FINAL REPORT TO THE AALL EXECUTIVE BOARD

SUBMITTED BY: Special Committee on Membership Publications

DATE SUBMITTED: June 25, 2004

TOPIC: Review of AALL Spectrum, AALLNET, and Law Library Journal

BACKGROUND

In June 2003, President Elect Janis Johnston appointed the Special Committee on Member Publications to “examine and clarify the purpose, scope and frequency of the AALL Spectrum, AALLNET, and Law Library Journal as the Association’s major communication vehicles for communicating with its various constituencies.” The committee, consisting of Sarah Andeen, Susan Siebers, and Suzanne Thorpe (Chair), held an organizational meeting in Seattle during the Annual Meeting. Present at this meeting were also Tory Trotta (Board Liaison), Camille Broussard (LLJ/AALL Spectrum Editorial Board and Advisory Committee Chair), Sandy Marz (AALLNET Advisory Committee Chair), and Maya Norris (AALL Director of Publications). In October 2003, our committee joined the LLJ/AALL Spectrum Editorial Board and Advisory Committee meeting in Chicago. Following this meeting, Susan Siebers gathered information regarding AALL Spectrum and Sarah Andeen gathered information regarding AALLNET. Suzanne Thorpe moderated a one-week online discussion to gather member input on the publications. Brief reports from each are attached (Appendices 1-3). We focused our investigations primarily on the AALL Spectrum and AALLNET based on guidance from Janis Johnston. The online discussion, however, provided excellent input on Law Library Journal.

The committee submitted a preliminary report to the Executive Board in March 2004.¹

Following the April 2004 Executive Board meeting, the committee received feedback from Tory Trotta. She advised us to focus our remaining time on identifying the various types of information disseminated by the Association, indicating where and how they might most effectively be published. We were also asked to comment on the public relations value of AALL Spectrum, AALLNET, and Law Library Journal. Finally, we were asked to make recommendations on a uniform program of publication for the Association. This report begins with these recommendations, follows with a profile of each publication containing specific recommendations. It closes with several tables illustrating where specific information currently resides and where we propose it should reside in the future.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Our committee finds justification for continued publication of AALL Spectrum, Law Library Journal, and AALLNET. These three publications are essential tools for the continuing development of the law library profession. Although AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal are similar in offering substantive content authored by law librarians, each serves a different role. AALL Spectrum is a vehicle for sharing ideas, opinions, and knowledge about cutting edge issues. It provides value here and now. Law Library Journal, in contrast, is a vehicle for sharing scholarship that may or may not have immediate application, but is likely to be valued over time. Law librarians benefit from both types of content. In addition, AALL Spectrum offers opportunities for librarians to contribute to our profession’s knowledge base, even if they are unable to engage in lengthy scholarship, while Law Library Journal promotes in-depth research and analysis of what we do. AALLNET provides law librarians with another vehicle for sharing and preserving knowledge. Librarians contribute daily to dynamic public dialogues through the various listservs sponsored by AALL. AALLNET archives these informal, yet informative discussions providing a unique record of our collective knowledge.

All three publications also serve as tools for the Association to disseminate information. AALL Spectrum publishes interim reports from its leadership on important developments within the organization and provides information about AALL programs and events. Law Library Journal offers annual reports from the leadership and subgroups within the Association, plus proceedings of official meetings. AALLNET, unlike the journals, serves as a comprehensive electronic handbook and directory of the Association and provides a venue for each subgroup to disseminate similar information. In addition, AALLNET provides an interactive means for the Association to implement program registration and solicit information.

AALL Spectrum and AALLNET also serve as tools for disseminating news. Regular columns in AALL Spectrum report news on activities of groups and individuals involved in law librarianship. AALLNET, in conjunction with “From the Desk of…” email alerts, serves as a bulletin board for posting up to date information about AALL programs and events. Many of the subgroups of AALL also share their news through electronic newsletters and listservs made available through AALLNET.

In addition to reaching law librarians and regular subscribers, all three publications reach out to the world at large. AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal reach the greater library community via
indexing in several library-related periodical indexes. In addition, Law Library Journal reaches the legal community via indexing in several legal periodical indexes and through inclusion in the Westlaw, LexisNexis, and HeinOnline full text databases. Researchers in many other disciplines are guided to Law Library Journal via indexing in numerous social science periodical indexes. The public relations range of AALLNET is potentially infinite since anyone worldwide has access to most of its contents. This fact alone makes it imperative that the Association put its resources into making AALLNET as comprehensive and reliable a communication tool as is possible.

