeting over the course of the year. But there are some things that you can do in the meantime. So one thing is if you aren't able to attend the annual meeting, the proceedings of the business meeting are published, I think, in the Fall issue of *Law Library Journal*. And that has a good overview including a more narrative Treasurer's report that the Treasurer presents. Another thing is to make sure that you are subscribed to the weekly e-newsletter that goes out, I believe that goes out... Femi and Jean, do you know if that goes directly to individuals or is it by the members open forum list?

Jean: I'm not sure, but there's the e-newsletter and the members forum, both.

Meg: So, the e-newsletter will let you know things like when the board books for the next board meeting come out, so you can look at it in advance and get in touch with us if you have thoughts on some of the issues and things that we will be voting on. If you are not sure if you are subscribed to the weekly e-news, I think Chris Siwa in headquarters can let you know. He's super helpful with that. I heard a rumor over the last year that some members are under the impression that you're not allowed to contact us and I am happy to report that that is completely false. We are your elected officials and you're more than welcome to contact us individually at any time if you have questions or concerns, or ideas for us that is part of what we're here for. Femi or Jean do you have any other ideas that I am missing?

Femi: I think that there is an upcoming question about Chapter visits. I will tell you that I do provide information to people during Chapter visits, too. That's the way that the Board connects with folks who are otherwise not able to come sometimes to the annual conference and we understand that the annual conference can prove challenging in situations where an individual is not funded. Frequently, I go to Chapter meetings where people have not been to an annual conference in a while. And that's where as a Board member I connect and it may not be the whole board book, treasurer's report, but it is a synopsis of



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

the state of the association. So, there are a variety of ways to do that and we are doing that today, where there is a virtual business meeting and we are giving some information. It's not very detailed, and I doubt that everyone wants that level of detail getting into the weeds of things, but having the general overview gives you the state of the association, is very helpful in different types of forum. It doesn't have to be just by replicating the business meeting, which again, just because of what it entails, it's definitely not feasible to have more than one business meeting.

**Q: HOW CAN A PORTION OF THE MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS WITH THE BOARD? IF MEMBERS ARE DISAPPOINTED BY A DECISION FROM THE BOARD, WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE BOARD?**

Answered above

**Q: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHAPTER VISITS? ARE ALTERNATIVES TO THE IN-PERSON VISITS BEING EXPLORED?**

Femi: I am not aware that we are looking at alternatives. I believe very strongly that connecting with members of the association who I might not be able to touch during the annual meeting is very important and is very vital. There are so many things you can do virtually, but there are things that we need to do in person. What we are doing is making sure that these types of visits are financially, fiscally responsible so that the ways that we are planning those visits have to be fiscally responsible. Last year, I was at the ALLUNY annual meeting and because I'm in upstate New York, I was the board visitor and that was actually funded by my institution. So, we look at different ways to make sure that we are being fiscally responsible, but I don't think that we are ever, I don't want to say that, but in the short term, that is not something we feel we want to dispense. I think it will be a strategically short-sighted move to do that. I don't know if Meg or Jean has anything to add to that.

Meg: I know that last year, Greg Lambert did a virtual chapter visit with the DALL, Dallas Association of Law Librarians, which is a very small chapter. So, we have started to experiment with some virtual options. Although we do find that when we're at the chapter visits often we have members come up to us that maybe they wouldn't have taken the time to call or email, but if we're right there we are available to them to discuss issues and concerns.

Femi: I really find that that it is interesting, about the way that we interact, that sometimes interacting by email alone, exclusively, is not always optimal. I remember going to a chapter visit where someone was very concerned that we were going to, because of the funding, we were not going to continue with recordings at the annual meeting. And, she expressed to me a concern and the fact that she doesn't get to



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

go to the annual meeting and the only way she would get that kind of professional development was through the recordings. I took that back to the board and I know that this was explored and we were able to find a creative solution for Baltimore so that we have the recordings. But honestly, I don't think this person would have emailed me or contacted me otherwise and this is just one of the types of issues that people will bring up at chapter meetings. There are concerns about viability of chapters, what are we supposed to do? What is the way forward? There's so much that you gain from being with people that you don't necessarily get the full maximum exposure when you're relating to people virtually. Like Meg has mentioned, it's great that's why I said I wouldn't say never, but who knows we could be migrating to virtual everything, but I hope not. I do like to connect with people. I was excited when I heard in Texas they were trying a virtual chapter meeting and Greg was able to represent AALL. That was exciting to hear, maybe there'll be more of that. We'll just wait and see.

Jean: Just one final comment. When we do reach chapter visits, we all come back and write a report which we send out to other members of the board. And, we all read these various chapter visit reports and then we discuss some of these issues in our open sessions at the board meeting. So, it's not just that Femi talks to somebody or I talk to somebody and that's it. It's reported on. And, we bring back not only good things, but concerns that people have raised with us and sometimes it becomes an action item for the board. So, that's another way, conduit, of communication with the members that is vital and important.

