MEMORANDUM

TO: AALL Executive Board

FROM: Annual Meeting Special Committee: Diane Rodriguez, Chair; Jean Wenger, Ron Wheeler, Debbie Rusin, Kate Hagan, and Celeste Smith

DATE: February 9, 2012


The American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting & Conference is the Association's premier event. It is the one time each year that all members of the Association are provided with the opportunity to come together and share in the celebration of our profession. The Annual Meeting is a "living" event that changes over time as do all of our members by way of growth, opportunity, advancement and collaboration. Another important aspect of the Annual Meeting is the revenue it produces in support of other AALL programs and services. So, it is also important for us to analyze the meeting’s economic model to ensure it continues to be viable.

Last year, in an effort to ensure that our premier event continues to support the professional life and growth of our members, AALL hired Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, VCC, to review our Annual Meeting and draft a report. The resulting report: Observations and Recommendations of the American Association of Law Libraries, October 2011, used member ideas and comments as well as conference best practices as the basis for recommending ways to keep our premier event, the Annual Meeting, vital and essential.

After the report was presented to the AALL Executive Board at the Fall 2011 Board Meeting, President Darcy Kirk appointed the Annual Meeting Special Committee, AMSC, to review each of the recommendations, assess their value to AALL, and categorize the recommendations into phases: immediate for the 2012 Boston meeting, next for the 2013 Seattle meeting, and those needing further consideration or a longer time frame to accomplish. Our goal is to improve the Annual Meeting experience and educational outcome for all AALL members.
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The committee met via conference call over eleven times in a 12-week period. Dave Lutz, VCC Managing Director, participated in many of our meetings to review concepts and answer questions. The committee solicited member feedback through the AALLNET Annual Meeting Special Committee Community. The AALLNET AMSC Community attracted 97 member subscribers and received 46 posts including six SIS response reports (Exhibit A). Additionally, a few members contacted AMSC members directly with their comments and questions. The member and SIS comments provided invaluable insight into what members want, need, and desire in their conference experience. The committee also reviewed past reports and articles regarding improvements, recommendations, and changes to the Annual Meeting by prior special committees and members of former AMPCs.

When reviewing the VCC report, the committee identified six major themes within the recommendations. In order for the Annual Meeting to evolve with our members, AALL needs to: (1) review the role of the AMPC, (2) revise the overall schedule of the conference, (3) enhance the content of the conference, (4) provide members with training to learn and utilize adult learning best practices, (5) create and adopt tools using new technologies, and (6) explore new methods of expo and sponsorship sales and service with our vendors.

Some items recommended in the VCC report have already been adopted for the 2012 Annual Meeting. The Boston meeting will offer an Association luncheon on Tuesday including a speaker, presentation of awards, and member recognition. The schedule also includes additional time, or white space, between programs to allow members more time to interact between sessions and digest information. AALL will expand coffee talks, informal roundtable learning opportunities, that started in 2011. In addition, select educational sessions will include roundtable room sets instead of lecture style to encourage interaction and attendee participation. There will be a focus on more intentional learner-centric strategies with the inclusion of a “curated” AMPC education session as well as a technology focused track developed in partnership with ILTA (the International Legal Technology Association). The schedule for 2012 also includes two reserved slots for Hot Topics to be curated closer to the meeting. These will use the intentional development and delivery recommended by VCC. Last year AALL also began the process of aligning AALL committee meetings to a more effective meeting time structure. AALL Committees meet on Saturday from 3-5pm in one hour time blocks and are hosted in close proximity to one another. Also in 2012, SISs have cooperated in eliminating SIS meetings scheduled against AMPC educational programs. AALL will continue to work with SISs on the scheduling of SIS meetings and events to aid in making the Annual Meeting less confusing and more manageable for members. AALL is launching (it is now live) an Annual Meeting website, a microsite of the larger AALLNET, that will be able to embrace the latest technologies and enhancements. AALL will also add a mobile application to the existing online conference scheduler and is exploring the feasibility of a more robust mobile application that includes exhibitor searching and other enhancements as part of a larger strategy.

Because the Annual Meeting is a “living” event, the committee realizes that the recommendations made here are the beginning of a path toward conference improvement. By taking risks, initiating new procedures, and utilizing new tools, we hope to enrich the
educational programs offered, provide more opportunity for professional development, and work toward a more cohesive, unified and engaging experience for all AALL members.

1. Annual Meeting Program Committee (AMPC)

The Annual Meeting is, for many members, the most valuable member service. In addition to providing extensive educational and networking opportunities, the Annual Meeting generates revenues enabling the Association to provide educational programming and other services throughout the year. The committee insists that the Annual Meeting continue to provide educational and networking events for law librarians from all types of libraries and performing all kinds of professional functions. However, the committee also recognizes that to grow the membership base and develop brand loyalty, the Association cannot lose sight of certain growth segments of our membership base. Finding ways of attracting these segments will help ensure a financially robust Annual Meeting enabling the Association to expand services to all sectors of the profession.

The committee agrees that all conference programming needs to align with the major issues facing law librarians. The AMPC should determine, with member and leadership input, what these challenges are and seek programming offering solutions. The narrative of these main ideas and issues can provide context and allow for semantic threading of education programming whether through tracks or other strategies. The AMPC needs to actively identify topics that reflect members’ needs and that support our strategic directions of leadership, education, and advocacy and other priorities of the profession.

The committee agrees that the AMPC should transition into a strategic committee, not only recommending topics and identifying issues but also helping to develop program ideas into high quality, learner-centric education. The AMPC needs to articulate new expectations and provide guidance for proposers to develop program objectives and descriptions in alignment with the strategic themes.

The committee agrees that conference education needs to differentiate itself by focusing on attendee learning. AALL’s goal should be to offer higher-level education beyond just access to the most current information. Programming needs to be learner-centric offering a variety of adult learning techniques including hands-on and interactive experiences. The education must be worthy of members’ time and investment and can be readily implemented in their work environment. Such changes as part of our educational continuum will provide a higher return for attendees and their employers.

The committee agrees that the traditional Call for Proposal process does not produce the most beneficial attendee learning experience. The committee likes the concept of the AMPC becoming an intentional curator offering strategic advice. This approach would be an evolutionary process, phased in over several Annual Meetings.
The committee recognizes that the AMPC needs training to understand appropriate content creation, presentation skills, and adult learning techniques. The committee acknowledges that to position the AMPC to fully implement these changes the charge, membership, and structure of the AMPC will need review and potential revision going forward.

AALL staff performs many functions in support of the Annual Meeting. The committee agrees that all planning procedures and deadlines need to be reviewed and retained, revised or eliminated based on their benefit to the conference attendee. The committee also agrees with the discontinuation of the program proposal binder. The committee likes the use of a blind review process whereby AMPC members only see the program title, description, and learning objectives.

**Audience**

**Recommendation:** That AALL measures and tracks loyal attendees by individual and institution to gage retention and loyalty metrics.
Completion goal: 2013

**AALL strategic directions & Annual Meeting goals**

**Recommendation:** That the AMPC determines, with member and leadership input, the major issues and challenges facing members and aligns conference content with these big strategic issues.
Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

**Transitioning AMPC to a strategic committee**

**Recommendation:** That the AMPC, with staff, articulate new expectations and provides guidance for proposers to develop program objectives and descriptions in alignment with the major strategic issues identified.
Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

**Recommendation:** That the AMPC charge be reviewed and revised to reflect the strategic responsibilities demanded by the future direction of conference education.
Completion goal: 2013

**Reevaluate conference programming**

**Recommendation:** That the AALL staff review the entire conference planning process, evaluating each activity, and redesigning or eliminating as necessary. AALL staff works in conjunction with the AMPC to realign educational programming activities.
Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

**Recommendation:** That the AMPC employs a blind review process in which AMPC members see only the program title, description, and learning objectives.
Completion goal: 2013

**Transition to curatorial role**
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**Recommendation:** That the AMPC expand the number of intentionally curated programs over the next few years. To that end, AMPC develops requisite processes and procedures. Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing.

2. **Scheduling**

The committee agrees that the scheduling of Annual Meeting programming, committee meetings, and SIS meetings creates a chaotic, confusing, and sometimes stressful experience full of conflicts for our members. Finding ways to schedule all programming that will maximize members’ ability to attend more and get the maximum amount of professional education is paramount. The committee also agrees that focusing programming on particular topics of interest or on professional questions to be answered is desirable.

The committee disagrees with the implication that certain SISs should be treated differently or given priority over others with regard to programming. Focusing on problems, hot topics, and themes is a way to find educational content that transcends SIS affiliation. The committee does agree that working with SISs on the scheduling of SIS meetings and events will aid in making the Annual Meeting less confusing and more manageable for members. The committee agrees with members’ comments that quality programming is paramount. The AMPC needs to seek ways to ensure quality programming while managing scheduling concerns.

The committee disagrees with the notion that SIS programming should be moved to a separate conference. The committee, instead, feels that AALL can work with SISs to find creative ways to provide relevant programming that speaks to the needs of the SISs and affords SISs a role in choosing programming.

The committee agrees that a greater portion of Annual Meeting programming should not be chosen until closer to the Annual Meeting. More hot topics will insure relevant and cutting-edged programming that will speak, in a timely way, to the current needs of members. The committee also agrees that programming should include more small-group discussions and that the coffee talk format is a great way to achieve that goal.

**Role of SISs, Committees, Chapters, and Caucuses**

**Recommendation:** That the SISs, Committees, Chapters, and Caucuses’ work be scheduled in a way that maximizes members’ opportunities for involvement while minimizing conflicts.

Possible strategies to be explored include:

- Helping SISs to adopt the approach to scheduling employed by the RIPS-SIS which holds its business and other meetings in one large room simultaneously thereby maximizing attendance and interactivity.
- Scheduling all SIS meetings on a discrete day or at a discrete time earmarked just for SISs
- Creating a leadership academy for SIS/Chapter/AALL Committee leadership training focusing on the soft skills of leadership and moving review of AALL policies to a webinar or other information vehicle.
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Completion goal: 2013

**SIS programming**

**Recommendation:** That programming specific to particular SIS interests be incorporated into the Annual Meeting and held to the same standards and requirements as AMPC programming including the same descriptive information, evaluation process, and video/audio recording. All non-AMPC programming will bear any associated costs.

Completion goal: 2013

**Postponing some program selection for relevance**

**Recommendation:** That a greater portion of programming be reserved by the AMPC and not scheduled until 6 to 12 weeks before the Annual Meeting. This could mean creating more hot topic slots, reserving hot topic slots for particular problems or issues, or calling on SISs to create hot topic programming around issues or problems identified by the AMPC or indicated by the AALL Strategic Directions. All programming must meet deadlines set by the AMPC.

Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

**More small-group discussion**

**Recommendation:** That the Annual Meeting Program Committee incorporate opportunities for more interpersonal interaction and small group discussion in all AALL programming and activities. Steps toward achieving this goal should be taken in 2012.

Completion goal: 2013

**New Schedule**

**Recommendation:** That the Executive Board and the AMPC, in collaboration with staff, completely revise the Annual Meeting program scheduling. The AMPC determines the final schedule including slotting of all educational programs (AMPC and SIS) and the total number of programs offered in any time slot. Scheduling should accommodate time for interactive learning and member participation, and more small-group discussion.

Completion goal: 2013

3. **Conference Content**

The committee agrees that adopting additional educational recommendations and conference content will add value for all members before, during, and after the conference. While the Annual Meeting is the premier educational event in our Association year, it is also the hub of a continuing dialog that begins before, and continues long after, the July meeting. Enhancing the programs and presentations and expanding the learning experience beyond the conference will keep this educational experience timely and critical.

The committee agrees that extended learning will enhance the Annual Meeting experience for both member attendees and non-attendees. Program planners can create a buzz with pre-conference and follow-up pieces to extend value before and after the conference. The conference website can be utilized as a tool to post ideas, questions, written materials and
discussions among presenters and members. An Annual Meeting Community can be created on AALLNET to facilitate discussion about programs and issues between presenters and members. These tools are available to all members, regardless of attendance, enabling members to prepare for a more fruitful experience and keep the discussions going as we try to resolve problems and issues addressed in the programs.

The committee agrees that AMPC should tap into the excellent talent available in local areas to keep costs down and expand our presenter pool to bring in fresh ideas and presentations. We need to look at external speakers, both non-members and non-core members such as judges and other legal industry professionals. We need to seek out and establish relationships with entities such as local AALL Chapters, local social media clubs, National Speakers Association chapters, and train our members that there are more options than our immediate membership pool. The AMPC can make these suggestions beginning with the 2012 conference and going forward.

The committee agrees that technology should be utilized to make it easier for past attendees to register. AALL staff will investigate the feasibility of implementing pre-populated registration information for past attendees for 2012, but this may not be possible until 2013. The committee also agrees that AALL should supply new registrants with more information about the conference to increase interest and justify attendance. Many associations are providing registrants with tools to identify programs for particular interests and job types, tools to identify which colleagues will attend, and updates on new conference developments to generate a buzz. AALL staff estimates this technology will be available for implementation in 2013.

Extended Learning

**Recommendation:** That the AMPC investigate and implement ways to extend learning beyond the annual conference using tools such as the conference website, articles in AALL publications, AALLNET Communities, etc.
Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

Local Speaker Pools

**Recommendation:** That AMPC investigate local speaker pools in the Annual Meeting location such as local AALL Chapters, local social media clubs, and National Speakers Association chapters and educate program planners about these sources.
Completion goal: 2013

Registrants

**Recommendation:** That AALL staff look into making registration for past registrants easier by using pre-populated fields and enhance registration for all users by investigating social tools to promote conference buy-in and create a buzz.
Completion goal: 2013
4. Adult Learning Best Practices

The committee agrees that AALL should adopt learning best practices and learner-centric strategies that go beyond information transfer in order to differentiate the conference experience. This process should include, but not be limited to, content “chunking” (focused content time with time to digest content). Current adult learning strategies incorporate this focused approach to increase content retention. Learner-centric strategies engage learners in a way that will positively affect job performance. AALL has already begun the process of adopting more learner-centric strategies for the 2012 meeting including experimenting with different room sets, new program development and delivery strategies including curated content (via AMPC) and content collaboration through a partnership with ILTA. The education schedule for 2012 also reflects the addition of adult learning “white space”. This is time between sessions to process session content and share ideas with colleagues post session.

The committee supports the recommendation to reduce the amount of presenter or panel monologues in favor of those that use good adult learning practices including audience engagement and peer sharing. This change is to include improved speaker delivery strategies and audience engagement techniques that will enhance the value of the learning experience. Engaging learners in a valuable session experience will promote increased overall satisfaction. Recognizing that some panels offer value, presenters will need to use learner-centric engagement as a strategy to keep the learner at the forefront. This may require presenter training in adult learning practices. This may also require other changes in room set-up to remove barriers between attendees and presenters, such as tables, and encourage presenters to walk out from behind the podium. At the 2012 meeting, AALL will start this process with a few sessions and begin a more intentional process with the 2013 meeting.

The committee supports the recommendation to invest in presenter training and helping speakers improve their presentations skills. This is paramount to create a good conference experience and to prepare members to lead a group of learners effectively and confidently. This item requires planning and funding. The AMPC and AALL staff will need to examine presenter evaluation data and other presenter information to determine appropriate action for consistently high scoring speaker presentations (assist with peer coaching) and consistently low scoring speaker presentations (speaker improvement). The committee agrees that presenter training, and content development and delivery go to hand in hand. Presenters need to take personal action to improve their skills and AALL will help facilitate this through offering speaker training and coaching (through webinars, articles, and peer coaching).

The committee supports a more comprehensive evaluation process that takes into consideration the impact of the learning experience on job performance. We currently assess learning at the first level of evaluation, reaction to the session (i.e. “smile sheet”). Smile sheets assess how well learners liked the session. There are four levels of assessment and the fourth level assesses business impact (increased productivity, improved work product, etc). The committee supports the ongoing evaluation of the conference experience to determine if the experience improves performance. This process will need to include an examination of the
current evaluation process (questions, types, number of questions, follow-up, etc). AALL will need to examine the process carefully in tandem with changes in learner-centric strategies. The committee supports strategies that will increase return rates, increase ease of use and continue to provide useful long term data to assess overall conference satisfaction.

**Adult learning best practices**
**Recommendation:** The AMPC and AALL staff will look at the present structure and begin to incorporate current adult learning and audience engagement practices that will include reducing monologues, increasing audience engagement and peer sharing.
Completion goal: 2013 and beyond

**Adopt learner-centric education strategies**
**Recommendation:** The AMPC and AALL staff will work in collaboration to create a strategic initiative to explore and adopt specific learner-centric education strategies and revise content development strategies for the 2013 meeting and promote continuous improvement over time. These strategies will need to be incorporated across AALL and include AALL entities that sponsor education during the conference.
Completion goal: 2013 and beyond

**Investing in presenter training**
**Recommendation:** Funding should be allocated to begin training for AMPC members in adult learning practices and learner-centric program strategies. Funding should also be allocated for training member speakers interested in improving their skills in this area.
Completion goal: 2013 and beyond

**Comprehensive evaluation process**
**Recommendation:** That the Association adopt a more uniform, comprehensive, and transparent evaluation process for review and acceptance of conference programming as well as for the evaluation of conference programming. This would allow for the unbiased presentation and evaluation of education programming. This would be required for all education programs presented at the Annual Meeting.
Completion goal: 2013

**Equal program evaluations**
**Recommendation:** That those entities who present non-AMPC education programs at the Annual Meeting be responsible for the cost of their program evaluations.
Completion goal: 2013

5. **Tools**

The committee agrees that the Annual Meeting website needs continuous review and to incorporate some of the latest technologies to ensure that it is of more value and use to all of our membership. The website needs to become a tool that members can use to showcase the
value of the Association in order to secure support for their attendance at the Annual Meeting from their respective employer.

The committee agrees that the Final Program needs to be more user friendly. The committee also agrees that all programming should incorporate the same information in its listing and not differentiate in how it treats or displays one program listing from a different type of program listing (e.g. AMPC vs. SIS). To the new conference attendee, this differentiation is confusing and doesn’t make much sense.

The committee disagrees that we should discontinue the daily conference paper and instead embrace blogs and mobile apps. While the committee agrees that we do need to embrace blogs and mobile apps, the daily paper is currently a revenue generator and the committee does not believe that we should discontinue its publication at this time.

The committee agrees that AALL should embrace and implement mobile apps which would enable attendees to download conference calendars into their smart devices and have a mobile website of the conference to take with them on the go.