Although our committee endorses the continued publication of AALL Spectrum, Law Library Journal, and AALLNET in the form in which they exist today, we would like to recommend some changes to each publication. These changes primarily concern two areas: (1) dissemination of news and announcements and (2) dissemination of official association reports. We believe that AALL Spectrum is no longer the best vehicle for disseminating news and announcements. New technologies (e.g., email alerts and listservs) permit instantaneous delivery of news and are already in use by most individuals and groups involved in AALL. By the time most news now appears in AALL Spectrum, it is no longer current. We recommend removing the news content of AALL Spectrum. This news should, instead, be posted prominently on AALLNET. Since many law librarians do not check AALLNET regularly, just posting it there might not be effective, so we also recommend expanding AALL’s current email alerts to include live links pointing to news updates on AALLNET.

We also recommend that the official reports from Association leaders that currently appear in AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal, in addition, be reproduced in a separate section of AALLNET. This would further the goal of making AALLNET a comprehensive compendium of information about the Association.

Although our recommendations are not based on cost analyses, we do not anticipate that they will be costly. In fact, they could save money (e.g., eliminating news from AALL Spectrum might allow publishing fewer issues per year). Our suggestions will probably involve increased responsibilities for the AALLNET Webmaster as more news content is added to AALLNET and might require additional staff to assist with the email alerts. As more information is added to AALLNET, it might also be advisable to hire an editor for AALLNET. This is probably worth considering even if the changes we recommend are not implemented, in order to make AALLNET the best possible communication tool.
PROFILoE oF aAll PuBLICATIONs

AALL Spectrum

Purpose

The AALL Spectrum currently serves to update law librarians and other legal information professionals on issues that affect legal information and law librarianship, and to keep members apprised of Association events and activities. The AALL Spectrum has evolved in the past decade from being an informal association newsletter into a professional-looking magazine containing practice-oriented articles, columns, and brief reports from officers, subgroups, and members. Articles run 2,000-3,000 words in length; columns run 700-1,000 words in length. Photographs and artwork are included. This content is produced by volunteer authors and is thoroughly edited by a law librarian who serves as a part-time editor and by the AALL Director of Publications.²

We recommend that AALL Spectrum focus on this educational role as its primary purpose. The AALL Spectrum plays a vital role in the professional development of law librarians, offering them a means to share their knowledge and expertise on current issues with others through the publication of brief, timely articles. It provides many law librarians who, for various reasons, are unable to produce scholarly articles for publication in Law Library Journal, an opportunity to write for publication.

As a corollary, we recommend that AALL Spectrum minimize its role as a current awareness tool. Although AALL Spectrum serves as a vehicle for AALL and its subgroups to report official association business and exchange information about members, the development of push emails (e.g., “From the Desk of....”), listservs, electronic newsletters, and Web sites make AALL Spectrum a less effective tool for disseminating ephemeral and time sensitive information. By reducing the news content in AALL Spectrum, more space could be devoted to substantive content.

Scope

Some issues of AALL Spectrum focus on particular themes, but most issues contain articles and columns on a wide range of subject matter of interest to law librarians. These articles and columns are shorter and less formal (e.g., footnotes are not used) than those appearing in the Law Library Journal. The rest of AALL Spectrum content consists of news about the activities of various committees, special interest sections, chapters, and members. Several times a year, AALL Spectrum also includes special inserts that cover timely topics and events. A calendar of events, announcements, and notices are also included. Table 1 below provides a detailed list of the current contents of AALL Spectrum.

We recommend publishing most of the news content in AALL Spectrum (marked with asterisks in Table 1) on AALLNET through a “News and Announcements” page where information pertinent to

all members of the Association would be prominently highlighted. Procedures similar to those already employed to gather news for AALL Spectrum (e.g., using member volunteers as news column editors) could continue to be used. To assure accuracy and to produce a consistent editorial style for the news added to AALLNET, the Director of Publications, an AALLNET editor, or someone else at AALL headquarters would need to approve and edit the news that is added to AALLNET. A policy for removing non-current information would also need to be developed. Any news that is removed from AALL Spectrum should be available indefinitely through an electronic archive.