**Q: WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR SELECTING CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD?**

Femi: And I have to say that before I got on the board, I wasn't paying particular attention to how people got on the board, I really didn't know what the process was. So, this is a very, legitimate question because you might think it is obvious, but it is not obvious. There is a Nominations Committee. There is always a call for nominations, so it is open. This is not a selection that is done through private means. You can nominate folks when the call comes out. Or, you can even self-nominate yourself as a potential member of the board. For the first time I sat on the Nominations Committee, since I've been on board, I sat on it in this spring and I was able to see first-hand how this works and it was really an eye opener for me. So, you know, we're going through all the nominations, everyone is looked at very carefully. And the final decision is up to the Nominations Committee, but every single nomination, whether it is self or whether it is somebody who has nominated another person, is scrutinized and examined and looked at diligently by the members of the Nominations Committee.

**Q: WHY ARE THERE NO ACADEMICS ON THE SLATE THIS YEAR?**

Femi: I will say that there was an academic on the slate, Emily Janoski-Haehlen, who happens to be the



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

Chair of, the incoming Chair of AMPC, is an academic on the slate. The committee always looks to achieve balance and what I saw firsthand was the historical, how we had a historical perspective, because I had a question, too, I was in the room and I said, oh we are looking at firm librarians for the two slots, why is that? So, what they showed me in the room was the historical perspective, when we had academics, when we had government, when we had privates. I was actually very surprised that we hadn't really had a slate of privates in, we had more of academics than privates as the historical perspective. Well, we always strive for balance and what you will see in the incoming year is that the President and the Vice President are actually academics come July 2018, and in the total seats, we have a total of eleven seats on the board, there will be five academics in 2018/19, but it is a very challenging process and not everybody who is nominated wants to run. I discovered that very quickly that not everyone is running to do this thing. It is very challenging to maintain balance. You might just want to have academics, but if they are not nominated in great numbers or if they are not accepting to run, there is so little you can do. So, you work with what you have. I would encourage people to consider running for a board position. If you know someone who would be great at it, when that time comes, please nominate them. We just don't have enough people who have the time to dedicate to this kind of voluntary work which is very time consuming I will say, but we need people from all segments in order to keep that balance. The Nominations Committee is cognizant of that and strives to maintain the balance as much as it feasibly can. We can only work with what we can in terms of the slate we get, the nominations we get. I hope that answers your question.

Lauren: We have just a couple of minutes left and a few questions have come in. Some are very similar questions, so I think I can lump them into one. It's a question about the Cataloging Liaisons and why, if the association is in such great financial shape, why was the funding cut to the three representatives?

Femi: I can take that question. I just want to go back. Maybe I did not focus well enough on this. We are in great shape because we are making decisions that keep us in great shape. And I always say let's go back to our libraries, let's go back to our context, I can tell you as a director of my law library, I am in great shape because I am deciding on what programs and what collections we are investing in. If I let things, if I just maintain status quo, I think I would be in a ditch by now. So, status quo is not an option for remaining in great shape. Remaining in great shape means that you have to make some strategic decisions as to what is important and what aligns with the strategic plan of the association. And we cut ten representatives, it was not like as if we just cut the ALA representatives. It was not focused on TS-SIS, and it was not to say that it is not an important venture, but it was to state that this is a time to be creative and innovative about the types of options that you have for funding and I can see that innovation and creativity coming up in terms of can we establish a fund. So, I really don't want to dial back the conversation because we have actually gone beyond that, but I do want to focus the fact that we are not doing this because we are in trouble, we are doing this because we are stewards of the association's funds and we want to plan for



**TECHNICAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL INTEREST SECTION**

posterity. This is not just about me as a librarian in 2018. This is about the profession in the next ten years, in the next fifteen, in the next twenty years. So, we want to leave a legacy for the younger librarians who are coming in and those who have not even come into the profession. To say that we are valued at what, \$5 million/5 point something million in assets, that is just phenomenal for our association. I was at the BIAL Meeting in England and they are so severely challenged, facing the same types of issues that most associations face—declining membership, not able to really generate revenue, declining attendance at their annual meetings, and it's a dilemma. They were talking about what they were going to do to sustain the association for the future. We don't want to be in that position, so we need to be proactive and that's what the board is doing and I would hope that everybody listening to me would trust that the board is making decisions that are best for the association. I am so grateful that I was elected as Vice-President/President-Elect of this association and I would not do anything to displace that trust. The decisions that we make are very difficult decisions. I can tell you that I want to be liked by everybody, but there are times that you have to make decisions that not everybody likes and I just hope that people trust that the decisions that we are making for the posterity, for the viability, and to sustain the association for the long term. I believe that the representative issue will be resolved. I am so pleased that you are looking at alternatives, and that is where we should focus, and I hope that what I've said creates a measure of understanding. I know that people will still disagree with us and I hope that we can respectfully even disagree. But, I would say one thing, please trust us, we are not making decisions to make your life difficult or because we do not believe that what you are doing is important. I have two librarians who work in technical services in my library. I value their work. I cannot do what they do. I am fascinated by what they do. I understand that they have a niche that's very important. And, I will tell you that the Executive Board feels the same way about TS-SIS and I am just hoping that we can move forward and not dial this conversation backwards.

Lauren: One quick question. Are board books accessible to all members logged into the web site?

Jean: You need to be logged in. If for some reason you are logged in and being blocked, I would suggest that you contact Chris Siwa at headquarters and he can help you with that.

Lauren: We have received additional questions. I will email you with the questions. Thank you to the three of you for speaking with us today.