The committee agrees that we need to capture content as it is happening to bring the conference experience to more members and those who cannot attend the conference in person. Questions remain as to whether this captured content should be free or offered for a fee to members. As there is the possibility that with captured content we may lose attendance numbers at the Annual Meeting, we may wish to consider “attendance light,” a smaller registration fee to participate at the Annual Conference at a distance and with select sessions.

The committee agrees that the “posters” should be made available through a link on the AALLNET website for viewing and discussion after or outside of the Annual Meeting.

**Meeting website & final program**

**Recommendation:** That all Annual Meeting conference materials be enhanced to allow for a more user friendly format. That AALL Staff will look into adding more features to the Annual Meeting website, including but not limited to, searchable online conference materials including the final program, the ability to conduct an exhibitor search, and items such as the ability to add personal appointments to “my calendar” as the technology becomes available.

Completion goal: 2012

**Daily paper**

**Recommendation:** That AALL revisit the possibility of discontinuing the Annual Meeting Daily Paper after the 2013 Annual Meeting. Currently the daily paper generates annual revenue.

Completion goal: 2014

**Content capture**

**Recommendation:** That the Association implement tools (e.g. mobile apps, live streaming/recording) that will allow the full spectrum of the Annual Meeting’s generations to
enjoy their conference experience regardless of age and/or experience. It is also recommended that the Association secure volunteer bloggers and tweeters who can share their “live” conference experience with fellow conference attendees and colleagues back home. Completion goal: 2013 and ongoing

Posters Online
Recommendation: That poster presenters add their own QR code and encourage that they provide AALL with a link to post on AALLNET. Completion goal: 2012

6. Sales Structure – Exhibit Booth, Advertising and Sponsorships

The committee agrees that current sales efforts are organized around products and that taking a more integrated, concierge approach would provide more positive results for both suppliers and AALL. The committee also agreed that AALL should deploy sales resources (exhibits, advertising and sponsorship) based on the customer, not the product.

The committee was also in agreement with the report’s recommendation that we provide more information and coaching to our exhibitors about how to optimize their investment and conference experience, both pre and post conference.

Sales Efforts Program
Recommendation: That staff work to develop a comprehensive program to optimize current sales efforts (exhibits, advertising and sponsorship) based on customer needs. As part of this process, staff will work to identify a consultant who can help define and develop a sponsorship program that is aligned with exhibit booth and advertising sales. Completion goal: 2013.

Sales and Service Approach – Customized Approach
Recommendation: That staff works to develop a customized approach, based on exhibitor needs, to help them meet their goals and expectations as exhibitors. Completion goal: 2013

Virtual Booth Packages, including Virtual Booth Demonstrations
Recommendation: That staff investigate the development of this capability, including cost/revenue projections and make a recommendation to the Executive Board regarding its implementation. Completion goal: 2014

Exhibitors and Affiliates to Help Promote the Annual Meeting
Recommendation: That staff work to develop a marketing partnership with exhibitors and affiliate groups to help market the Annual Meeting and secure additional attendees. Completion goal: 2014
New Registration Provider
Recommendation: That staff develop an RFP for registration services when the current contract expires, to ensure we are getting the best service and price for Annual Meeting registration.
Completion goal: 2014

Exhibitor Lead Retrieval Solution
Recommendation: That staff work with the Annual Meeting exhibitors to address their concerns regarding the current lead retrieval system and make any appropriate changes to meet their needs in this area.
Completion goal: 2013
Exhibit A. AALLNET AMSC Community SIS Responses
### Post New Message

The last message(s) which were posted to this eGroup

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46. VCC Report Comment
   Pamela Deemer

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**Next**

1. Presentation Skills

   From:  Mark Estes
   To:  Annual Meeting Special Committee
   Posted:  01-18-2012 19:40
   Subject:  Presentation Skills

   Message:
   the ABA Journal column, McElhaney on Litigation always has some good tips.  The current should resonate with law librarians too:  when we talk with lawyers they expect us to talk like them and they judge us based on our confidence and presentation skills - skills we want AALL members to master.  See the current article: http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/more_than_just_words_this_is_what_it_really_means_to_talk_like_a_lawyer/ for another collection of excellent tips.
   -Mark

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**Previous**

2. Response to the VCC Report

   From:  Janice Henderson
   To:  Annual Meeting Special Committee
   Posted:  01-18-2012 17:08
   Subject:  Response to the VCC Report

   Message:
   This message has been cross posted to the following Discussions: Private Law Libraries SIS and Annual Meeting Special Committee -

   I was a member of the AMPC committee for the 2002 Orlando Convention under the leadership of Victoria Trotta.  The ideas that are stated in the report reflect the format of that convention.  Each day began with a plenary session that discussed either a management or technology topic (there were 3 plenary sessions).  After that, the sessions under that plenary/track for the remaining day were similar to that general topic.  The idea was that all of the attendees would attend the plenary or general session with a guest speaker and then go to smaller group sessions to discuss issues under that topic.  The SISs and other members were asked to create sessions under the three plenary topics that would be appropriate for their individual members.  This setup eliminated the political atmosphere of how many programs were approved for each SIS.  A fuller description of the convention can be found in AALL Spectrum, Vol. 6 no. 9 (June 2002): http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/spectrum/Archives/Vol-6/pub_s p0206/pub-sp0206.pdf.
I thought this was a great idea. Because it brought everyone together each morning and then gave practical information that could be brought back to your employer with the more specific-oriented group sessions.

Looks like we should look at what was done for the 2002 convention and use it for future conventions.

Janice E. Henderson
janicehenderson@att.net

The CS-SIS board finds a number of positive and desirable recommendations in the report. In particular, we support:

- Differentiation of AALL education offerings from other events
- More interactivity in educational sessions, and fewer talking heads
- Later deadlines for at least a portion of the program to allow for better relevance
- More training for presenters

However, with this, we are concerned about the report’s hostility towards SIS independence and programming, because CS-SIS has been leading exactly the sorts of changes recommended by VCC. Our interactive, non-traditional programming includes:

- The Cool Tools Café, which alternates between making the AMPC program and being sponsored by CS-SIS. Cool Tools Café began as an informal gadget showcase in 2007.
- The Lawberry Camp unconference since 2009.
- Battledecks, run as part of Lawberry Camp or the AMPC program since 2009.
- Outside of the annual meeting, CS-SIS sponsored and ran the online, self-directed Web 2.0 Challenge learning program in 2008 and 2009.

Our programming has strong attendance and is well-reviewed, with attendees commenting that they “learned more at this than any other session” and 100% of reviewers indicating that they would like more programming like it at future conferences.

We are concerned that limiting the role of SISes to merely online communities will inhibit exactly the sort of innovation that has been recommended. Many of AALL’s most successful programs began as non-AMPC programming. If such programming is restricted in the future, a valuable opportunity for experimentation and innovation will be lost, to the detriment of the greater good of AALL.

In addition to already innovative educational sessions, CS-SIS members have been among those voicing calls for some of the changes that VCC has recommended. See, for example:

- Tom Boone, Three suggestions for improving AALL program selection (crowdsourcing/voting on some of the program)
- Jason Eisenman, A defense of AALL (sort of) (crowdsourcing, interactive sessions)
- Meg Kribble, AALL Annual Meetings: But Is It Generative? (crowdsourcing, interactive sessions, later deadlines)

We are concerned that the small Annual Meeting Special Committee does not have any representation from CS-SIS, nor indeed from any members of less than 10 years experience. Further, limiting the role of SISes will also limit the opportunities for AALL membership to learn and practice leadership skills in smaller venues before, for example, serving on the Executive Board.

We look forward to the ongoing conversation about the annual meeting and thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Meg
CS-SIS Chair

Janice E. Henderson
janicehenderson@att.net

Subject: Annual meeting comments
Posted: 01-18-2012 16:52
From: Ann Fessenden
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee

Several days ago I offered some historic background on the annual meeting. Now I would like to offer a few personal comments:

Program selection, content, quality etc.

- I think the proposal to make AMPC “more strategic” is well worth exploring. Under our current system the quality of the programs AMPC selects can only be as good as the program proposals that are submitted. Soliciting programs on particular topics and developing tracks makes sense. So does selecting more of the programs closer to conference time in order to ensure they are timely. I agree that more participatory programs would be preferable for most (though not necessarily all) topics. I also think there could be more focus on quality rather than quantity. Selecting good speakers is always a challenge. Perhaps the speakers should be asked to submit videos of previous presentations to demonstrate their skills. Greater efforts...
should be made to partner with chapters and to use the many excellent local/regional chapter programs to "feed" the national conference.

On the other hand, I am deeply concerned about the report's suggestion to focus programming on the needs of the largest groups. AALL's strategic vision states that it is "the national professional organization for all law librarians." This cannot be true if the educational needs of smaller or more specialized groups are ignored. Balancing programming between "something for everyone" versus meeting specialized needs is a constant battle, but worth the effort. Since the SISs were given more programming freedom, I think they have done an excellent job of providing that balance. I personally have not found their programming to be in any way inferior to the AMPC-selected programs. There are good and bad examples of each. When the Board looked at this issue in 2005, we found that most comparable organizations had all or most of their programming developed by "sections" or "divisions." The freedom AALL now gives the SISs is really minimal in comparison.

Conference length and scheduling

- There is no doubt that the conference is exhausting and that there are lots of choices to be made. When it was longer it was more - not less - exhausting! Lengthening will make travel more expensive, which will make it more difficult for many people to attend. A more deliberative program selection process could go a long way towards eliminating the conflicts. If there still seems to be too much conflict between programs and committee or SIS work, AALL could consider something like the "mid-winter" model used by ALA, with much of the Association business conducted at a separate time. However I am concerned about the time and costs involved in this model and also the need for Association entities to run on a different annual schedule than the conference.

I definitely agree with the suggestion to reinstate the "opening luncheon" or similar event. Finding appropriate times to honor award winners has been a tremendous challenge ever since the luncheon was discontinued. We need to come together as an organization and celebrate the accomplishments of our members and see ourselves as a community. I also think it is important to celebrate our Association's milestones in a dignified environment. Last year's gavel-organization and celebrate the accomplishments of our members and see ourselves as a community. I also think it is important to celebrate our Association's milestones in a dignified environment. Last year's gavel-passing at the exhibit hall did not provide such an environment. This needs to be done at either the business meeting or the luncheon, even if it means that the new president takes over one day early. (We do that at MAALL with no problems, with the incoming/outgoing presidents cooperating on the remaining events.)

Role of the SISs

- I fully agree with everyone who has noted that the report misunderstands the role that SISs play in our organization. They are not polarizing political groups. They are vital organizations that provide a "home" for overwhelmed new members, a training ground for leaders, and a source for excellent programming. If AALL is to be the organization for all law librarians, then the SISs need to be honored and recognized for the invaluable roles they play.

An observation

I have followed my colleague's comments for the past few weeks and had hoped that someone would mention something that I think the consultants missed.

The Association has two types of SIS's - library type: Academic, Private and State, Court, County (SCCLL) and it has what I refer to as the subject type or true special interest type SIS. I did not see anywhere in the report where this was discussed and I believe it is important. The SCCLLL SIS section did not rank among the top 4 SISs by the consultants. Among the library type SIS's we have the fewest members - less than 500. Yet, programming for our members in our type libraries is important; we serve a larger and broader constituency than the other two library type SIS's.

I have always had a vision for programming for the library type SIS's at the annual meeting and it is - that the first day of the annual meeting, each of the three groups has a half day to hold their business meetings and a program or programs that are relevant to their library type. This would be followed by a luncheon or luncheons with attendance being optional, i.e. a ticketed event (for example, Academic Directors, Academic Middle Managers, etc.) or for SCCLL, State law librarians, County Law Librarians, Court Librarians, Membership Law Libraries, etc.). This would provide for some continuity in programming for this type SIS. Perhaps the afternoon of the first day could then follow a similar schedule for the true special interest topical SIS's.

This would then leave two days that could be devoted to programs that have outside speakers, that would attract a broad audience and programs that get us thinking about the future - programs that stimulate critical thinking, programs that challenge us as professionals. I imagine we could also have some SIS type programs scattered within the mix. I do think that quality rather than quantity should be more important. However, I recognize that the Association will never be able to please every member.

There are many topics addressed in the report that I agree with, especially interactive programming. I am weary of the panel presentations and I will be participating on one at this year's meeting. I agree with Carol's comments regarding having a speaker workshop during the first few days of the meeting - it's too late then. Do it, but do it another way and well in advance of the meeting. I also agree that the date for program submissions needs to be moved back. I also hope that the AMPC will allow us to do away with "participants shall..." We are adults after all. I also support moving the time of the meeting away from July. I also like the idea of a lunch time event where award winners are recognized. I have never liked doing it in the exhibit hall as these award winners deserved more.

I thought that the PLL Response was great and on point. I am also a member of PLL because they are my library's customers. The Tech Services SIS's response was also great. I know that these librarians work behind the scenes but what they do to organize information is phenomenal. I have read the OBS (great comments) and I am sure that others will be submitted by the deadline. I fully support the SCCLL response except for the daily paper.

Another topic that was not discussed but I think I read in a Spectrum article or in a blog and that is that some of our younger members are not comfortable with annual meetings. I am attending AALL annual meetings since 1981 and find them a valuable venue for networking and expanding my knowledge base but I am a member of a different generation and our learning style is different. I do remember when we did not have 7 a.m. meetings and members were not basically run from morning to p.m. programs to conferences to tours. We did at one time have kinder and gentler annual meetings. I learned a lot from the programs, met leaders in the profession who would serve as mentors, and made time to visit with vendors. Maybe we can find a balance as a result of this report.

I appreciate the Association's Executive Board engaging VCS to study our Annual Meeting and look forward to reading the report.
6. Some final thoughts

From: Carol Bredemeyer
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-18-2012 14:09
Subject: Some final thoughts

Message:

After reading all the postings that have been made in the last couple of days, I have some final thoughts.

More interactive programming probably means that audio recordings of those types of programs will be less meaningful, but if they are live streamed and archived members can watch them when they return home. That should figure into which programs are selected for streaming.

Much of our leadership came up through the SISs. It has been the vehicle for many of our younger members to get started in association activity. On last year's AALL Executive Board, there was only one member whose rise to the Board was not primarily through SISs. It would be my guess that many of our members come to the meeting because of SIS meetings and programming. SISs have helped many of our members find a place in AALL.

One of the comments suggested a "speakers' academy" prior to the start of the annual meeting. I say that is too late - very few people would rework their presentation at that point. All of our members need good presentation skills - and not just for AALL programs. We need them for teaching and training as well as making presentations to practice groups, management and executive committees and library boards. This is an area where Celeste can help us identify speakers.

VCC had some very good suggestions in their report. I just think they got the SIS part wrong.

Ismael Gullon
TS-SIS Chair
Bess Reynolds
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This message has been cross posted to the following Discussions: Council of SIS Chairs and Annual Meeting Special Committee.

Please find attached the formal response of the State, Court, and Count SIS’s Executive Board to the Velvet Chainsaw Consulting (VCC) report on the AALL Annual Meeting. This is being cross-posted to the Council of SIS Chairs and will also be posted to the SCCLL listserv.

Thanks,

Amy Hale-Janeke
SCCLL-SIS Chair, 2011-2012

I have been going to annual meetings for almost 40 years now. The first one I attended was in 1973 in Seattle and there were about 750 attendees. How times have changed from that small meeting where you could meet a lot of people and see them in passing during the four days. Now it is hard to find people you know unless you plan to meet them ahead of time. A lot more has been packed into the annual meeting and it has been shortened so for many it is a frenetic time. My first 20 years I went annually (when I was an academic). When I moved to the corporate / law firm world, I was not able to go as often mainly due to time constraints and to funding. As I progressed in my career the educational offerings were less relevant and the Exhibits and networking were more important. I have gone every 3-4 years during the last decade partly due to funding and partly due to ennui about it all. I must say...
that the last annual meeting I attended in Philadelphia had the best educational programs - I was either better at selecting them or programming has improved.

1. I like the consultants idea to bring back an all-attendee luncheon. I thought it was nice at the beginning of the meeting. I must confess I haven’t attended a business meeting in years so have missed the more recent presentation of awards. We used to have it at the final banquet but people would get restless near the end. I think having one sit down food event to bring everyone together and highlight those who have won awards is excellent. It gives a feeling of being in a large community. Some SIS groups used to try to sit together at those events. Others (myself included) would sit at a table with people we didn’t know to meet new colleagues.

1. I have some comments about the consultants’ ideas re: presentations. I agree that talking heads or panels can be deadly if the speakers are not good or cannot be heard. However, if they are good and they are experts in an area about which I know little, I think a panel of 3 or more is beneficial. I attended two at the last AALL that were very interesting to me-Friending the Court (F-3) and E-books (I-3). The speakers kept my attention and I learned more about the topic than I knew earlier. I’m not sure how a non-lecture session would have improved my learning. I admit I have not studied adult education theory, so there might be ways it could have been incorporated but my goal was to get more information about the topics.

1. I need to have a non-lecture presentation be relevant and helpful to me. Sometimes I feel they waste my time. I’m thinking of role playing or motivational speakers who want the attendees to partner up and do some task which is often not that helpful. I want the facts and I know how to apply them to my situation, thank you very much! Speakers who welcome questions during a program can be very good. I do benefit from the questions of others in the audience or to being able to interact with the speaker. This type of interactive learning is beneficial to me. I can hear the consultant reading this and saying, she’s old and that’s how she has learned so she’s not "comfortable" with non-lecture setting. Well, I’m fine with it if it benefits me but in the past that has not always been the outcome.

1. A smaller group setting is good for non-panel or two-way speaker interaction. Again, I’m not sure what the consultant had in mind as a solution to talking heads but I think it needs to be in smaller groups.

1. In 2008 I was a presenter. I was only given 45 minutes and there were two speakers in the program. It was also a webinar and the connection was not ready on time so I had to rush through the material-though I had pared it down and had no time for questions. The topic would have been good for a question/answer/information & tips sharing segment but there was no time. The next panel was breathing down our necks as soon as the time was over. I think giving programs enough time is important even if it means having fewer ones. And it is also good to have enough time to walk from one session to another without racing.

1. Yes, I agree that the deadline for annual meeting programs should be moved back a few months so people have time after the recent annual meeting to reflect on what would be good for the next one.

1. Under Conference Goals and Audience there is discussion of the number of repeat attendees and how these metrics should be tracked. Under the current economy I don’t think that is a good measure. I know people who would love to go but have no funding. I would not want them to be underrepresented because at this point in time they cannot afford to attend.