We also recommend that the Association expand its use of email alerts to notify AALL members and others about important news developments that are added to AALLNET. These alerts should provide access to additional information through live links to AALLNET and should go to all Association members (unless they opt out of receiving them). It should be possible for non-members to also subscribe to the alert service. The “From the Desk of...” alerts currently in use could be expanded for this purpose or separate alerts devoted to what is new on AALLNET could be sent. We recommend sending the alerts on a weekly basis to allow rapid distribution of time-sensitive information.

Current Frequency

The AALL Spectrum is currently published monthly, except January and August. This schedule helps to disseminate news on a timely basis, but provides little time for the editor to review and develop content.

We defer to the editor and to the LLJ/AALL Spectrum Editorial Board and Advisory Committee to determine the optimum number of issues to be published per year, but we recommend that fewer than ten issues be published per year. If AALL Spectrum were used less to disseminate time-sensitive news and information, it could publish on a less frequent basis. The extra time between issues would allow the editor to expand educational content and provide more editorial support to authors. Publishing fewer issues might also result in cost savings.

Public Relations Value

Many of the articles, columns, notices, and special inserts in AALL Spectrum assist the Association in promoting its programs and activities to members. These are noted in Table 1 with double asterisks.

As one of only a few serial publications devoted to law librarianship, AALL Spectrum is also an important resource for anyone seeking to monitor current developments in this field. AALL Spectrum helps to enhance awareness of the law library field, increase visibility of law librarians, and attract new professionals to law librarianship. Similarly, AALL Spectrum provides a vehicle for law librarians and the Association to communicate with attorneys, legal academics, government officials, and legal information consumers who can access it electronically free of charge on AALLNET. Such access is facilitated through the indexing provided by Library Literature and Legal Information Management.
We recommend disseminating the table of contents of each issue of AALL Spectrum through law and library related listservs (e.g., LAW-LIB). If possible, the contents should provide links to the individual articles and columns on AALLNET. This will increase awareness of the contents and make specific content readily accessible.

Standard Web search engines (e.g., Google) currently do not provide access to the issues of AALL Spectrum currently available on AALLNET in PDF format. Since Web surfing to find information is used so widely, the AALLNET Advisory Committee and AALL Webmaster should explore the feasibility of making this possible.

AALLNET

Purpose

AALLNET is the official Web site of AALL and its subgroups. It exists to foster the mission and strategic plan of the Association. It is an important tool for conducting association business, promoting law librarianship, and marketing AALL programs, products, and services to members and the world at large.3

Because the Web is increasingly the first and sometimes the only resource that people utilize when seeking information, we recommend that the Association make AALLNET the primary place to locate current, accurate, and comprehensive information about the Association, law libraries, and law librarians. This information should be easy to find through a user-friendly design structure and through popular Web search engines.

Scope

AALLNET is comparable to the Web sites of many other library and professional organizations. It contains a substantial amount of information about the Association’s history, governance, structure, and programs. It also contains information about law librarians and law libraries. Some AALLNET content is also available in separate hard copy publications (e.g., AALL Directory and Handbook, AALL Spectrum, Law Library Journal), but other information is only available on AALLNET (e.g., listserv archives, job database). Table 2 below provides a detailed list of the current contents of AALLNET. Information appearing only on AALLNET is marked with an asterisk.

We recommend retaining the content currently available on AALLNET. The information on

3 See http://www.aallnet.org/about/policy_aallnet.asp for further information.
AALLNET provided by the Association staff is carefully edited, comprehensive, and current. The same is not true of some of the information provided by some of the subgroups of the Association. The pages of the committees, caucuses, and special interest sections, in particular, vary greatly in style, currency, and scope of content. This detracts from the usefulness of AALLNET as a reliable information resource and diminishes its value as a promotional tool. We support the efforts currently in place (e.g., editorial guidelines, training workshops, and assistance from the Webmaster) to help the various groups who contribute quality content to AALLNET. However, mechanisms are not in place to actually control the accuracy, currency, and quality the information on the pages of the various subgroups. We strongly urge the Association to consider creating the position of editor for AALLNET. This person would serve as a filter for new content and would provide oversight to ensure that contributed information is kept up to date.

We also recommend shifting additional information to AALLNET. As noted earlier, we recommend removing some of the news from AALL Spectrum and publishing it exclusively on AALLNET in a “News and Announcements” section. In addition, we recommend creating a separate section of AALLNET to republish official reports of Association business (e.g., Treasurer’s Report) that appear initially in AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal. This would make them more accessible. Although these reports already exist on AALLNET in the PDF versions of AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal, the PDF versions are not searchable. The Law Library Journal on AALLNET includes a table of contents, but the reports are difficult to find without browsing the contents of every issue. Table 3 below provides a list of the contents of AALL Spectrum and Law Library Journal that we recommend moving to AALLNET.