1. I think the comments about SIS programming is wrong. I frankly don’t care who puts on a program as long as it is good. I attended two SIS programs (I had to look at the 2011 schedule to figure out that they were SIS sponsored) and both were excellent. I was not a member of either of the sponsoring SIS’s but they were useful to me. I think that the SIS programming could be moved to one day but certainly not eliminated or put in a second conference! Both of these programs were in smaller rooms too so the audience could easily interact with the speakers and we did.

I hope these comments from a long-time member are helpful. I have enjoyed my attendance at annual meetings for different reasons over the years - education, networking, presenting programs and participating in national committees and SIS activities. Before e-mail this was essential to feeling connected to the law librarian community outside of one’s local areas. A lot of networking can be done virtually now, but it is still valuable to meet people face to face and have shared educational experiences at an annual event. Our profession is known for collaboration and sharing information and the ties that are made at annual meetings certainly enhance the ability to connect with others.

I look forward to reading your Committee’s report.
From: Eric Parker  
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee  
Posted: 01-18-2012 12:33  
Subject: Government Documents SIS response to VCC annual meeting report  
Attachment(s): Government Documents SIS response...  
Message:  
This message has been cross posted to the following Discussions: Government Documents SIS and Annual Meeting Special Committee.  

Please find attached the response of the Government Documents SIS Executive Board to the Velvet Chainsaw Consulting report on the AALL Annual Meeting.  

Thank you,  
Eric Parker  
GD-SIS Chair, 2011/2012  

Eric Parker  
Acquisitions Librarian and Coordinator of Library Metadata Services  
Northwestern University School of Law  
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Per Diane Rodriguez's request, I am posting the OBS SIS response.  

OBS SIS response to Velvet Chainsaw's consultant's report  

OBS is concerned with the general tone and conclusions of the consultant's report because we feel that the consultants have misunderstood the basic relationship between the SISs and AALL in general, they are unclear about the function of SIS programming, and they do not understand enough about library processes to be able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the SIS structure. Reading the report closely, it seems that the consultants see the annual conference as a money making activity, where attendees will visit the vendors in the exhibits area and purchase goods and services, and vendors will pay AALL good sums to have this access. We do not think that this is the reason for the AALL annual conference; many of us see it as our way to participate in continuing education and meet with colleagues in peer libraries to discuss common problems and solutions.  

Librarians are not a homologous group; there are many different functions that a library needs to support its mission, and many librarians...
have different specializations and areas of responsibility. A reference librarian in an academic library often has more duties in common with a reference librarian from a firm or business librarian than the technical services librarians in the same academic library. Similarly, most technical services librarians, regardless of what kind of library they are from, use the same resource for identifying and cataloging materials (OCLC), follow the same rules for cataloging, and need to address similar user needs when negotiating licensing agreements and contracts for online resources. To speak of "academic" librarians as if they were all the same is naïve. One size will not fit all and one program will not serve all.

We are also concerned that technical services does not have a "home" in any of the groups the consultants identify. Research Instruction and Patron Services (group 3) includes librarians from both Academic libraries (group 1) and Private libraries (group 2). Computing Services (group 4) does include some technical services librarians, but librarians who use the technology are not necessarily the same ones who manage the technology, and each has different needs. If AALL follows the consultants' recommendations regarding which group to focus their attention on, technical services librarians will again be underserved by our annual conference.

Past conferences have had far fewer programs aimed at technical services librarians, who complained that they didn't have enough programming to justify their attendance at the conference. Past rules of AMPC dictated that the programs they sponsored (assumed to be AALL programs in the report) be of interest to a large section of conference attendees but "general interest" was often used to deny support for "narrowly focused" technical services programs. Many members of the OBS and TS SISs remember the difficulties of getting our educational needs met. The Anaheim annual conference in 1998 and the Minneapolis annual conference in 2001 were mentioned by several members as conferences with almost no technical services programs.

The suggestion that AALL have more keynote and general sessions is a step backwards for technical service librarians, as these sessions are not useful enough to our members and often skipped. Plenary sessions, often the "feel-good" type of programs mentioned in the report, are very difficult for technical services librarians to justify to our library directors or firm managers. And how can the AALL annual conference include "more keynote and general sessions"[1] and also meet their assessment that "participants want sessions that include advanced content that is narrower in focus..."[2] at the same time? These are contradictory statements.

The suggestion that the SIS educational programs be moved to another conference or be made pre-conference programs is impossible. It is difficult for technical services librarians to get funding and time to attend the annual conference, and to add extra days to it or to hold a separate

http://community.aallnet.org/AALLNET/DigestViewer/?ListKey=ab8c992b-37c8-4978-bc3d-4a40d4cc3a... 1/20/2012
conference for the SISs makes it more likely that technical services librarians will be unable to attend. It is certainly possible to hold meetings virtually, either through Skype or other video conferencing software, but there is much to be said for meeting in person. And video conferences are more restrictive as people cannot just "walk in" and listen to the discussion. The technical services oriented SISs business meetings are always open meetings and new members are encouraged to attend and volunteer for committees. This cannot happen when participants have to have special access codes or numbers to join.

In conclusion, we feel that the consultants' report does not accurately reflect the aims of SIS educational programming. By following their recommendations, AALL conferences would be less useful to our members and thus these members would be less able to justify attending the conferences.

[1] Consultants report p. 4

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13. Great Discussion

From: Jean Wenger
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-17-2012 16:49
Subject: Great Discussion

Message:
Dear Colleagues,
Thank you for your comments and suggestions on the VCC report and for sharing your experiences about the annual meetings. The annual meeting is the place to expand our horizons and become better at what we do through educational programming and networking with colleagues.

I am very excited that the 2013 Annual Meeting in Seattle will be the launch of many new initiatives to improve the meeting format. I look forward to working with AALL members, the Annual Meeting Program Committee, the executive board, and headquarter staff to create a new learning experience.

Please continue to share your ideas. Remember this community discussion will close tomorrow, January 18.

Thank you.
Jean M. Wenger
AALL Vice President
jean.wenger@cookcountylabel.gov

14. adult learning

From: Mark Estes
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-17-2012 09:02
Subject: adult learning

Message:
An interesting looking interview this evening about the "connected educator." I especially like the phrase "they figure out what they need to learn and then collaborate with others to construct the knowledge they need" because I think that aptly

http://community.aallnet.org/AALLNET/DigestViewer/?ListKey=ab8c992b-37c8-4978-bc3d-4a40d4cc3a... 1/20/2012
summarizes what we need the annual meeting to be: one of many places, real & virtual for us to collaborate in building what we need to know. See:

**Live Interview Tuesday, January 17th - Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach on "The Connected Educator"**

Join me Tuesday, January 17th, for a live and interactive FutureofEducation.com webinar with Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach on her new book, *The Connected Educator*. "In The Connected Educator, authors Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach and Lani Ritter Hall integrate professional development that is currently working in schools with a new model connected learning communities. Connected learning communities are a three-pronged approach to effective professional development using the local (professional learning community), contextual (personal learning network), and global (community of practice) environments. Connected learners take responsibility for their own professional development. They figure out what they need to learn and then collaborate with others to construct the knowledge they need. Instead of waiting for professional learning to be organized and delivered to them, connected learners contribute, interact, share ideas, and reflect." (-Amazon's book description)


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I have been reviewing the comments made with great interest. One thing I feel that has not been provided is an historic perspective on some of the changes that have taken place and that are now under review. Inspired by Mark Estes, I offer full disclosure - In 2005 I chaired the Board subcommittee which recommended shortening the annual meeting by a day. I was also involved - as Board member and President, in the expansion of SIS programming to run concurrently with AMPC programs. Therefore from these perspectives I offer some background.

**Meeting length** - At the time of the 2005 change in the length of the meeting, the Board was receiving frequent suggestions that the meeting should be shortened. These came from members in all library types but especially from PLL members. They said that the lengthy meeting was too expensive and that employers would not allow them to be away so long. Some members also found that family responsibilities made full participation in a 4-day meeting (or longer, with workshops, leadership training etc.) prohibitive. We also looked into what comparable organizations were doing and found a trend towards shorter meetings.

**SIS programming** - There was very strong pressure for several years by the SISs to not limit their programming to Sunday morning (the old approach) but to allow it to occur at the same times as regular AMPC-selected programs. The basic problem seemed to be that AMPC program criteria required that programs appeal to a broad range of the membership, while SIS programs tended to be tailored to the more specialized needs of particular groups. Some groups found the SIS programming to be critically important to its members. Both the broad and specialized approaches seemed to be valid and so the Board, with concurrence of AMPC, eventually removed the scheduling restrictions.

Program quality and content vary, both among SIS programs and AMPC-selected programs, but -- as others have pointed out - there are many excellent SIS programs, and most members don't know and don't care which way these programs came to be presented - they just want programs that meet their educational needs. These needs are likely to be met by a combination of general and specialized programs.

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Ann Fessenden
Circuit Librarian
U.S. Court of Appeals
8th Circuit Library
16. RE:Question #3 for Discussion

From: Mark Estes
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-12-2012 19:22
Subject: RE:Question #3 for Discussion

Message:
Q: What is your primary reason for attending the annual meeting?
A: Professional development; which for me encompasses education and networking.

Q: What do you like best?
A: The variety of opportunities to engage in professional development -- from the exhibit hall to the educational programs and conversations with colleagues.

Q: If you could change one thing about the annual meeting, what would that be?
A: Stop the obsessing over which SIS or chapter sponsored an educational program. After that: more travel time between each educational program, collect and publish the educational programs that various members and leaders plan to attend - emphasize the liberal arts opportunities of the annual meeting rather than emphasizing the narrow traditional "tracks." It is too early to add a day back into the annual meeting. Collectively we need and must learn to live with a shorter annual meeting. Learning to live with a shorter annual meeting will take time we have to learn to use different tools, to accept that we cannot afford to meet face-to-face with everyone all the time.

-Mark

Law Library Director
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- Mark Estes

17. RE:Question #2 for Discussion

From: Mark Estes
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-12-2012 19:07
Subject: RE:Question #2 for Discussion

Message:
Question: As a member, do you feel conflicted by what to attend at the annual meeting - AMPC educational programming, SIS programs, SIS meetings, exhibit hall, or other activity? If so, what would you recommend to uncomplicate the schedule?

Answer: Yes, I feel conflicted about what to attend at the annual meeting. I feel conflicted about what book to read next. Life is about choices. Yes, attendees have many things they want to do during the annual meeting. Perhaps the number of choices contributes to the energy of the meeting - the opportunities to do so many different things.

(Full disclosure: the special Annual Meeting Education Program Committee I chaired recommended that the SISes and committees be able to schedule meetings and programs against AMPC educational programs. We reasoned that there are a relatively small number of committee members and if some of the missed an educational program then it was not the end of the world. The SISes had complained that programs were not meeting their needs or in numbers that didn't match their membership numbers. The solution, inelegant, was to give each SIS one program from the AMPC budget. We also recommended that the larger SISs be given additional programs based their membership size. In making that recommendation we assumed that the annual meeting committee would retain control for quality purposes. Uncomplicating the schedule might be accomplished by better layout, graphics, and explanatory notes. It might also help to have a grid showing all the possible choices within each timeslot. The Association records educational programs so that those who were unable to attend that meeting or the annual meeting can listen to the program later. While it is not the same as being in the room it does let you hear the presentation you missed.

-Mark
Re: Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

From: Mark Estes  
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee  
Posted: 01-12-2012 18:39  
Subject: RE: Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

Message:

Apologies for being late answering this question.

Restating the question: What specific skills would you like the training to cover and how would you like to see the training delivered?

Specific skills: Here's somewhat of a laundry list of general skills: organization, diction, storytelling, understanding the audience, dealing with stage fright, effective use of visuals, controlling audience questions and answers, speaking without memorizing, posture, tone, effective use of humor and pacing.

These are skills similar to an effective trial lawyer appearing in court. So, for general discussion of skills see books on persuading juries opening statements, etc.

How taught: certainly, the session on presentation skills at each annual meeting would be one good continuous program. But, we need to take presentation skills out to where the members are and not limit the training to the annual meeting. Satellite programs, in conjunction with chapter programs could create the small workshop settings that would enable immediate practicing of skills. Seeing oneself on videotape and critiquing it with a skilled coach can prove a very effective training tool. For example, see the workshops offered by Speechworks.net

We should also consider online sessions that last several weeks the sessions could involve a brief lecture and then presentations by the various members of the class or workshop. By seeing each other and seeing oneself with the help an instructor we could reach people who would not otherwise be able to attend an annual meeting. If these classes were offered online after-hours then we get away from the constraints of the workplace demands. It does of course require the law library to commit to some lifelong learning activities outside the normal workday. A possible model might be the online storytelling classes offered library school students at San Jose State University School of Library & Information Services (full disclosure: my wife is an instructor at SJSUSLIS and teaches storytelling)

-Mark

The PLL-SIS Board's formal response to the VCC Report is attached as a Word document format.

This message has been cross posted to the following Discussions: Private Law Libraries SIS and Annual Meeting Special Committee.
This message has been cross posted to the following Discussions: PLL Summit and Annual Meeting Special Committee.

Below, please find a formal response to the VCC Report submitted on behalf of the Private Law Librarians Special Interest Section (PLL-SIS) Board. The recommendations were unanimously approved with one abstention by Debbie Rusin, who is on the AALL Meeting Special Committee.

I urge PLL members to read the PLL Board’s response and to take the opportunity to provide their own comments before the January 18th deadline. While there are many positive recommendations in the report, some recommendations may not be in the best interest of our members. We urge our members to read the VCC Report and the PLL formal response so that they can be apprised of these important issues and formulate their own opinions.

Respectfully submitted by

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Overall Observations:

The Private Law Libraries Special Interest Section supports the efforts of AALL to undertake this study in order to make significant improvements in the management of the Annual Conference, and to take a fresh look at the Association’s goals to identify primary concerns of the membership. This document seeks to provide AALL with a formal response from the Board of the Private Law Libraries Special Interest Section. We speak on behalf of PLL members and, in that capacity, would like to highlight some concerns and make additional suggestions for improving both the conference and the professional development of our members.

These are several recommendations we advocate in support of the proposals in the Consultant’s Report:

- There is a need to create education differentiation by bringing in more outside speakers and providing for more hands-on learning opportunities.
- There should be less of a lecture style in the presentations, and more use of case studies in a problem-centric approach. Our members expect to return to their places of employment prepared to implement solutions immediately.
- There can be value in adopting broad topics/themes with the caveat that there is direct relevant learning for each type of library, and that the members have the opportunity to vote on the proposed topics.
- The time frame and the process for selecting programs should be more flexible. Moving back the timeline to allow sufficient time for members to return to their work responsibilities while assimilating what they have learned, and to allow for “Hot Topics” to percolate for some time, will result in stronger programming.
- The conference schedule should include all Education programs, including SIS programming so that members have a clear selection of times and formats.
- There should be more coverage and inclusion of the latest disruptive technologies which help create new MarketICL, by disrupting existing markets, thereby displacing earlier technologies. The Association could bring in the developers of those technologies to be keynote speakers to improve the quality and differentiation of conference content. In addition, a “Technology Track” of some kind should be available as part of the conference for the purpose of our members exploring the capabilities of the newer technologies.
- The conference schedule should provide more networking opportunities with other members and vendors, as is done at other professional conferences. For example, the current proposal to work directly with ILTA on a “Technology Day” at the annual meeting could result in further development of that relationship. Such collaborations with other professional associations in the legal industry should be investigated, as they would directly benefit the members in their relationships in the workplace.
- In order to increase attendance at the conferences, the Association should consider alternative venues (e.g., Las Vegas, Miami, etc.) likely to attract more members, as well as alternative times which may allow for better synchronicity with individuals planning family or group vacations, and variances in work schedules. July is simply not the optimal time for a professional association meeting.

By aligning with the positive recommendations in this report, all of our members will benefit. The SIS Boards and SIS members are integral parts of the fabric of AALL. Their participation in the revision process will strengthen, not splinter, the Association.

Specific Responses and Recommendations:

1. CONFERENCE GOALS & AUDIENCE (Pages 9-11) — AGREE that the conference offers too much general content, thereby losing effectiveness for the primary target audiences identified by the Consultant’s Report.

1. Identify primary and supporting goals of Annual Meeting and the appropriate audience. AGREE that there is a need to do this, while recognizing that PLL is one of four primary audiences (page 9) and most changed by exhibitors. More targeted programming for this audience will result in greater attendance at conference by this group and attract more vendors, which equals more value. For example, attendance at the PLL Summit has been proven to boost attendance at the AALL conference. The Association should recognize that the SISs are one of the primary revenue members attend the Annual Meeting. In order to justify attendance to employers, members want to attend programming specific to their jobs and to network with industry peers.

1. Align all conference programming with AALL strategic plan, board direction and annual meeting goals. AGREE that broad topics/themes are appropriate, as long as there is direct relevant learning for each type of library, and members have opportunities to suggest and vote on the proposed themes. E.g., PLL has a successful track record in selecting topics for the Summit which has doubled the number of attendees. A more focused, strategic conference - one that keeps to relevant educational tracks for the current environment - offers a more robust learning/educational experience.

As for first-time attendees and newer members, the Special Interest Sections offer a home of sorts, where they can meet and learn from colleagues and professional mentor on a smaller scale. In this environment, they encounter opportunities for skil enhancement and professional development in less formal settings where they may feel more comfortable in sharing ideas and concerns.

1. Adopt a "We serve our members best by serving our profession first" attitude as one of
the overarching educational goals. **DISAGREE** with the objectives as stated in the report, with regard to conducting business at the annual meeting and the inference that there should be no SIS programming during the Annual Meeting. The Annual Conference is **not** used by the PLL Committees and Caucuses to conduct business. To the contrary, most PLL-SIS work takes place virtually throughout the year in the form of e-mail and conference calls. The one PLL Meeting Luncheon at the Conference is used to highlight successes, and to recognize volunteers and their accomplishments. We need to continue to provide opportunities for PLL SIS members to meet face to face at conferences and to reach out to foster camaraderie and teamwork. In addition, as noted above, members seek education at the Conference as the way to justify their attendance and to enhance their professional development. Therefore, it is essential to provide a conflict free time for SIS meetings for both educational and networking purposes, as highlighted in the introduction to the Consultant’s Report.

1. Create conference education that differentiates itself from all other industry education offerings that focuses on attendee learning. **AGREE TO A POINT**, but feel there could be further recommendations to create education differentiation such as:
   - bringing in more outside speakers
   - providing for more hands-on learning opportunities
   - collaborating with other Legal Professional Associations, such as the ABA, ARMA, ILTA, LMA, with regard to cross-interests and common concerns, such as the impact of technology and social networking on legal education.

1. **POLITICS (Pages 11-12)**
   - Adopt learner-centric education strategies that go beyond information transfer in order to differentiate itself. **AGREE.**
   - Creating conference education that differentiates itself from all other industry education offerings that focuses on attendee sharing/learning opportunities or problem solving exercises would serve PLL and all members favorably.
   - As noted in the report, many attendees are hands-on, interactive learners. More programming that offered roundtables, peer-sharing opportunities would serve PLL and all members favorably.
   - As noted in the report, many attendees are hands-on, interactive learners. More programming that offered roundtables, peer-sharing opportunities or problem solving exercises would serve PLL and all members favorably.

1. Transition the AMPC from a detailed logistic scheduling committee into one that is strategic that recommends topics and identifies issues and challenges of AALL participants. **AGREE, with some changes:** AMPC cannot operate efficiently and effectively, as it is hampered by the details and logistics of program planning. The Association might consider hiring a professional meeting planner to coordinate many of the activities previously handled by the AMPC regarding logistics and the exploration of themes. As noted, the primary focus of the Committee should on identifying the problems, issues and needs of all members for education programming. AMPC needs to be balanced with equal representation from the top four target audience SIS groups.

1. Move SIS education programming to another conference or a pre-conference format. **AGREE that the pre-conference format could be beneficial as the vehicle for SIS programming.** In fact, the PLL Summit has already foreshadowed the recommendation of the pre-conference format, and has been quite successful. This year’s theme is "The Path to 2020: A Vision for Change." In this regard, PLL has anticipated the need for this variation on the conference scheduling. If some SIS programming is moved to pre-conference, then it might be necessary to add another day to the annual meeting. However we strongly **DISAGREE with any effort to move the SIS education programming to a separate conference.** Moving the SIS programming to another conference could be disastrous because of the economic implications requiring members to choose between the two conferences. Given the option of separate conferences, PLL members would prefer a Summit-like Conference in contrast to the Association meeting. Any movement in this direction would definitely foster splintering among the groups.

In addition, having an SIS pre-conference should **NOT preclude them from being involved in formulating the regular conference programs.** SIS Programming for the largest SISs should be allowed not only to continue but to grow within the scope of a theme provided for by AMPC. The SISs know what programming is vital for their members, so they should have more of a role in programming, not less. **Contrary to what is stated, the SISs are the drivers of the Association, the veritable glue which holds it together, NOT "splintering."** In many ways, the SIS Boards are better-equipped to respond to member needs as they understand their priorities.

1. Make all SIS programming accountable to the same criteria as conference programming: higher evaluation scores, attendance and alignment with AALL's mission, strategic plan, overarching conference themes, etc. If it can't meet those goals, it should be dropped or omitted. **We basically AGREE that SIS programming - as well as AALL Conference programming, should require metrics such as which provide accountability. However, there should be flexibility in selecting themes for SIS pre-conference programming, independent of the Annual Program Meeting.**

**CAVATRA:** Based on the PLL-sponsored survey of attendee evaluations, it is clear there is no basis for the inference that SIS programming is of inferior quality. On the contrary, the results of the AALL survey show that the PLL-sponsored programs were ranked higher than a significant portion of other programming.

We **DISAGREE with any recommendation that would relegate SIS activities to online communities only.** As supported by evaluations and responsiveness to volunteer for SIS activities, the Special Interest Sections are the lifeblood of the Association. Relegating Committee/Caucus/Liaison interaction to only virtual involvement would weaken the membership as a whole.

1. **TIMING (Pages 13-15)**

1. **a)** AALL should reexamine its traditional conference planning process with a focus on providing current, relevant content that meets its primary audience segments' needs. **AGREE that rethinking the entire schedule for the annual meeting, particularly the preparation phase, is essential.** It is clear that, due to the timing, the process drives the planning. In addition to the specific suggestions included in the report, a more formal schedule and given numeric values should be used for program analysis and proposal feedback. This process should be explained in all communications regarding program proposals, including rejection letters.

1. **a)** AALL should not schedule approximately 20%-25% of the education programming until eight-four weeks from the event. **(Should this be "four-eight") AGREE that some topics should be selected only shortly before the conference.
However, four weeks may be too tight for planning an effective presentation. AGREE there is a need to re-examine the processes but again, SIS leadership input must be included.

1.  **EFFECTIVENESS VS EFFICIENCY (Page 15)**

1. AALL staff should reevaluate all conference planning processes based on “must haves,” “like to have” or “unnecessary” procedures. AGREE that there is a need to re-examine the processes but, again, the SIS leadership input must be included wherever possible.

1. **CONFERENCE CONTENT (Page 16)**

1. AALL should move away from the traditional Call for Speaker Proposal process and instead take an intentional curator strategist positions. AGREE.

1. Transition the AMPC into a strategic committee that offers input, feedback and advice about big ideas, issues and topics. AGREE this should be modified.

1. The AMPC and staff should theme conference topics around two to four main issues and then provide semantic threading for the rest of the content. AGREE.

1. **FOCUS ON QUALITY (Page 17)** AGREE.

1. **GOOD ADULT LEARNING BEST PRACTICES (Page 17)**

1. AALL will best serve participants’ needs by significantly reducing the amount of presenter or panel monologues and instead offer presentations that use good adult learning practices including audience engagement and peer sharing. AGREE that content must be targeted and relevant to the audience and the programming must be responsive to their needs. Perhaps broader programs but fewer of them will bring in a wider audience across SIS and specific interest lines. As previously discussed, more hands-on and solutions-based presentations are essential. However, there may be instances where knowledge-sharing through case studies will benefit the audience.

1. **INVESTMENT IN PRESENTER TRAINING (Pages 17-18)** AGREE that AALL should bring in more external speakers as well as invest in presentation training for members. The latter could greatly benefit members who need to upgrade those skills and cannot obtain the training elsewhere.

1. **MORE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION PROCESS (Pages 19-20)** AGREE in principle with this approach, but recommend that evaluation processes such as those PLL used at the end of previous meetings, be considered. According to this analysis, less than 34% of attendees complete evaluations so there must be a concerted effort to identify more efficient ways to obtain this feedback. There are more technologically advanced ways to survey attendee response and provide on-the-spot feedback, including those using smartphones and iPad ‘apps.’

1. **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS (Pages 20-21)** Many of these are worth investigating, with the following ‘honorable mentions’:

- **Saturday Programming.”** AGREE with this implied vote of confidence for at least some SIS programming. In fact, the evolution of the PLL Summit anticipated many of the asset changes in programming which this report recommends for the entire conference and the Association needs to address.

- **“VIP Programming.”** AGREE that this concept should be considered, but should not be limited to Large Firm Directors. If developed, this type of programming should be expanded to include those seasoned professionals who may not have the title of "Director," but who have the same responsibilities and professional development needs. There is strong evidence to suggest that law firms are eliminating those positions in the throes of firm administration re-structuring, and using the more narrow title would eliminate some of this valuable target audience.

- **More Small Group Discussions. AGREE.** These formats provide for more diverse conversations among the various constituencies of the respective SIS and the Association at large. They are flexible and conducive to less formal yet valuable networking.

- **Closing Luncheon might be a way to celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of the members without having to extend their stay an additional day. AGREE.**

1. **EXPO AND SPONSORSHIP SALES & SERVICE (Pages 24-26)** “We believe that AALL can better leverage its relationships by deploying sales resources based on customers, not products.” AGREE that AALL needs to understand and be open to the value proposition from the vendor’s perspective. Trying to accommodate vendors to reach their target audiences through varying formats will strengthen relationships with members for both vendors and AALL. The Association should work with Special Interest Sections that have been identified as target audiences to establish more events and face-to-face opportunities to conduct business. As mentioned, AALL, as a whole, would greatly benefit from additional targeted sponsorships.

1. **MARKETING AND WEBSITE (Pages 27-28)** AGREE with most of the recommendations which address communication and conference issues, particularly with regard to streamlining conference registration, improving the website, eliminating the convention newspaper, using technology to contact and track previous registrants, etc.

1. **TECHNOLOGY (Pages 29-30)** AGREE with these suggestions, and also advocate that the adoption of smartphone and iPad apps as well as bar-coding to track attend actual attendance could provide critical metrics to evaluate the success of the Annual Meeting.

PLL Chair

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Message:

- What is your primary reason for attending the annual meeting?
  My primary purposes are education and networking. I'm always looking for new skills, or to learn more about reference, research, training, gadgets and technical services. I'm also looking for people in similar or even dissimilar situations who can be a sounding board for future projects.

- What do you like best?
  Seeing people in person whom I've corresponded with via email. Getting away from the office to concentrate on learning and networking.

- If you could change one thing about the annual meeting, what would that be?
  That is a tough one. I like the idea of having committee work on one or two days, instead of spread out through the conference. I even like the variety of times for sessions (75, 60, 45, 30 minute sessions.) The only thing I would change would be more chances to interact in a learning environment. Sometimes I'd like to be able to pick the speakers' brains about a topic, but other than the Q&A, there doesn't seem to be a way to do any sort of give and take between presenter and audience.

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Maria Sosnowski
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Message:

1. My primary purpose in attending is education. I go for the programs. As a county law librarian serving the public primarily, there are too few others there similar to me for networking. I tend to network in my state and the neighboring state, and have relationships with librarians in similar circumstance. And if the programs don't look like the will be of benefit to me, I don't go.

2. My goal is to learn something new. I want to find new ways to do something, or techniques I can bring back to my library. I like meeting a new vendor who has products that work for me, or a program that really strikes a chord.

3. I would like to have fewer things at the same time, and get rid of some of the excess. I never attend the banquets, for example. I think they are too much time/money. I would like to cut down on the expense, both for the librarians attending and the cost to AALL itself. I agree with what Pamela said that we could do general association time within the meeting, or the keynote. Personally I am looking for like-minded, similarly situated people to get to know, not to be lost in a herd of a thousand. And since I find the conference exhausting, I reserve evenings to be alone in the quiet of my hotel room, or seeing a local site, or something like that.

Maria Sosnowski
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Message:

1. I primarily attend AALL for the educational programs. Practically all my volunteering and leadership in AALL and the special interest sections has had as its core purpose improving the knowledge of my colleagues and myself to carry out the duties of...
2. What I enjoy most about annual meeting programs is talking about the educational sessions with colleagues after programs. It helps clarify points and fill in gaps of understanding. Hearing other people's immediate reactions, interpretations, and opinions is very helpful. People who might be shy about commenting or asking questions in front of a large audience may be more willing to share their thoughts with a smaller group walking in the hallways or sitting at a table in a restaurant.

3. More time between programs and meetings certainly would enhance that after program sharing. At least, if programs and meeting are in more than one building, the program and meeting buildings should be very close together, not blocks apart.

The expense of the final banquet both for the banquet itself and the extra overnight required became unjustifiable expenses to employers paying for us to attend AALL. There was no true professional benefit to that expensive playtime. I do agree there should be an overall gathering of some sort though. But doesn’t the business meeting serve as that, and isn’t it an appropriate place to announce awards? It needs to be made more attractive perhaps? The luncheon was boring, and mass produced meals were slow to arrive and, while not bad food, still got to be also expensive for what they were. Speaking frankly, I find the opening and closing receptions, keynote speeches, and the business/general meeting to be enough general association time. I do admit I would rather the receptions were not in the exhibit hall, though.

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-------------------------------------------
I'm not sure VCC realizes that the SISs are the gateway to sustained activity and leadership for many of our members. As for SIS programming, maybe we should look at ways to have some time set aside for SIS programming.

I also like the idea about better evaluation questions. In addition to programming, there should also be a way to evaluate the “local arrangements” aspects of the meeting - the convention center, were there adequate bathrooms, food functions, etc. Having food available in the Exhibit Hall would be nice, especially some healthy food and not just hot dogs or pizza. There are lots of lunchtime meetings where food is not provided and attendees have to pick up something quickly. I believe it was the Denver convention center that had several options for food.

SISs

I don't think a lot of the members know (or care) whether the program is SIS-sponsored or not, as long as it is well done. Do we, for example, depend on the CS-SIS to provide the best in technology programming? I think tracking could be good, but what about a good program that really doesn't fit into a track?

Will we need to spend more on the program budget to get the kind of programming the members say they want?

The VCC report says that other associations are streamlining the conference program selection timeline. Is Pam seeing this through her professional association?

SISs

A lot of SIS and committee work already takes place via email and conference calls. The Annual Meeting is the place where we can meet face-to-face and sometimes the culmination of virtual meetings needs a face-to-face conclusion - or beginning. Virtual meetings can be stilted and sometimes you need to see the body language or look on someone's face to totally comprehend the meaning or context of what they are saying. When 6 or 8 people are having a conference call, it's sometimes hard to remember who said what and having everyone identify themselves every time they talk disrupts the flow of the conversation.

As for SIS programming, maybe we should look at ways to have some time set aside for SIS programming;

I'm not sure VCC realizes that the SISs are the gateway to sustained activity and leadership for many of our members.

TIME

While I like the idea of a longer conference, I think it puts a lot of strain on our libraries. Many of our members are already paying a share of their expenses (but usually not enough to deduct on taxes) that an extra day of expenses is asking a lot from them.

"COMMUNITY EVENT"

I like this idea, but what kind of event can we have that people will attend? Perhaps we have to go back to including it in the registration fee, but I agree that the closing event in the Exhibit Hall in Philly was lackluster - and there probably won't be a car giveaway in Boston either.

ETC.

I agree with discontinuing the newspaper. There is very little useful content and it could be most of the information could be disseminated some other way.

Whatever we try, I think we have to wait until at least the Seattle meeting so people get used to the idea that there will be something new. As someone said earlier, we need to go into this knowing that some things we try will not succeed; we learn from them and move on. Some ideas may take a meeting or two to catch on.

Notes on the observations and recommendations of the velvet chainsaw consulting report

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27. Comments on Velvet Chainsaw report

From: Mark Estes
to: Annual Meeting Special Committee

Posted: 01-06-2012 18:03
Subject: Comments on Velvet Chainsaw report

Message:

Notes on the observations and recommendations of the velvet chainsaw consulting report

These comments address the report. I'll address Diane's question's separately.
Background and context: I chaired the education committee for the 1989 Reno annual meeting, have served on AMPC, chaired the special Annual Meeting Educational Programming Committee in 2002 that studied the program selection process and scheduling of programs at the annual meeting. I am a past AALL president, past chair of the PLL. I have worked in academic, law firm and county law libraries and have not missed an annual meeting since 1978.

Executive summary

I suspect there is less politics in the program selection process than the consultant observed. Certainly, SIS's attempts to insert politics into the process and I suppose that attempt in itself is enough to warrant the suggestion and implemented to take politics out of it.

Is there a suggested date for the new deadline for call for proposals?

AALL could improve presenter quality by offering further workshops at the annual meeting and throughout the year on presentation skills. In addition, part of the criteria for selecting speakers, program could be their bio that focuses on speaking experience and skills, including any workshops or courses taken.

What does he mean “semantic threading”? That’s the educational program should have some consistent theme throughout all the programs? This use jargon is distracts.

Agreed, executive board must clearly define the focus and purpose of the annual meeting. I think the first and foremost is it is a fundraiser for the Association. It accomplishes that by having an exhibit hall with vendors to pay premium prices to interact with qualified buyers, influential purchasers and knowledgeable users that help improve their individual products whether law related or not. The annual meeting format has continued largely unchanged for 30+ years. Across that time the number of members attending the meeting has probably tripled as have a number of educational opportunities, committee programs and SIS meetings. The consultant is absolutely correct when he suggest that the SIS is and committees must learn to do more of their work away from the annual meeting. Technology enables that the crush of time and change requires that we work between the annual meeting on these important projects.

I don’t recall a past decision to allow each SIS to have equal voice in program selection. Is this a applying to slots from the annual meeting program selection committees? But I can’t find (on 1/6/12) the current AMPC handbook about how they’re allocating program slots.

Regardless, if the thrust of the recommendation is that AALL educational programming should be more strategic and less accommodating to SIS desires that are not strategic - I agree wholeheartedly. This is a documentation that will cause grave consternation among some members, but it really shouldn't be seen as a threat to the SIS effectiveness, it is rather a challenge to all of us to adapt some new habits about the annual meeting, adult learning and the work of committees and the SISes throughout the year.

Appendix A

Good distinction between learning, education and information transfer. For far too long events at the annual meeting have focused on information transfer which could have been accomplished by other means throughout the year. Participatory learning is more effective than straight lecture which is all a panel discussion is. See a recent NPR piece http://www.npr.org/2012/01/01/144559092/physicists-learn-why-semantic-threading-works-the-hard-way.

Excellent education strategy: “help members learn through participation not just information transfer”

Appendix B

Query: are adults with liberal arts education also always problem centered rather than content oriented? I will choose to attend the program that I may know little about not because I have a problem other than the problem that I don’t think I know enough about the topic.

Why people attend conferences, page 6:

Yes! We must redesign the education program in such a way “that attendees become active participants in the listening to a lecture or panel talking heads.” This does not require changing the length of the annual meeting, it does require articulating new expectations of program proposals and additional guidance for program planners and proposers of how to conceive and implement such a program idea and proposal.

Current conference education approach pagd 7:

I’m not sure I agree that AALL and AMPC try to be all things to all people. Perhaps the effort is to be something for everyone? Regardless, from the outside observer I can see that the attempt is to be all things for all people.

Conference content page 8: yes, we should provide more structure and guidance for the content and type of programs we want to see proposals for. I fear however, that this requires greater staff involvement then membership is prepared to allow.

Recommendations

Conference goals and audience pp 9-11

Zing! Yes! Serve the profession! First so many SIS functions are indeed in a fitting the SIS's First and not the profession. Encourage and facilitate the use of technology so that SIS members can conduct their information transfer throughout the year. Query: how much would it cost to host web-based meetings from headquarters?

Excellent recommendations in the politics section pp 11-13.

Very good possible conference planning process pp 14, 15: Ideally we could implement this for the 2013 meeting because it is too late to do so for 2012. However, this is a very disruptive process with many changes that we must plan for and coach members and staff about how different it will be - and how much more attendees focused the resulting education program will be which in turn should provide a higher return on investment for attendees and employers.

Pages 15 through 18, effectiveness versus efficiency through investing in presenter training: again, excellent want recommendations that will discomfort many but if implemented will benefit the Association and the profession.

Page 18 & 19Wow! “Aren’t librarians introverts and excellent sponsorship sales and service” is spot on. Adding more travel time between programs is elegantly simple and obvious and creates that opportunity for ongoing discussion with colleagues about what they just participated in.