Finally, we recommend adding Executive Board agendas and approved minutes of Executive Board meetings to the "members only" section of AALLNET. These would offer members an important glimpse of the issues facing the Association and insights into the decision-making process of Association leaders.

**Current Public Relations Value**

In today’s world of electronic communication, where nearly everyone searches the Web when seeking information, AALLNET has enormous potential as a public relations tool. It is likely to reach the largest number of individuals worldwide of any AALL publication. It should be viewed as the Association's most important vehicle for interacting not only with members of the profession, but also with anyone, anywhere, seeking information about the law library profession.

Any important information about the Association, its members and programs, and the field of law librarianship should be easily found on the AALLNET. We recommend an audit of AALLNET, to identify information currently residing on it that cannot be found through usual Web searching techniques (e.g., the publications mentioned above).
Law Library Journal

Current Purpose

The Law Library Journal is the premiere scholarly publication covering law librarianship. It provides a forum to both share substantive information on topics relevant to all types of law librarians and pay tribute to the leaders of the profession. The articles selected for publication in Law Library Journal are thoroughly researched and are usually longer and more in-depth than those published in AALL Spectrum. As the official organ of the Association, Law Library Journal also provides a formal record of association business.  

We do not recommend any changes. This publication has stood the test of time as the leading research tool for our profession.

Current Scope

The Law Library Journal provides content that is both theoretical and practical on all aspects of law librarianship. This content has long-lasting research value. The articles differ from those in AALL Spectrum in being longer and having a more formal style (e.g., authorities are documented with footnotes). Table 4 below provides a detailed list of the contents of Law Library Journal.

It has been noted by participants of the online discussion held by this committee that additional content by and for private and state, court, and county law librarians is needed. In addition, the editor indicated at the LLJ/Spectrum Editorial Board and Advisory Committee meeting on 17 October 2004, that more contributions on technical services issues, possibly a regular column, are desirable. We recommend that efforts be made by the Association to encourage more private, state, court, and county law librarians and anyone knowledgeable about technical services to write for publication in the Law Library Journal.

Current Frequency

The Law Library Journal is published quarterly. We do not recommend any change. This schedule appears to work well for the editorial process and there are sufficient submissions for four issues.

4 For further information see http://www.aallnet.org/products/pub_journal.asp.

Current Public Relations Value

Like AALL Spectrum, Law Library Journal offers AALL members a forum to exchange information, develop their careers, and learn about the Association. It also provides a vehicle for law librarians and the Association to communicate with legal professionals and with other library communities. Indexing via Current Law Index (and its electronic equivalents), Index to Legal Periodicals & Books, and several social science databases enhances Law Library Journal's ability to reach legal professionals. Full text electronic versions on Westlaw, LexisNexis, and HeinOnline also increase outreach opportunities with the legal community. Legal Information Management Index, LISA: Library & Information Science Abstracts, and Library Literature, connect library professionals with research about law librarianship.

We recommend continued dissemination of the table of contents for each new issue of the Law Library Journal email alerts to all members and subscribers. If not already being done, we also recommend that email alerts be disseminated on law and library related listservs (e.g., LAW-LIB). The table of contents alerts should contain links to electronically available full texts on AALLNET.