Pages 19 through 30: another excellent collection of recommendations. I especially appreciate those related to wayfinding during the annual meeting. Too often I have been frustrated trying to find where the program is that I want to attend next. Somewhat related to this would be some additional content on that guide: namely how long it takes to walk from one location to another.

Query: does the consultant thinks that audio recordings lack educational value or that are not selling enough of them to be worth the time and effort? If we're not recovering our cost then we should look closely at why we continue. In truth, this year by have not downloaded or listened to any additional programs. This is the first time I have not done so. But, if we are going to record I think that we should not accept any speaker who does not agree to have their program recorded. (See the model contract language).

http://community.aallnet.org/AALLNET/DigestViewer/?ListKey=ab8c992b-37c8-4978-bc3d-4a40d4cc3a... 1/20/2012
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28. Annual meeting comments

From: Kathryn Fitzhugh
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-06-2012 13:11
Subject: Annual meeting comments

Message:

Even though I have been an AALL annual meeting participant since 1982, I still have growing and changing responsibilities. I still need to attend several roundtable discussions and programs. I try to go to these roundtables: faculty services, international law, writing, sometimes legal history, and sometimes preservation. For these reasons I agree with those who advocate for adding another day to the annual meeting so that we will have fewer conflicts.

I agreed with those who advocated for at least one association-wide event sponsored by AALL. Give us one. Recognize those who have mentored or served in a great way -- it doesn't have to last a long time.

Keep the Saturday workshops.

One full day for committee meetings sounds good.

Thanks to the annual meeting committees of the past and present for the great job that you have done in helping educate me.

-----------------------------------------------------------------

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-----------------------------------------------------------------

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29. RE:Question #2 for Discussion

From: Kenneth Hirsh
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-04-2012 14:21
Subject: RE:Question #2 for Discussion

Message:

While I too echo Tracy's sentiments, I think offering each program twice is impractical for many reasons, but two stand out: this would be a tremendous burden to place on the panelists, especially those who are not members of the association or are not attending the full meeting, and it effectively halves the number of programs that can be offered. Rather, it makes more sense to commit to making high quality recordings of all programs and make them freely available later to all registrants. I hesitate to say whether those should be audio or video recordings, because some programs convey little visual information and others are very visual. Of course, doing this will increase the costs of the meeting.

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30. RE:Question #2 for Discussion

From: Lawrence Meyer
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 01-04-2012 13:42
Subject: RE:Question #2 for Discussion

Message:

All:

I want to echo two of Tracy's comments:

1.) Extend the meeting by one day. That lost day has just ratcheted up the craziness
2.) Offer each program at least twice during the conference to minimize conflicts.
First, I wholeheartedly agree that there is a need to add back at least half a day, if not a full day. Second, I have frequently wondered why some of the programs that we know will be popular are not presented more than once during the conference. Maybe this year, experiment by selecting 3 or 4 programs that might be judged to be popular and are in time slots where they compete against other popular programs and offer them a second time.

Larry
From: Jennifer Stephens
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-30-2011 16:03
Subject: RE:Question #2 for Discussion

Message:
Maria Sosnowski said "Personally, I don't pay attention to who does the programming - I'm just concerned about the content. So I had to actually go look at the program for this summer to see if I attended SIS events, and there were 3 programs they put on that I attended."

I second this. I've never paid much attention to who was sponsoring or putting on the program, but instead, have paid attention to the content of the program. The AMPC and the SISs should be able to work together to produce the best possible programming for the annual meeting.

My opinion, not that of my employer, or any other organization.

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33. RE:Question #2 for Discussion
From: Maria Sosnowski
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-30-2011 15:24
Subject: RE:Question #2 for Discussion

Message:
I've been to several meetings, and each one ends up with time slots when there are 3 things scheduled that look good, and time slots where nothing scheduled fits my needs.

If we had more of a tracking system, so there was one program in each time slot designed for academics, firms, SCCLL, tech, etc, this would be minimized. There will still be programs outside of the track that would appeal, but I'm always amazed when there are 3 things for people who serve the public at the same time, and that wouldn't happen any more.

You could also do SIS programs at times when they don't conflict with other programs - perhaps a designated afternoon for those, or lunch hours. They shouldn't be at the same time as AALL programming, unless there was nothing from AALL for that track at that time slot. I'm not sure how I feel about SIS meetings - it seems like those should be the day ahead, or the day after, to eliminate that conflict. Or maybe do more Skype-type meetings, so there is less need to meet during the meeting itself.

Personally, I don't pay attention to who does the programming - I'm just concerned about the content. So I had to actually go look at the program for this summer to see if I attended SIS events, and there were 3 programs they put on that I attended.

For me, the exhibit hall is something I do when none of the programs look good, or nothing is scheduled. There always ends up being time slots to get in there and see something. As a SCCLL, there is so much there for big firms, or academics, and not much applicable to me, that it doesn't take long to look around.

Maria

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35. RE: Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

From: Catherine Kellett  
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee  
Posted: 12-19-2011 08:37  
Subject: RE: Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

Message:

I'm curious to hear suggestions on how to change the CONELL schedule to accommodate the programming for new librarians. I attended CONELL in Philadelphia and found it to be mostly a networking/socializing day, with a few speakers who introduced us to the conference format and gave advice on how to get the most out of it. It would be interesting to add some substance to that, while at the same time not making that day too long.

CONELL would have to expand to allow all new librarians who want to attend. Last year they had to turn people away. I wouldn't want those members to miss the new librarian programming. We would also have to ensure enough veteran members attend those sessions. Most of the librarians from my library waited until Saturday afternoon to get to the conference.

Cate

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36. Question 1--speaker training

From: Suzanne Graham  
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee  
Posted: 12-18-2011 22:43  
Subject: Question 1--speaker training

Message:

In large part, speaking charisma is a natural talent. Those of us that weren't born with it can learn a lot about it and practice hard and still not be as engaging as we would like to be. We need to be realistic about the limits of any speaker training. Having said that, I do believe that AALL could offer assistance to members who want to learn some tricks to help them through their presentations.

Requesting the presentation in article form a month/week ahead of the meeting guarantees that serious thought and idea organization has been done well before the presentation is given. Information should be updated and improved in the interim but no major cramming is done the nights just before the session. Even while I type this, I cringe. Bad medicine. But it drives me crazy to have a speaker begin by boasting that they worked on their talk on the plane. Personally, my favorite presentations have been the ones that I had given before and felt like I was talking about an old friend. Those are the sessions during which I am most comfortable and able to embrace interruptions and questions and think better on my feet.

Topics: Effective facilitation techniques--how to work a room and get crowd involvement

Delivery of speaker training: At Annual offer a program on effective presenting done by an expert in pedagogy or public speaking. We have many excellent presenters already in our organization, but I would guess most are naturally good. This speaker should have done research in the field and offer, not just a how-I-do-it talk, but a why-these-techniques-work talk and also include what kinds of styles are best suited for the type of presentation/information.

The same program should be available as an on-demand webcast and as an article. We have different monetary and time constraints.

Maybe there is a great book on just this topic and we could do an "AALL reads" campaign?

Just my opinion, Suzanne
37. RE:Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

From: Jennifer Stephens
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-16-2011 15:23
Subject: RE:Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

Message:
I have been reviewing the VCC report over the past few days and have a few opinions and observations I'd like to share.

First, if there is such a problem with SIS programming, why not turn the question around to what can the SISs do to coordinate and contribute higher quality programming that fits with the theme or the tracks of the annual meeting? I am a law firm librarian, and had been a corporate librarian in a previous life, and have found over the years that PLL-SIS has provided more on target programming for my situations and needs than the general programming.

Second, I do like the idea of time to mill about and talk to other attendees about sessions. I have been lucky enough to do this on a casual basis with other librarians I know, but think a time set aside to do this would be valuable.

Third, I like cross-pollination of types of programming. My understanding of where a new associate or summer associate is in their research skills has been greatly enhanced by attending programs offered by academic librarians on training and teaching research. I've also garnered many ideas and tips on structuring training classes from both academic and private librarians.

Fourth, I've been saying for years that the reason many mid-level private librarians do not present is that many of us literally do not know we can attend until a few months before the conference. Holding back additional slots for hot topics would be a great way to harness the skills and knowledge of librarians who are unable to commit to presenting until mid- to late spring.

Fifth, I like the idea of more coffee talks or round tables. I've attended either regional or national library conferences for nearly twenty years, and find that I am sometimes remiss in meeting or talking to new faces. Talking through topics with a moderator sounds like a great way to meet new, or new to me, librarians, and to be able to assimilate the material presented by discussion.

Sixth, and last, I like the idea of offering programming specifically for new librarians on Saturday, when they should be at CONELL.

These are strictly my opinions and observations, not those of my employer, supervisor, or director.

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38. RE:Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

From: Sara Sampson
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-16-2011 13:58
Subject: RE:Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

Message:
Diane,

I would love to see some sort of “certification” option for presentation skills. Maybe AALL can offer a short workshop in which people could learn to present well. Things like energy, voice, and pace could be covered - preferably by an expert in public speaking. (I remember that there was such a program at the conference in Orlando.) It could also cover more substantive areas like how to present complex ideas and concepts as well as adult learning theory. Another thing to include would be an overview of the different techniques described in the VCC report. This would educate the speakers about the different ways to present so that the speaker could choose the most appropriate format for the subject of a proposal or session. Once a person is certified, it could count as a plus factor in program selection or just be a nice enhancement to a resume. I would imagine that many of these skills are transferable to teaching and running meetings.

Another thing that will be necessary if we do accept some of the more active styles of learning is to retrain the attendees that they will have to do more than just absorb information. There’s (almost) nothing worse than preparing a very interactive session for a group that turns out to not want to participate or is just too tired to do so. I’ve taught evening classes to adult learners who have worked all day and the techniques that normally work well for adult, interactive learning don’t work when people are mentally and physically exhausted. Given how exhausting the AALL meeting can be (at least for me), we should at least consider this.

Sara
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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Kathrine R. Everett Law Library
39. Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

From: Diane Rodriguez
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-16-2011 12:50
Subject: Question for Discussion: Program Quality & Member Training

Message:

I want to thank all of you for joining this community and sharing your thoughts on the Velvet Chainsaw report and your annual meeting experiences. The report is full of recommendations, many of which require further review and input by the membership, including the SIS communities. As we review the report, the committee will post questions to facilitate discussion of some of the main ideas. We hope you will continue to share your opinions and ideas with the community!

First Question: A main theme of the report is improving program quality, including speaker and moderator presentation skills and development of adult learning techniques. In order to create better programs, our membership needs training in these areas. What specific skills would you like the training to cover and how would you like to see the training delivered?

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40. VCC report

From: Maria Szosnowski
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-15-2011 16:55
Subject: VCC report

Message:

I've read the report and share many thoughts that have been expressed. First, I agree with many recommendations made. The programming is often at a very basic level and tells me something I already know rather than enlightening me. And I'm also tired of having time slots with 6 programs, none of which appeal to me, and then other slots where I have to decide between 2-3 that all sound good.

I like the idea of tracks that Barbara mentioned. I had the same thought when I was reading the report. You could have a tech services, academic, firm, public services, etc, tracks, and have one program in each for each time slot. You could have a better programs, our membership needs training in these areas. What specific skills would you like the training to cover and how would you like to see the training delivered?

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These are just my immediate thoughts. Overall, I like the report - I like the idea of taking a closer look at how things are done rather than just doing things the way they've always been done. I hope the changes that flow from the report will strengthen things for everyone, and not cut out members.

Maria

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41. VCC report

From: Barbara Fritschel
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-15-2011 15:43
Subject: VCC report

Message:

Like others, I am concerned about the report's view of the role of the SIS's and the annual meeting. I agree with the proposal that we should not select the number one choice of each SIS. But I am concerned that one of the three "membership" (type of libraries) SIS's isn't deemed important enough to be considered planning for. While the SCCLL SIS may not have the large numbers the academic and private law firm SIS's have, we have provided significant leadership to the organization in the past. SCCLL members look forward to networking, especially since many of us work in small libraries. Yet, like the private law firm librarians, we, too, have to justify going to a conference with something more than it provides networking opportunities. If programming opportunities for SCCLL members are not there, AALL faces a loss of leadership potential.

What I did not see in the report were figures on the program evaluations ranked by SIS for the AMPC programs. In the past, SCCLL has offered several programs concerning proses. Obviously this is a limited topic, perhaps of interest to some academics but the programs I went to were respected attendees. If they received high evaluation marks from the audience, it would seem to me to be providing a valuable service.

Other conferences I have attended, such as Computers in Libraries, have better defined tracks and offer only one offering per track per session. I think having a clearly organized track system (technology, management, patron services, technical services, innovations, library guerrilla tactics, etc.) will help eliminate the problem that other posters have commented on about some sessions offering nothing of interest while other sessions have multiple programs of interest. It might even make sense to offer fewer sessions or fewer offerings, if the quality improved. I'd even be willing to put a categorical ban on some types of programs, such as substantive law of the state where the meeting is being held.

I served on an AMPC and I know how difficult it is to find good programming--even if you request advanced proposals will win them over. Some years, there are so many programs that I want to go to that I can't choose and other years, there are hardly any. Some conferences crowdsource selection of the programs. I like that idea. Also, it's more transparent.

The consulting group had a lot of really good things to say, but I didn't like their view that the SISs compete with AALL. I've found my committee work at AALL a good way to connect with librarians. Since it's so hard to get on a AALL committee, I serve on one and I'm able to work and attend the annual meeting. People can be uncomfortable with these formats at first, but it's worth giving it a shot. Our university library association just had its first "lightning talk" and it was a huge success.
43. RE: VCC Report Comment

From: Janet Fischer
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-12-2011 15:37
Subject: RE: VCC Report Comment

Message:

Thank you, Ken. And I thought I would be the only one!

I too see much of value in the report, and it reflects many of my own opinions about the annual meeting. Too shallow, too scattered. I would love to see fewer, larger sessions each day, and a keynote speaker each day as well. I'm really tired of going through the program to select what I plan to attend and finding nothing for many slots, and 3 things I want to attend all at the same time.

At the same time, I disagree with the report in that I don't see any reason to take away the SIS's ability to have their own accounts. I like Ken's idea of having SIS meetings and programs on one day dedicated to that.

Other conferences I have attended in the past - SLA, Internet Librarian - seemed much more focused and the programming was timely, in-depth, and valuable.

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44. RE: VCC Report Comment

From: Kenneth Hirsh
To: Annual Meeting Special Committee
Posted: 12-12-2011 15:21
Subject: RE: VCC Report Comment

Message:

I take a different view from Pam or Amy. I am generally favorably disposed to most of VCC's recommendations. Some need tweaking, and a few may be off the mark, but most are spot on.

First, I think our programming suffers greatly from the long lead time from proposal submission to program date. Timeliness is a casualty, which then may make programs less relevant for attendees. Second, we do need to rethink the meeting logistics in many regards, including SIS events. I would not favor taking SIS meetings or educational programming completely outside the annual meeting, but the schedule could be changed to accommodate their needs and still benefit attendees who are not so interested or dependent on SIS programming. For example, if the SISes (what is the plural, anyway?) had a day up front devoted to business meetings and programming, then attendees who are not active in them could arrive a day later, saving a night's hotel cost. The sections could schedule business meetings in a more consistent manner. For example, the library types could meet at the same time without engendering significant conflict. The other sections could bundle their meetings around lunch or at another time in the day, and the remainder of that day could be devoted to section educational programs. The costs incurred in booking the meeting space we now require make registration fees out of reach for many.

I think the current program selection process needs an overhaul. First, relying on membership fees out of reach for many. Secondly, I can understand the point that VCC makes that AMPC involves politics to a higher degree than may be desirable. So my advice to the special committee is to take the recommendations seriously: implement those that offer new and refreshing ways to look at ourselves and the meeting; expand the pool from which we draw programs and speakers; and juggle the current schedule. Try out changes - view each year's annual meeting as an opportunity to improve on the one before.

Best,
Ken Hirsh

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45. RE:VCC Report Comment

From: Amy Hale-Janeke

To: Annual Meeting Special Committee

Posted: 12-12-2011 14:35

Subject: RE:VCC Report Comment

Message:
Speaking as the Chair of the State, Court, and County Law Librarians Special Interest Section, I was surprised at the report's conclusion that SISs are too strong. Is that perhaps because we are starting to make our voices heard where in the past we have been content to sit in the background?

I also got a feeling that VCC thinks "a library is a library is a library." If that were truly the case, we could just fold AALL right into AIA or PLA or SLA and call it a day. We are a specialized library association that has specialized components within it. SCCLLers deal with a very different customer base than the Academics or Private Law firm librarians and it would be ludicrous to try and lump us all together.

I think our programs and roundtables are really starting to provide the kind of interaction and information that various SISs need. Pamela Deemer's posting about the TS-SIS is an excellent example of this.

In the SCCLL world, the Joint Roundtable for Library Services to Pro Se Patrons and Prisoners is a collective venture between SCCLL and the Social Responsibility (SR) SIS and the Legal Information Services to the Public (LISP) SIS that is in its fifth or sixth year. Since it gets larger each year, I would say it is a great success. It allows people to share ideas with each other and across SIS boundaries. Would I want to give that up to hear an expensive speaker talk about the future or some other esoteric topic? No.

Do I wish some people were better speakers? Sure. But as long as the information is relevant and interesting, I'm usually willing to overlook that fact. And if there is someone who I know gives a good program (Ron Wheeler) I will go see the program even if I am not especially interested in the topic. In that way, I do think we have a sort of self-selecting mechanism.

Perhaps there could be a program on Saturday for first time speakers where they could get some coaching from experienced speakers. Or have a professional speech coach come in and offer a workshop for speakers to help them improve their delivery.

I'm still digesting the rest of the report and I'm sure I'll have other comments but I'd like to hear what others have to say.

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46. VCC Report Comment

From: Pamela Deemer

To: Annual Meeting Special Committee

Posted: 12-11-2011 23:25

Subject: VCC Report Comment

Message:
Although I shall be retiring in August 2012 and most likely not attending the Boston annual meeting, my loyalties to my colleagues compel me to make personal comments. Having served several years ago on AALL's Career Development Task Force, which at least had the results of a survey with which to work, also prompts my response.

The striking out at the SISs really bothers me, especially since I remember the awful Anaheim meeting, where there was maybe one program that was geared for tech. services librarians/catalogers. It was a waste of my university's money to send me there. It was a directors', associate directors', managers' and reference librarians' meeting. I also remember when I was Sec./Treas. of the TS-SIS that the then TS-SIS Board, concerned about having a quorum number for the business meeting, wondered if maybe 30 could be too high a number. Looking at the current past TS -SIS business meetings, I see achieving that number has been far from being a problem, thanks in part, I believe to the TS-SIS being very pro-active with programs that justify a tech. services librarian spending money to attend the AALL annual meeting.

The TS-SIS has its programs because it's been told the AMPC programs have to have wider appeal outside the SIS. The AMPC programs TS-SIS sponsors usually don't meet our specific needs, but contain what we hope will also interest non-tech. services people. Our SIS is exclusively concerned about production/processing/workflow for providing access to information and knowledge for all types of libraries, and not so much about social matters, latest reference tools, tech. toys, political influence, the laws of the state the conference is in, and so on.

If our SIS members depend only on webinars and readings or outside special conference, the main AALL conference will lose even more attendees. We'll also lose our contacts with non-technical services librarians for collaboration.

I also wonder if any of the Velvet Chainsaw Consultants attended any of the TS-SIS standing committee meetings, as well as programs. These meetings are often combination business meetings and roundtables and have large attendance. The report complains of cliquishness, but if committee meetings were only teleconferences or through email, that would worsen. Our committee meetings are open to all and are so to encourage people to drop in to give their ideas, thoughts, and volunteer time. If a person is interested in a committee, it's easy to get involved. It's not who you know that gets you active, it's intelligently opening your mouth or signing up and volunteering to do things in our SIS.

Most tech. services librarians I know do visit the Exhibit Hall to converse with vendors of integrated library/discovery systems, cataloging of batch records, book dealers, preservation experts, serials collections, etc., especially there has been a program comparing any of these.
The TS-SIS has so many standing committees and roundtables because technical services has different departments doing specific, different tasks. Some tech. services librarians are specialized in one area, others more than one or may be the head of techservices and thus interested in all the standing committees and roundtables. We have to justify our going to conferences to our bosses; being “educated/entertained” by general programs/keynote speeches doesn’t cut it, unless we can demonstrate the practical use of our attendance. This is probably even more so for tech. services librarians, because while we’re away, planning, ordering, cataloging, preserving, checking in serials, and processing materials are slowed down if not stopped.

What is the real crux of the problem? I believe, is NOT the programs. It’s the expense of registering, being strongly encouraged to stay at the high end hotels, and the expense of travel at a time of serious library budget cut-backs threatening even the existence of some libraries. Add to that the fact that instead of 5 days for the conference, we now have 4 days to cram everything in. We’re paying a heck of a lot more for less time. It can harder and harder for a non-director/associate director to attend if there isn’t a payback at the place of work.

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Overall Observations:

The Private Law Libraries Special Interest Section supports the efforts of AALL to undertake this study in order to make significant improvements in the management of the Annual Conference, and to take a fresh look at the Association’s goals to identify primary concerns of the membership. This document seeks to provide AALL with a formal response from the Board of the Private Law Libraries Special Interest Section. We speak on behalf of PLL members and, in that capacity, would like to highlight some concerns and make additional suggestions for improving both the conference and the professional development of our members.

These are several recommendations we advocate in support of the proposals in the Consultant’s Report:

- There is a need to create education differentiation by bringing in more outside speakers and providing for more hands-on learning opportunities. There should be less of a lecture style in the presentations, and more use of case studies in a problem-centric approach. Our members expect to return to their places of employment prepared to implement solutions immediately.
- There can be value in adopting broad topics/themes with the caveats that there is direct relevant learning for each type of library, and that the members have the opportunity to vote on the proposed topics.
- The time frame and the process for selecting programs should be more flexible. Moving back the timeline to both allow sufficient time for members to return to their work responsibilities while assimilating what they have learned, and to allow for “Hot Topics” to percolate for some time, will result in stronger programming.
- The conference schedule should include all Education programs, including SIS programming so that members have a clear selection of times and formats.
- There should be more coverage and inclusion of the latest ‘disruptive’ technologies which help create new markets, by disrupting existing markets, thereby displacing earlier technologies. The Association could bring in the developers of those technologies to be keynote speakers to improve the quality and differentiation of conference content. In addition, a ‘Technology Track’ of some kind should be available as part of the conference for the purpose of our members exploring the capabilities of the newer technologies.
- The conference schedule should provide more networking opportunities with other members and vendors, as is done at other professional conferences. For example, the current proposal to work directly with ILTA on a ‘Technology Day’ at the annual meeting could result in further development of that relationship. Such collaborations with other professional associations in the legal industry should be investigated, as they would directly benefit the members in their relationships in the workplace.
- In order to increase attendance at the conferences, the Association should consider alternative venues (e.g., Las Vegas, Miami, etc.) likely to attract more members, as well as alternative times which may allow for better synchronicity with individuals planning family or group vacations, and variances in work schedules. July is simply not the optimal time for a professional association meeting.
By aligning with the positive recommendations in this report, all of our members will benefit. The SIS Boards and SIS members are integral parts of the fabric of AALL. Their participation in this revision process will strengthen, not splinter, the Association.

Specific Responses and Recommendations:

1. **CONFERENCE GOALS & AUDIENCE** (Pages 9-11) -- AGREE that the conference offers too much general content, thereby losing effectiveness for the primary target audiences identified by the Consultant’s Report.
   
a. **Identify primary and supporting goals of Annual Meeting and the appropriate audience.** AGREE that there is a need to do this, while recognizing that PLL is one of four primary audiences (page 9) and most desired by exhibitors. More targeted programming for this audience will result in greater attendance at conference by this group and attract more vendors, which equals more value. For example, attendance at the PLL Summit has been proven to boost attendance at the AALL conference. The Association should recognize that the SISs are one of the primary reasons members attend the Annual Meeting. In order to justify attendance to employers, members want to attend programming specific to their jobs and to network with industry peers.

b. **Align all conference programming with AALL strategic plan, board direction and annual meeting goals.** AGREE that broad topics/themes are appropriate, as long as there is direct relevant learning for each type of library, and members have opportunities to suggest and vote on the proposed themes. E.g., PLL has a successful track record in selecting topics for the Summit which has doubled the number of attendees. A more focused, strategic conference – one that keeps to relevant educational tracks for the current environment – offers a more robust learning/educational experience.

As for first-time attendees and newer members, the Special Interest Sections offer a home of sorts, where they can meet and learn from colleagues and professional mentor on a smaller scale. In this environment, they encounter opportunities for skill enhancement and professional development in less formal settings where they may feel more comfortable in sharing ideas and concerns.

c. **Adopt a "We serve our members best by serving our profession first" attitude as one of the overarching educational goals.** DISAGREE with the objectives as stated in the report, with regard to conducting business at the annual meeting and the inference that there should be no SIS programming during the Annual Meeting. The Annual Conference is not used by the PLL Committees and Caucuses to conduct business. To the contrary, most PLL-SIS work takes place virtually throughout the year in the form of e-mail and conference calls. The one PLL Meeting Luncheon at the Conference is used to highlight successes, and to recognize volunteers and their accomplishments. We need to continue to provide opportunities for PLL SIS members to meet face to face at conferences and to reach out to foster camaraderie and teamwork. In addition, as noted above, members
seek education at the Conference as the way to justify their attendance and to enhance their professional development. Therefore, it is essential to provide a conflict free time for SIS meetings for both educational and networking purposes, as highlighted in the introduction to the Consultant’s Report.

d. Create conference education that differentiates itself from all other industry education offerings that focuses on attendee learning. AGREE TO A POINT, but feel there could be further recommendations to create education differentiation such as:

- bringing in more outside speakers
- providing for more hands-on learning opportunities
- collaborating with other Legal Professional Associations, such as the ABA, ARMA, ILTA, LMA, with regard to cross-interests and common concerns, such as the impact of technology and social networking on legal education.

e. Adopt learner-centric education strategies that go beyond information transfer in order to differentiate itself. AGREE. Adopting more of a learner-centric presentation strategy could benefit the members tremendously. As noted in the report, many attendees are hands-on, interactive learners. More programming that offered roundtables, peer-sharing/learning opportunities or problem solving exercises would serve PLL and all members favorably.

2. POLITICS (Pages 11-12) –

a. Transition the AMPC from a detailed logistic scheduling committee into one that is strategic that recommends topics and identifies issues and challenges of AALL participants. AGREE, with some caveats—AMPC cannot operate efficiently and effectively, as it is hampered by the details and logistics of program planning. The Association might consider hiring a professional meeting planner to coordinate many of the activities previously handled by the AMPC regarding logistics and the exploration of themes. As noted, the primary focus of the Committee should be on identifying the problems, issues and needs of all members for education programming. AMPC needs to be balanced with equal representation from the top four target audience SIS groups. AMPC can look to the top four target SISs to identify speakers and develop program content, in response to the strategies and goals identified by the Committee.

b. Move SIS education programming to another conference or a pre-conference format. AGREE that the pre-conference format could be beneficial as the vehicle for SIS programming. In fact, the PLL Summit has already foreshadowed the recommendation of the pre-conference format, and has been quite successful. This year’s theme is “The Path to 2020: A Vision for Change.” In this regard, PLL has anticipated the need for this variation on the conference scheduling. If some SIS programming is moved to pre-conference, then it might be necessary to add another day to the annual meeting. However we strongly DISAGREE.
with any effort to move the SIS education programming to a separate conference. Moving the SIS programming to another conference could be disastrous because of the economic implications requiring members to choose between the two conferences. Given the option of separate conferences, PLL members would prefer a Summit-like Conference in contrast to the Association meeting. Any movement in this direction would definitely foster splintering among the groups.

In addition, having an SIS pre-conference should NOT preclude them from being involved in formulating the regular conference programs. SIS Programming for the largest SISs should be allowed not only to continue but to grow within the scope of a theme provided for by AMPC. The SISs know what programming is vital for their members, so they should have more of a role in programming, not less. [Contrary to what is stated, the SISs are the drivers of the Association, the veritable glue which holds it together, NOT “splintering.”] In many ways, the SIS Boards are better-equipped to respond to member needs as they understand their priorities.

c. Make all SIS programming accountable to the same criteria as conference programming: higher evaluation scores, attendance and alignment with AALL’s mission, strategic plan, overarching conference themes, etc. If it can’t meet those goals, it should be dropped or omitted. We basically AGREE that SIS programming – as well as AALL Conference programming – should require metrics such as which provide accountability. However, there should be flexibility in selecting themes for SIS pre-conference programming, independent of the Annual Program Meeting.

CAVEAT: Based on the PLL-sponsored survey of attendee evaluations, it is clear there is no basis for the inference that SIS programming is of inferior quality. On the contrary, the results of the AALL survey show that the PLL-sponsored programs were ranked higher than a significant portion of other programming.

We DISAGREE with any recommendation that would relegate SIS activities to online communities only. As supported by evaluations and responsiveness to volunteer for SIS activities, the Special Interest Sections are the lifeblood of the Association. Relegating Committee/Caucus/Liaison interaction to only virtual involvement would weaken the membership as a whole.

3. TIMING: (Pages 13-15) –

a. AALL should reexamine its traditional conference planning process with a focus on providing current, relevant content that meets its primary audience segments’ needs. AGREE that rethinking the entire schedule for the annual meeting, particularly the preparation phase, is essential. It is clear that, due to the timing, the process drives the planning. In addition to the specific suggestions included in the Report, a more formal rubric where programs are ranked and given numeric values should be used for program analysis and proposal feedback. This process should be explained in all communications regarding program proposals, including rejection letters.
b. AALL should not schedule approximately 20%‐25% of the education programming until eight‐four weeks from the event. *(Should this be ‘four‐eight’?)* AGREE that some topics should be selected only shortly before the conference. However, four weeks may be too tight for planning an effective presentation. AGREE there is a need to re‐examine the processes but again, SIS leadership input must be included.

4. **EFFECTIVENESS VS EFFICIENCY** (Page 15) –

   a. AALL staff should reevaluate all conference planning processes based on "must haves," "like to have" or "unnecessary" procedures. – AGREE that there is a need to re-examine the processes but, again, the SIS leadership input must be included wherever possible.

5. **CONFERENCE CONTENT** (Page 16) –

   a. AALL should move away from the traditional Call for Speaker Proposal process and instead take an intentional curator strategist positions. AGREE.

   b. Transition the AMPC into a strategic committee that offers input, feedback and advice about big ideas, issues and topics. AGREE this should be modified.

   c. The AMPC and staff should theme conference topics around two to four main issues and then provide semantic threading for the rest of the content. AGREE.

6. **FOCUS ON QUALITY** (Page 17) – AGREE.

7. **GOOD ADULT LEARNING BEST PRACTICES** (Page 17) –

   a. AALL will best serve participants' needs by significantly reducing the amount of presenter or panel monologues and instead offer presentations that use good adult learning practices including audience engagement and peer sharing. AGREE that content must be targeted and relevant to the audience and the programming must be responsive to their needs. Perhaps broader programs—but fewer of them—will bring in a wider audience across SIS and specific interest lines. As previously discussed, more hands‐on and solutions‐based presentations are essential. However, there may be instances where knowledge‐sharing through case studies will benefit the audience.

8. **INVESTMENT IN PRESENTER TRAINING** (Pages 17-18). AGREE that AALL should bring in more external speakers as well as invest in presentation training for members. The latter could greatly benefit members who need to upgrade those skills and cannot obtain the training elsewhere.
9. **MORE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION PROCESS** (Pages 19-20). AGREE in principle with this approach, but recommend that evaluation processes such as those PLL used at the end of previous meetings, be considered. According to this analysis, less than 34% of attendees complete evaluations so there must be a concerted effort to identify more efficient ways to obtain this feedback. There are more technologically advanced ways to survey attendee response and provide on-the-spot feedback, including those using smartphones and iPad ‘apps.’

10. **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS** (Pages 20-21). Many of these are worth investigating, with the following ‘honorable mentions’:

- g. **“Saturday Programming.”** – AGREE with this implied vote of confidence for at least some SIS programming. In fact, the evolution of the PLL Summit anticipated many of the exact changes in programming which this report recommends for the entire conference and the Association needs to address.

- i. **“VIP Programming.”** AGREE that this concept should be considered, but should not be limited to Large Firm Directors. If developed, this type of programming should be expanded to include those seasoned professionals who may not have the title of “Director,” but who have the same responsibilities and professional development needs. There is strong evidence to suggest that law firms are eliminating those positions in the throes of firm administration re-structuring, and using the more narrow title would eliminate some of this valuable target audience.

- More Small Group Discussions. AGREE. These formats provide for more diverse conversations among the various constituencies of the respective SISs and the Association at large. They are flexible and conducive to less formal yet valuable networking.

- Closing Luncheon might be a way to celebrate and recognize the accomplishments of the members without having to extend their stay an additional day. AGREE.

11. **EXPO AND SPONSORSHIP SALES & SERVICE** (Pages 24-26) – “We believe that AALL can better leverage its relationships by deploying sales resources based on customers, not products.” AGREE that AALL needs to understand and be open to the value proposition from the vendor’s perspective. Trying to accommodate vendors to reach their target audiences through varying formats will strengthen relationships with members for both vendors and AALL. The Association should work with Special Interest Sections that have been identified as target audiences to establish more events and face-to-face opportunities to conduct business. As mentioned, AALL, as a whole, would greatly benefit from additional targeted sponsorships.

12. **MARKETING AND WEBSITE** (Pages 27-28). AGREE with most of the recommendations which address communication and conference issues, particularly with regard to streamlining conference registration, improving the website, eliminating the convention newspaper, using technology to contact and track previous registrants, etc.
13. TECHNOLOGY (Pages 29-30). AGREE with these suggestions, and also advocate that the adoption of smartphone and iPad apps as well as bar-coding to track attend actual attendance could provide critical metrics to evaluate the success of the Annual Meeting.
OBS SIS response to Velvet Chainsaw’s consultant’s report

OBS is concerned with the general tone and conclusions of the consultant’s report because we feel that the consultants have misunderstood the basic relationship between the SISs and AALL in general, they are unclear about the function of SIS programming, and they do not understand enough about library processes to be able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the SIS structure. Reading the report closely, it seems that the consultants see the annual conference as a money making activity, where attendees will visit the vendors in the exhibits area and purchase goods and services, and vendors will pay AALL good sums to have this access. We do not think that this is the reason for the AALL annual conference; many of us see it as our way to participate in continuing education and meet with colleagues in peer libraries to discuss common problems and solutions.

Librarians are not a homologous group; there are many different functions that a library needs to support its mission, and many librarians have different specializations and areas of responsibility. A reference librarian in an academic library often has more duties in common with a reference librarian from a firm or business librarian than the technical services librarians in the same academic library. Similarly, most technical services librarians, regardless of what kind of library they are from, use the same resource for identifying and cataloging materials (OCLC), follow the same rules for cataloging, and need to address similar user needs when negotiating licensing agreements and contracts for online resources. To speak of “academic” librarians as if they were all the same is naïve. One size will not fit all and one program will not serve all.

We are also concerned that technical services does not have a “home” in any of the groups the consultants identify. Research Instruction and Patron Services (group 3) includes librarians from both Academic libraries (group 1) and Private libraries (group 2). Computing Services (group 4) does include some technical services librarians, but librarians who use the technology are not necessarily the same ones who manage the technology, and each has different needs. If AALL
follows the consultants’ recommendations regarding which group to focus their attention on, technical services librarians will again be underserved by our annual conference.

Past conferences have had far fewer programs aimed at technical services librarians, who complained that they didn’t have enough programming to justify their attendance at the conference. Past rules of AMPC dictated that the programs they sponsored (assumed to be AALL programs in the report) be of interest to a large section of conference attendees but “general interest” was often used to deny support for “narrowly focused” technical services programs. Many members of the OBS and TS SISs remember the difficulties of getting our educational needs met. The Anaheim annual conference in 1998 and the Minneapolis annual conference in 2001 were mentioned by several members as conferences with almost no technical services programs.

The suggestion that AALL have more keynote and general sessions is a step backwards for technical service librarians, as these sessions are not useful enough to our members and often skipped. Plenary sessions, often the “feel-good” type of programs mentioned in the report, are very difficult for technical services librarians to justify to our library directors or firm managers. And how can the AALL annual conference include “more keynote and general sessions”\(^1\) and also meet their assessment that “participants want sessions that include advanced content that is narrower in focus...”\(^2\) at the same time? These are contradictory statements.