TABLES

Table 1 Current AALL Spectrum Contents by Category of Information

Table 2 Current AALLNET Contents by Category of Information

Table 3 Proposed Additions to AALLNET Contents by Category of Information

Table 4 Law Library Journal Contents

Table 5 AALL Information from All Sources

Table 6 Official AALL Information
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Information</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Articles</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
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<td>Professional Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articles Appearing Annually</td>
<td>Previews of the Annual Meeting, CONELL, etc.**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review of the Annual Meeting **</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Articles on Award Recipients</td>
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<td>Articles on New Architecture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AALL Candidate Bios/Election Information*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Articles</td>
<td>(Often several articles in one issue are related to a particular theme or event.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Columns</td>
<td>Letter from the Editor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chapter News*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Committee News*</td>
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<td>SIS News*</td>
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<td>Membership News*</td>
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<td>From the President **</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasional Columns</td>
<td>From the Treasurer **</td>
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<td>From the Secretary **</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Washington Brief **</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CRIV Notes*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special inserts (occasional)</td>
<td>CRIV Sheet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Members’ Briefing **</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Annual Meeting Guide **</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Special Reports **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>News about various events, meetings, scholarships, grants, elections, membership renewals, dues, nominations, calls for papers, etc.* **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Calendar</td>
<td>Listings of Professional Development Committee columns and articles in the <em>AALL Spectrum.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Notices (occasional)</td>
<td>Brief notices about the death of members *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notices</td>
<td>Various updates and reminders *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classifieds</td>
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<td>Ad Index</td>
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<td>Category of Information</td>
<td>Example</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about Operation/Governance</td>
<td>AALL Financial Plan*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AALL Mission Statement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AALL Strategic Plan</td>
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<td>AALL Bylaws</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AALL Policies/Guidelines/Procedures/Forms</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Board Meeting Agendas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive Board Meeting Minutes (restricted)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive Board Policies/Procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington Affairs Office Information/Link to Web Site</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AALL Staff Bios/Contact Information</td>
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<td>AALL Representatives to Related Organizations</td>
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<td>AALL Election Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about Subgroups</td>
<td>Committee &amp; Task Force Profiles/Web Sites/Listservs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SIS Profiles/Web sites/Listservs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caucus Profiles/Web Sites/Listservs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chapter Profiles/Web Sites/Listservs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consortia Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about Members</td>
<td>Member Contact Information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Member Profiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about Meetings/Events</td>
<td>Annual Meeting Schedule/Registration Information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Meeting Planning Information (e.g., Forms, Policies, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Annual Meeting Exhibitor Information</td>
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<td>Continuing Education Calendar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about AALL Programs</td>
<td>Placement Hotline/Database</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scholarship/Grant Information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Research Fund Information</td>
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<td>Mentoring Program Information</td>
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<td>Professional Development Program Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about Listservs</td>
<td>Listserv Directory*</td>
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<td>Listserv Archives*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listserv Subscriber Information*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listowner Information (Policies, Procedures, etc.)*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2

**CURRENT AALLNET CONTENTS BY CATEGORY OF INFORMATION**

* indicates information only available on AALLNET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Information</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full text Publications</strong></td>
<td>AALL Annual Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Press Releases</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Price Index for Legal Publications (members only)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Guide to Fair Business Practices</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Universal Citation Guide</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Salary Survey (members only)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Law Library Journal</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>AALL Spectrum</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Committee Newsletters (e.g., CRIV Sheet)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SIS Newsletters</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contents Descriptions and Ordering Information for AALL</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resource Guides</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publications/Products</strong></td>
<td><strong>Special Reports (e.g., Beyond Boundaries)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Salary Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Guide to Fair Business Practices</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Annual Meeting Recordings/Handouts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Video Conference Recordings</td>
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<td><strong>Information for Donors, Vendors, and Other Interested</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advertising Information</strong></td>
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<td>** Parties**</td>
<td><strong>Sponsor Information</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Giving Opportunities Brochure</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Membership Brochure</strong></td>
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<td>Category of Information</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instead of publication in <em>AALL Spectrum</em>, create “News and Announcements” page.</strong></td>
<td>Candidate Bios/Election Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disseminate highlights of latest additions via email alerts.</td>
<td>Professional Development Calendar</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scholarship Announcements</td>
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<td>Grant Announcements</td>
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<td>Annual Meeting Announcements</td>
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<td>Committee News</td>
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<td>Member News</td>
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<td>Death Notices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In addition to publication in <em>AALL Spectrum</em>, create separate pages to deposit</strong></td>
<td>Treasurer Reports</td>
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<td><strong>these reports.</strong></td>
<td>Secretary Reports</td>
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<td></td>
<td>President’s Letters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Annual Meeting Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In addition to publication in <em>Law Library Journal</em>, create separate pages to deposit</strong></td>
<td>Annual Treasurer’s Report</td>
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<td><strong>these reports.</strong></td>
<td>Annual Secretary’s Report</td>
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<td>Annual President’s Report</td>
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<td>Annual Washington Affairs Office Report</td>
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<td>Annual Executive Director’s Report</td>
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<td>Annual Business Meeting Proceedings</td>
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<td>Annual Report of Representatives to Other Organizations</td>
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<td>Annual Chapter Report</td>
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<td>Annual Committee/Task Force/Council Report</td>
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