The suggestion that the SIS educational programs be moved to another conference or be made pre-conference programs is impossible. It is difficult for technical services librarians to get funding and time to attend the annual conference, and to add extra days to it or to hold a separate conference for the SISs makes it more likely that technical services librarians will be unable to attend. It is certainly possible to hold meetings virtually, either through Skype or other

\(^1\) Consultants report p. 4
\(^2\) Consultants report p.3
video conferencing software, but there is much to be said for meeting in person. And video conferences are more restrictive as people cannot just “walk in” and listen to the discussion. The technical services oriented SISs business meetings are always open meetings and new members are encouraged to attend and volunteer for committees. This cannot happen when participants have to have special access codes or numbers to join.

In conclusion, we feel that the consultants’ report does not accurately reflect the aims of SIS educational programming. By following their recommendations, AALL conferences would be less useful to our members and thus these members would be less able to justify attending the conferences.
The members of the GD-SIS Executive Board have studied the Velvet Chainsaw report from October 2011, and offer the following feedback on behalf of the GD-SIS membership. We are dividing our feedback into 3 areas: (1) recommendations and other points with which we basically agree; (2) recommendations that we challenge; and (3) other thoughts on the report.

Recommendations and other points we agree with

As with any such report that deals with a complex set of issues, there are positive points among the VCC recommendations for the Annual Meeting. We feel that, with some caveats, the following recommendations are good ones:

- **1e**: Adopt learner-centric education strategies that go beyond information transfer in order to differentiate itself.
  
  AMPC has tried to encourage formats beyond lectures for years; it’s time to focus more closely on bringing this about.

- **2c**: Make all SIS programming accountable to the same criteria as conference programming: higher evaluation scores, attendance and alignment with AALL’s mission, strategic plan, overarching conference themes, etc. If it can’t meet those goals, it should be dropped or omitted.
  
  We should be striving for accountability, and believe this recommendation represents a good first step in the right direction. Nevertheless, the devil is often in the details, and the recommendation and discussion is thin on timelines for meeting the goals, or specifics on measuring progress toward them.

  We do strenuously object to the unsubstantiated assertion that SIS educational programming results in “watering down the entire conference experience for the attendee.” It could just as easily (and probably accurately) be asserted that the AMPC-selected programs are responsible for watering down attendees’ experiences as are the SIS-sponsored programs.

- **3a**: AALL should reexamine its traditional conference planning process with a focus on providing current, relevant content that meets its primary audience segments’ needs.
  
  We agree with this recommendation insofar as the timeline should be shortened; program proposals
currently must be submitted approximately 10 months in advance of the actual conference.

• 7a: AALL will best serve participant’s needs by significantly reducing the amount of presenter or panel monologues and instead offer presentations that use good adult learning practices including audience engagement and peer sharing.

See comment under 1e above. Having said that, some of the best programs we have attended over the years were indeed “monologues” given by fascinating and intelligent people. It’s not the format that is the problem as much as it is the quality of speakers. We need speakers and presenters who are both better communicators and have something valuable to say. We would rather see fewer, excellent programs than 3-4 days full of mediocre ones.

• 8: AALL should invest in presenter training, helping speakers improve their presentation skills, content development and delivery.

The report makes a few other points which we feel are accurate (but are not always fully explored):

• From page 4: “The regular attendees who are active volunteers are exhausted after four full days!”

True, but we do not know why. The Annual Meeting used to be 5 days long (Saturday-Wednesday), which allowed for more breaks and down time during the day. Are active volunteer attendees spending all their time running from meeting to meeting? Even if one were not especially active in committee or SIS work, it’s quite possible to spend all 4 days just attending programs and visiting the exhibits, and still end up exhausted.

• From page 10: “Some leaders have stated that the content is not advanced enough to attract them so the content must change.”

AMPC has tried to encourage more advanced programming. It is not easy to do, since the more advanced people are in their careers, the more divergent their needs may become.

• From page 15: “All deadlines, procedures and requirements should be reevaluated and some should be redesigned. There have been many advances in technology and systems since AALL processes and procedures were first established. A review will help ensure that all of these activities are streamlined and support the conference attendee.”

Shortening timelines could be a good step toward shortening the 10 months between program submission deadlines and the actual meeting.
We challenge the following recommendations

There are some recommendations that we feel are misguided at best.

- **1a:** Identify primary and supporting goals of Annual Meeting and the appropriate audience.

  There are portions of AALL dues-paying membership who do not naturally fall into one of the top audience segments identified in the report. Even if potential attendees can figure out for themselves which segment they might fit into, there is no greater likelihood that the market segment approach endorsed in the report will result in programming that draws them to a conference. On its face, the goal of growing the conference is laudable; however, the audience segments approach (by leaving out certain constituencies) seems likely to bring in some new attendees at the expense of other attendees, thus minimizing the overall growth.

- **1c:** Adopt a “We serve our members best by serving our profession first” attitude as one of the overarching educational goals.

  There is an unsubstantiated assertion in the discussion of this recommendation, namely that “Allowing all SIS to offer programming and hold committee meetings during the conference is not in the best interest of the entire profession or the conference participant. It is in the best interest of some smaller groups within the association.” The members of SIS’s are also conference participants and members of the profession. SIS programming is sometimes scheduled opposite AMPC programs. We believe that professionals are capable of determining which they wish to attend, and which best serves their interests.

- **2b:** Move SIS education programming to another conference or a pre-conference format.

  The discussion claims that “Most SIS’s secure programming that is in the best interest of their SIS group, not of the average conference attendee.” That’s debatable, but there are reasons why SIS’s have fought hard to be able to put on their own programs: in the past, there have been conferences where specific constituencies have been “shut out” by the AMPC process, so their interests have not been represented. Allowing each SIS to be able to put on its own programs guarantees that at least some of their interests might be represented. Also, we would like to point out that it is not demonstrated that AMPC programs are always in the best interest of the average conference attendee (assuming there is such a person).

  We take issue with the paragraph discussing the use of AALL resources for SIS programming scheduling and meeting space planning. There is an unstated assumption that somehow the SIS’s are not constituents of AALL, deserving of staff time.

  One other point with on this recommendation: the GD-SIS Breakfast and Business Meeting serves
numerous purposes. Yes, it is an opportunity to move the business of the SIS forward. However, it is also an important networking opportunity for those who are fortunate enough to be able to attend. It even serves an educational function, as attendees to the Breakfast and Business Meeting are informed of happenings at the Government Printing Office that impact their work.

- **5b: Transition the AMPC into a strategic committee that offers input, feedback and advice about big ideas, issues and topics.**

  From the discussion: “Then staff designed a conference schedule around topics and matched speakers to the topics instead of scheduling speakers from proposals.” The staff at AALL who assist with meetings are all tremendous. We could not do what we do without them. But there is an unstated assumption here that they would be the ones in the best position to determine speakers, rather than the AALL membership (as currently happens). We believe this assumption is not in the best interests of either AALL membership or AALL staff.

**Other thoughts on the report**

Finally, some additional thoughts on the report, which do not fit neatly into the discussion above.

- The report reads as if AALL membership is hopelessly Balkanized by the presence of SIS’s. The report fails to note that many members (and attendees) are members of more than one SIS, so the apparent division into warring camps is vastly overstated. Additionally, the report reads as though the SIS’s are groups completely outside of AALL, trying to elbow their way into the proceedings. On the contrary, the SIS’s are all comprised of energetic, engaged professionals who are AALL members themselves!

- The authors of the report also do not appear to understand how the current program proposal and selection process actually happens. Many of the AMPC-selected programs are submitted to SIS’s for sponsorship before being submitted formally to AMPC. Some proposals are accepted by an SIS for sponsorship, then are submitted to AMPC. So many AMPC programs are SIS programs. Some proposals are rejected by AMPC, but can still be put on at the Annual Meeting at the sponsoring SIS’s option.
SCCLL is submitting a formal response to the VCC report in order to outline our concerns with the some of the presumptions and conclusions of the report. Our current board includes two people who have served on the Annual Meeting Programming Committee (AMPC) and are familiar with the current process.

**VCC: Identify primary and supporting goals of Annual Meeting and the appropriate audience.**

First, while the VCC report did focus on the idea that the annual meeting cannot be all things to all people, the report missed the point that the meeting fills an important educational role as a *specialized conference for law librarians*. This conference is not meant to be a generalized conference on the future of law librarianship or to just focus on the needs of only a fraction of the membership. The membership of AALL is not comprised of law librarians who just happen to work in slightly different environments. It is comprised of law librarians who work in vastly different environments with completely different educational needs. Focusing on just a few groups within the organization seems like we’d be cutting our own throats. It is fine to develop a theme, but don’t let that get in the way of an excellent topic.

**VCC: Align all conference programming with AALL strategic plan, board direction and annual meeting goals.**

This is an admirable goal and we generally support this in AMPC programming. We do think perhaps there should be a ban on certain topics. The annual meeting needs to focus on programs that can help their members move forward in their jobs and grapple with current topics and prepare for the future. Programs like “how the law from State X came into being” doesn’t seem to fit into that model.
However, if AALL decides to replace SIS-sponsored programs with more generalized keynote speakers, as the report suggests, where will the specialized information exchange happen?

**VCC:** Adopt a "We serve our members best by serving our profession first" attitude as one of the overarching educational goals.

This is ridiculous. It’s like the US disbanding all its military segments (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) with the idea that they all serve the USA so they can all do it as one big group. It would be unwieldy, inefficient, and unresponsive. Now imagine that all SISs were disbanded. What would you have? You'd have a huge membership that would feel cut adrift. And eventually cliques would develop, probably centered around the type of library an individual works in. We already have that. It's called a Special Interest Section. SISs help members feel like they are a part of AALL. They have people they can connect with who understand their challenges and who can mentor and help them with their career. People don’t join AALL for altruistic reasons. They join and pay membership dues to get something out of it for themselves. They need camaraderie, companionship, and a sense of belonging. In addition to topic-specific programming, that’s part of what an SIS provides.

Now, as to whether SISs should have a lot of committee meetings while at the annual meeting, that is a decision that needs to be made at the SIS level. With technology, it is easier to meet electronically, but there is still no replacement for face-to-face contact. The SCCLL Board thinks that the Social Responsibility SIS is pioneering a good way to have their committee meetings. They are having all the committees meet in one room at one time. So SISs can adapt and cut down on the number of committee meetings held at AALL, but they should not be totally excluded.

**VCC:** Create conference education that differentiates itself from all other industry education offerings that focuses on attendee learning.

After speaking to a number of members of SCCLL, one reason many of them have never joined the Special Library Association is that they do not have a State, Court, and County Law Library section. In fact, the SLA Legal section is mainly run by private firm librarians. And while there may be topics that overlap occasionally, firm librarians do not face the same challenges as state or county law librarians and vice versa. So people keep returning to AALL’s annual meeting not only for programming, but also for networking within the SIS. Therefore it seems that AALL has already accomplished this.
VCC: Adopt learner-centric education strategies that go beyond information transfer in order to differentiate itself.

We agree. This sounds like a great idea.

VCC: Transition the AMPC from a detailed logistic scheduling committee into one that is strategic that recommends topics and identifies issues and challenges of AALL participants.

Once again, AALL could use crowdsourcing to identify topics and issues and then AMPC could work on selecting programming that reflect those choices. It seems that VCC is advocating that AALL staff take on the work of the AMPC committee in addition to all the work they already do to arrange the annual meeting. This is unreasonable and, unless AALL hires another person, untenable. Perhaps AMPC could set up a listserve and interested people could vote or help out during the selection process or they could use the Zoomerang poll creation software and poll the membership on a regular basis. This would perhaps stimulate interest in members who have previously not attended.

VCC: Move SIS education programming to another conference or a pre-conference format.

We do not agree that SIS programming should be cut or crammed into one day. Members go to programs because they are interested in the topic of the program and the quality of the person presenting the program. They do not care if it is an AMPC program or an SIS program. The Special Interest Sections exist not to splinter the Association, but to foster mentoring and educational opportunities within specialized environments, which in turn cements loyalty to the AALL organization. Many AALL board members are nurtured within SISs and hold leadership positions in an SISs before moving up to a leadership position in the national organization.

If SIS programming were moved to a pre-conference format, it is likely it would reduce the number of days people would attend the annual meeting. Many SCCLL members pay their own expenses and forcing all SIS programming into one day would either prevent people from coming to the annual meeting or reduce the number of days they would attend the annual meeting since the specialized programming would meet their needs better than generic general session speakers.

SISs are not “space-hogs.” We order food for our business meetings and roundtables. Our members frequent the on-site restaurant and stay in the hotel. And it is not AALL’s place to regulate a participant’s experience. If SIS participants are tired after the annual meeting, that is a personal choice.
VCC: Make all SIS programming accountable to the same criteria as conference programming: higher evaluation scores, attendance and alignment with AALL’s mission, strategic plan, overarching conference themes, etc. If it can’t meet those goals, it should be dropped or omitted.

We agree. SIS programs should offer quality programming and speakers.

AALL does currently provide training for incoming committee leaders and leaders of special interest sections on Saturdays before the annual meeting. How did VCC miss this?

SCCLL vehemently disagrees with the notion of making SISs online only and dismantling their boards and committees. SISs are hubs within the organization with which members connect to on a personal level. If you take them out or spread them too thin, there will be a loss of membership.

VCC: AALL should reexamine its traditional conference planning process with a focus on providing current, relevant content that meets its primary audience segments’ needs.

We also agree that the dates for creating programming for the Annual Meeting should be pushed back. There is simply not enough time between the end of one annual meeting and the due date to create quality programming and recruit speakers. December 1 would be a much more reasonable date. And perhaps allowing the membership to vote on programming topics (crowdsourcing) would be a way to involve more of the membership and encourage them to come to the annual meeting.

One idea could be that after someone registers, they are allowed to vote on program topics (with speaker names removed). This would be an instance of voting with one’s dollars.

VCC: AALL should not schedule approximately 20%-25% of the education programming until eight-four weeks from the event.

If AALL wants to get quality speakers, the speakers will need more than four to eight weeks notice, especially if they are a big name or professional speaker. Leaving a few sessions open in order to do the “drip marketing” is reasonable. 25% of the programming being undecided a month before the meeting is not.
VCC: AALL staff should reevaluate all conference planning processes based on "must haves," "like to have" or "unnecessary" procedures.

We agree. However, this will take time. We also agree with the blind screening process.

VCC: AALL should move away from the traditional Call for Speaker Proposal process and instead take an intentional curator strategist positions.

How? Who will run it? How will it be funded? And once again, can a general speaker really connect with an audience of specialists?

VCC: Transition the AMPC into a strategic committee that offers input, feedback and advice about big ideas, issues and topics.

If the AMPC committee morphs into this, SCCLL would like to see it comprised of the Chairs of each of the SIS committees, along with the AALL staff or someone hired by the AALL staff.

VCC: The AMPC and staff should theme conference topics around two to four main issues and then provide semantic threading for the rest of the content.

This is a good idea. Instead of having one main theme to the annual meeting, there could be several. It sounds like the tracking system used by Computers in Libraries which seems to be very popular.

VCC: AALL should focus on providing more quality content and not quantity.

This is true. But quality is not necessarily hiring outside speakers to talk about “positive thinking” or other general topics. Quality could be in the form of providing more roundtable discussions with a moderator in a smaller setting instead of a cavernous room.

VCC: AALL will best serve participants' needs by significantly reducing the amount of presenter or panel monologues and instead offer presentations that use good adult learning practices including audience engagement and peer sharing.
VCC asserts that switching to a more hands-on model will increase participants’ satisfaction and will attract members to the annual meeting. This may or may not be true. Our profession is unique. It is a largely cerebral one. Most of our speakers are volunteers who are not getting paid, and there are few people in our profession who could successfully pull off an interactive program. By and large, our profession is staffed with people who are not comfortable with public speaking or being called on in large group settings. In fact, people may shun such settings, even if the information promises to be excellent, simply because they do not want to be “called on.” Many people prefer the lecture-type format and find that it is an efficient information transfer system.

On the other hand, in order to gradually introduce more interactive concepts to speakers, we do think it is an excellent idea to have a public speaking academy for speakers on the Saturday before the conference to allow people to polish their presentations and/or work on their style. Everyone can use pointers and it could be a mandatory requirement for AALL members to attend if you commit as a speaker.

As far as the length of the meeting, we do not feel that adding another day onto the length of annual meeting itself or for SIS programming, will make the annual meeting more financially viable. Most SCCLL members pay to attend the meeting out of their own funds since their employers are usually too strapped for cash to send them or will not pay for out of state travel. Adding an extra day would probably not entice them to stay due to hotel and food costs.

**VCC: More comprehensive evaluation process for education and move away from smile sheet evaluations**

We agree. Evaluations that are more objective and informative help provide better feedback. Session counts should also be implemented.

**VCC: Awards Ceremony and Tuesday Lunch**

We agree. And the lunch should last no more than an hour.

**VCC: Convention Newspaper**

We disagree with the discontinuation of the newspaper. Many people either do not bring or do not have iPads or smartphones or other technology. And the newspaper helps keep participants aware of important information like room changes, the background for keynote speakers, etc.
VCC: Final Program

We like the printed version of final program the way that it is. It is easy to use and doesn’t need to have photos of members or other “extras” that will drive up the cost of the programs.

VCC: Live Streaming and Video Capture

We support this. Members who are not able to attend the annual meeting should be allowed to see at least one program a day. That might entice them to come to the meeting next year. The other info about how to enhance the video capture is nice, but it would take adding another person to the AALL staff to accomplish it.

Summary: VCC has some good ideas about slowly moving our membership and annual meeting into the future, but they have totally missed the value of SISs and how we help the Association. We recommend that AALL keep the value of its SISs in mind when making any decisions based on the VCC report.
Members of the TS-SIS and its Executive Board have read and studied the consultant’s report on the Annual Meeting, and offer this feedback, following the order of the report’s sections as closely as possible.

Why People Attend Conferences

We agree that people attend conferences for their networking and educational value. The consultant’s report notes that attendees “desire solutions that improve their companies or their professional condition” (p. 6). TS-SIS is committed to ensuring that Annual Meeting programming meets this goal. The work of technical services librarians differs markedly from that of other law librarians because it is production-oriented and judged by metrics, and consequently our programming must reflect that difference.

AALL Current Conference Education Approach

The consultant’s report contends that “the SIS committee meetings and programming at the Annual Meeting have created splintering factions, SIS fatigue where leaders have to attend too many meetings instead of conference education, and AALL’s own competing forces” (p. 7). We respectfully disagree with this assertion. The TS-SIS Education Committee vets program proposals for both AMPC submission and SIS sponsored programming. It winnows out weaker or duplicative program proposals and gives guidance to strengthen programs. TS-SIS limits the number of programs it offers, Committees have combined meetings with Roundtables, and our chairs make judicious decisions about scheduling. We are not continuing to expand our programming unchecked. For example, in 2012, we will combine our incoming and outgoing board meetings into one session.

TS-SIS is willing to continue its efforts to reduce the number of meetings and roundtables it offers based on member feedback, but we do not wish to eliminate vital collaborative meetings that bring real value to us individually, to our employers, and to our profession. Compelling programming draws attendance. Rather than see a popular SIS-sponsored event as weakening the conference, we should respect the important niche it fills.

Conference Goals and Audience
The consultant’s report suggests that the top Annual Meeting audience segments are Academic, Private, Research Instruction and Patron Services, and Computing Services (p. 9). Technical services librarians do not fit easily into any of these segments. Our interests span the segments, and as a result technical services programs draw substantial audiences. In fact, over the years it has not been rare to encounter crowds overflowing the insufficient space allotted to a session on a technical services topic.

The report asserts that “Allowing all SIS to offer programming and hold committee meetings during the conference is not in the best interest of the entire profession or the conference participant” (p. 9) and that “People attend the conference for education and networking, not to attend SIS or committee meetings” (p. 10). We believe that our meetings are educational.

The Special Interest Sections supply programming that is in the best interest of their respective groups. Technical services librarians cannot justify attending the Annual Meeting based solely on the number of AMPC programs devoted to technical services issues. Independent TS-SIS programming was fought for and eventually achieved after years during which AMPC virtually ignored technical services topics.

AALL charges a fee for SIS-sponsored program evaluations, so TS-SIS uses Zoomerang.com, which is free of charge. Attendees at TS-SIS sponsored programs are encouraged to complete these evaluation forms online. TS-SIS also conducts biennial membership surveys in which we actively seek comment and implement program suggestions from the membership. As recommended in the report, we create conference education that “differentiates itself from all other industry education offerings that focuses on attendee learning” (p. 10). The AALL Annual Meeting is THE place to go to learn about acquisitions, cataloging, preservation, etc. as these areas specifically relate to law librarianship. We have success in engaging the experienced professional as well as the novice.

The consultants recommend that “AALL should implement other educational strategies such as Peer2Peer Roundtable discussions …” (p. 21). Roundtables and hands-on programming have been hallmarks of TS education for decades. A number of TS-SIS groups meet as roundtables to discuss common concerns and issues. These roundtable discussions engage adult learners at all levels of experience.

The TS-SIS Board does not agree that committee meetings have no place at a professional meeting. All our committees have teleconference meetings and email correspondence among members throughout the year. Our meetings at Annual serve important purposes of networking among existing members and recruitment among existing and potential members. And sometimes those meetings are not small, and sometimes they offer the most exciting and passionate discussions of the conference, as anyone who has attended one of those exhilarating sessions can attest. Practically all TS-SIS meetings are open, and walk-in members are encouraged. Unlike AALL committees, for which people are selected and membership is limited, TS-SIS committees accept volunteers, making it much easier to get involved and participate actively.
Our productive and industrious TS-SIS committees are engaged in meaningful services that add true value to the entire profession. We are not “planning our SIS year” (p. 10), we are conducting vibrant work for the profession. The benefits of our work are felt by every law librarian and legal researcher who turns to an online bibliographic database for help. We exemplify the goal of “serv[ing] our members best by serving our profession first” (p. 9).

- We are collaborating with OCLC to retrospectively add the new law genre/form terms to all appropriate bibliographic records in the OCLC database.
- We championed efforts to implement COUNTER and SUSHI standards.
- We provide a constructive flow of information between librarians and MARC record vendors through our Vendor Records Quality Committee. The committee provides a strong unified voice to demand high-quality records and to provide feedback to those vendors that do adhere to satisfactory standards.
- We sponsor the Subject Authority Cooperative (SACO) Law Funnel, which empowers all librarians to recommend new law-related subject headings to improve the Library of Congress Subject Headings.

In each of these cases, TS-SIS committees formed action-focused groups in direct response to needs expressed by members. These are the very kinds of services that a professional organization should offer.

**Politics**

Under *Politics*, the report recommends that “The primary focus of the AMPC should be one of identifying the top three or four audience segments’ needs, challenges and issues” (p. 11) and goes on to say that “AALL must take control of the SIS programming and move it all to one day or not offer it at all during the conference” (p. 12) and “The SIS groups do not offer programming that’s in the best interest of AALL’s top three audience segments that will help the conference grow” (p. 13). This sounds to us ominously akin to the situation before the reforms of the last ten years. We are concerned that technical services programming will once again be marginalized, while focus is narrowed to segments of the membership deemed more likely to generate revenue.

The *Politics* section also contends that “Current SIS programs are actually a liability ... because of the lack of accountability for the SIS’s to provide quality programming” (p. 13). On the contrary, we take our programming decisions seriously.

At the 2011 Annual Meeting, TS-SIS separately coordinated four programs. We are not unaccountable, but rather we administer detailed attendee surveys to gauge the success of these programs—similar to the very recommendations in the report (p. 19). The evaluations of TS-SIS program are overwhelmingly positive. Our results exceed the consultant’s eventual goal of 90-95% favorable. Three of the programs achieved scores indicating 96-100% satisfaction, and 97-100% of respondents agreed that the content would “benefit [them] in [their] workplace or career.” The remaining program achieved 77% and 83%—closely matching the initial benchmark in the report (p. 19). Only three respondents indicated that the programming was too basic.
Evaluators are encouraged to post comments for each specific program and for TS programs in general. These comments commend speakers for practical information, and further support the value of the specific programming that TS-SIS provides:

- “This was the best program at AALL this year.” (TS-SIS Hot Topic program: The RDA Decisions and What It Will Mean for Me and My Library),
- “Thanks so much to TS-SIS for providing a forum for this extremely important information. I learned a lot and now I have some practical advice to implement in my own library.” (TS-SIS Hot Topic program)
- “I am a reference librarian and I attended because of discussions I have been having with my colleagues …. I found the presentation highly informative and very interesting. Thank you! (Is-ness vs. About-ness: Development and Implementation of LC Law Genre/Form Terms, a submitted program proposal not accepted by AMPC)
- “Once again showing that TS-SIS knows what people are interested in—standing room only crowd!” (a submitted program proposal not accepted to AMPC)
- “All of TS sponsored programs and speakers this year were excellent and very useful.”

The report also claims that “Currently the SIS groups are taking up unnecessary meeting space to have small board/committee meetings during conference education ... Utilizing a disproportionate amount of meeting space, without food and beverage revenue, makes AALL less desirable to these facilities” (p. 12). TS-SIS is sensitive to the need for the Annual Meeting to produce revenue. In Philadelphia many TS-SIS meetings ordered coffee and breakfast foods. In comparison, none of our Board membership could remember any AMPC educational sessions with food or beverages.

**Timing, Effectiveness vs. Efficiency, Conference Content**

TS-SIS recognizes that the call for proposals comes too soon after the previous year’s conference. We reserve one programming slot per conference for a “TS-SIS Hot Topic.” In 2011, the TS-SIS Education Committee posted a call for ideas to the SIS membership in March. The Education Committee began coordinating the session in late April and May, just prior to the conference.

The report’s proposals for changing the functions and procedures of the AMPC may be useful, but we don’t believe they will fundamentally alter the predisposition of AMPC members, few of whom have backgrounds in technical services, to dismiss technical services programs as uninteresting or arcane. TS-SIS does not relish the prospect of having to contort its program proposals to meet some all-encompassing conference theme that has nothing to do with technical services.

**Focus on Quality, Good Adult Learning Best Practices, and Presenter Training**

The TS-SIS Board agrees with the recommendation that AALL train, coach, and evaluate speakers on content design, delivery and visuals, and is ready to engage enthusiastically in efforts to improve the learner experience through presenter training.
Tracks

We patently do not recognize our programming as “political posturing” or as “causing division of AALL membership ranks” (p. 12). We are a house united in service to our members and our profession. What is viewed as “splintering factions” (p. 7) is instead a constructive effort to keep the Annual Meeting relevant to a large segment of the membership. TS-SIS does an excellent job providing programming that fulfills the consultant's recommendation to “include advanced content that is narrower in focus.” Our sessions are targeted and practical, yet a recent member of AMPC describes her experience as having to “really fight to get tech services programs accepted.”

The consultant reports that “First-time attendees are overwhelmed by the number of choices, lack of educational tracks and endless list of committee meetings that don’t apply to them” (p. 4). TS-SIS has been lobbying AALL about the importance and value of establishing educational tracks for a long time. Several library conferences, like LITA and Computers in Libraries, already define specialized tracks. Rather than limiting SIS involvement in programming, we request that the consultant's report be interpreted as a need for more direct SIS input in organizing tracks for the conference, although we do not believe that the primary audience segments identified in the report can serve as tracks.

The consultants suggest that “Another way to focus on quality over quantity is to design more keynote or general sessions” (p. 4). The TS-SIS Board believes that the typical keynote and plenary-type programs are better suited and more efficiently presented in printed library literature, blogs, and webinars. These "thought stimulating" presentations are generally not applicable to solving concrete workplace problems and challenges. Technical services librarians need to be able to justify conference attendance and expenses with attainment of practical knowledge. Rather than provide more keynote or general sessions, AALL should free up more of the schedule. Our strength is in the variety of our buffet-style offerings, and in trusting our innovative and intelligent membership to connect its own dots.

Revenue

The TS-SIS Board understands that AALL needs funds in order to operate, but we’re disturbed by the report’s focus on the revenue potential of members as a determining factor in program choice, as in these remarks:

- “Beyond a SIS census, we recommend that the filters used to define your primary audience include: 1. Competitive alternatives in the marketplace (SLA, ILTA); 2. Buying authority (exhibition/sponsors keep conference fees in check).” (p. 4-5)
- “The SIS committee meetings should align with the goal of the Annual Meeting, revenue and education of members ...” (p. 10) [Revenue comes first?]
- “If SIS conference programming and meetings are going to be offered, the Board should place limits on both. If not, the AALL conference will continue to grow with increased programs and meetings and AALL will get less and less revenue for their annual budget from the experience.” (p. 12)
• “Note, topics should attract the top three market segments that will help the conference grow, not being all things to all people.” (p. 14)

As a nonprofit professional membership organization, AALL cannot play favorites or appear to play favorites in educational programming based on income potential. TS-SIS makes up a sizable constituency. As of January 17, 2012, TS-SIS has 663 members (more than 14% of AALL’s 4650 total). The consultant’s focus on “attracting the top three market segments” marginalizes our membership in AALL and our role in the profession.

Reliability

The report repeatedly presents opinions as statements and facts without references. As outlined above, our experience with the annual meeting and the work of the TS-SIS is very different from what the consultant’s report asserts.

Conclusion

The consultant’s executive summary notes: “Your participants want sessions that include advanced content that is narrower in focus and led by presenters that will guide them through how to apply the content. They also want content that will help them solve their problems and challenges. They enjoy topics around new technologies that can be applied in the work place” (p. 3). This is exactly what TS-SIS provides. We pride ourselves on addressing the needs of our large and active membership. The services and programming offered by TS-SIS are vital to the health and success of AALL.

We believe that the AALL staff and the AALL Executive Board can work together towards the goal of increased Annual Meeting attendance by incorporating the report's recommendations for improving presentations, while avoiding its more divisive suggestions, such as eliminating programming for those outside primary market audience segments and excluding SIS programs and meetings.
Exhibit B. Late SIS Responses
To: Diane Rodriguez (dmr@hassard.com), Committee Chair; Deborah Rusin (deborah.rusin@kattenlaw.com); Ron Wheeler (rewheeler@usfca.edu); Jean Wenger (jean.wenger@cookcountylil.gov)

From: Margaret (Meg) Butler (mbutler@gsu.edu), on behalf of the SR-SIS

Date: February 13, 2012

Re: Velvet Chainsaw Consulting Report

On behalf of the SR-SIS I am responding to the Velvet Chainsaw Consulting report on the AALL Annual Meeting.

We are concerned about the report’s generally negative tone regarding SIS groups, something we have seen echoed by the other SIS groups responding to the report. SIS groups—and caucuses, which received little discussion in the report and on the list—are important in terms of both future leadership development and encouraging members to find affinity groups, whether they are based on age in the profession, protected status (race, sexual orientation), or type of work environment. Within those groups, librarians network with each other, learning how to get things done in their own work environments, how to get work done within the association, and how to work with others. Social events, though fun and affording librarians the opportunity to meet each other, do not provide reasons for folks to stay in touch—something that SIS work encourages, by its very nature. Although SIS committees may meet in person during the conference, their work continues throughout the year, and those relationships are among the strongest networking done at the conference. Marginalizing the SIS groups and their work will not benefit members or the association.

The SR-SIS feels that there are a number of beneficial suggestions that if implemented would further the strategic mission for AALL’s annual meeting.

- The deadline to submit program proposals should be changed to give people more time to create sessions. However, if the timing is pushed back significantly there is a possibility that people won’t have time to plan for funding/scholarships if accepted programs are not announced until February.
- Investing in presenter training and developing their presentation skills is a great idea.
- Finding ways to deal with a ten minute attention span is important.
- The last minute programming and drip marketing sound like a good ideas, but we aren’t comfortable relying on staff to select content.
- Creating an Annual Meeting that isn’t a four day marathon would be beneficial for many attendees who are highly active in the profession and organization.

There are also a number of recommendations that are incomplete and/or misguided.

- The assertion that AMPC is caving under political pressure from the SISs ignores the fact that allowing each SIS to present its first choice program dispenses with the AMPC’s need to cater to any political pressure from an SIS.
- Many attendees rely on participation in the SIS activities to justify the cost of attendance. If we decrease the number of activities available for participation fewer people will be able to go to the Annual Meeting.
- Devoting resources to create more opportunities to network may not be as important as the report makes it out to be. In fact, professionals are going to find ways to network and mingle. There is no danger of missing out on that, particularly as participants network at SIS meetings, for example.
• The idea that SIS work can be done entirely virtually or with a conference call is laughable at best, and there is a great benefit to some actual face to face work at the meeting.

• The report fails to acknowledge/understand the scope and value of the networking and learning taking place at these SIS committee meetings, roundtables, and programs.

• There is a recommendation that roundtables should be encouraged, yet these already exist from the SISs. These roundtables are generally open to all, regardless of SIS membership, and they provide attendees a great opportunity to learn and network on a more focused issue—geographically specific collection development issues for the FCIL folks, faculty services issues for the ALL-SIS folks, etc.

• Live blogging during a program. If you are present at a program why are you trying to follow along at another? Although this might benefit people who are not able to attend, this is already happening based on people tweeting through events. Imposing a structure upon this may not ultimately make the programming any more accessible, particularly if the current My Communities platform is used for this.

The following suggestion met with ambivalence from the SR-SIS.

• Discontinuing the newspaper and moving to a blog
  o Perhaps if it were to save resources better spent elsewhere it would be a good idea since the newspaper is met with no strong feelings at all.
ALL-SIS Reply  

to the  
Velvet Chainsaw Consulting Report (VCC Report)  

Authored by the ALL-SIS Programs Committee; Edited and Submitted by the ALL-SIS Executive Board  
Thursday, February 23, 2012

Introduction

ALL-SIS shares many of the concerns raised by the SISs which have already commented upon the report. While we start with a critique of the report, we submit this reply to further support some of the VCC suggestions. Most of all we would like to thank AALL for providing us with the opportunity and tools to reflect on the role of AALL in the development of our profession.

The Greater Role of the SIS Structure

As a section, ALL-SIS asks AALL to continue to recognize that the current network of special interest sections is an integral part of the organization. The most significant flaw in the report is that it starts with a misconception that the SIS’s are somehow in conflict. We wish to counter the reports assertions that AALL is competing with SISs for sponsorship dollars, conference participant attention, and meeting space.

ALL-SIS is one of the larger SISs and yet it cannot serve the needs of all academic law librarians. We must ourselves rely upon otherSISsto support the various, and sometimes fringe, professional aspirations of AALL members. Each SIS provides members with leadership opportunities, professional networking systems, and educational programming. For example, ALL-SIS once rejected a program proposal regarding archiving special collections. The section’s leadership considered the topic irrelevant to the vast majority of law schools. However the Rare Books and Legal History SIS was interested and turned it into a valuable program.

In addition to networking generally at conference-related events, such as CONELL, networking occurs at the SIS meetings, roundtables, and other events which allow attendees from geographically diverse areas to meet and discuss common issues related to their employment.

Our section also supports the current system of SISs because it provides our members with additional leadership opportunities. Because the association has a limited number of committees, leaders in the profession first became involved with AALL through the SIS committees. Limiting the number of SISs or the role of SISs would ultimately take away opportunities to groom new professionals.

We oppose the suggestion that SIS programming be moved to preconference days. Those days are already occupied by other programming and trainings, ranging from the Boulder Conference to AALL workshops. Moving SIS programming would, in fact, splinter the conference. Also, because we believe that SIS programming is complementary to, rather than
conflicting with, AMPC programming, we believe that SIS programming does “serve the profession first.”

Program Selection

The section has strong reservations about the suggestion that the AMPC should have a smaller role in planning AALL educational programing and that AALL staff should be more involved in organizing the programs. The report makes this suggestion in response to a perception that the membership and staff are currently prisoners of operation logistics and not focusing on the strategic and big-picture issues of the profession. ALL-SIS cautions against minimizing the role of the AMPC in the evaluation and selection of programs. The AALL staff members are clearly knowledgeable about the issues of law libraries in general, but are not professional librarians. Because our professional needs shift constantly, we believe that only professional librarians can evaluate the relevance of program proposals. More specifically, ALL-SIS is opposed to a system of automatically selecting the programs highly ranked by the AMPC.

The current system for reviewing program proposals should be retained because it asks several professional librarians with divergent interests to express the value of each program. This educates the AMPC. In addition, the SIS-funded alternative programs provide the membership with a valuable way to present programs rejected by the AMPC. For example, last year the section funded a program on the need for librarians to have law degrees. While the AMPC rejected the program, it drew a huge crowd and generated a lively debate.

ALL-SIS does not agree with the VCC statement that politics is playing a large role in the selection of programs. Our first concern is that the report does not define “politics”. We assume the report refers to the tension within AMPC as it attempts to promote the varying needs of its various members. Rather than consider it a problem, the section believes that political debate creates a balanced conference. The resulting programming addresses the needs of a broad cross-section of the AALL membership. In some ways the political process allows the profession to compare the experiences of our peers. For example, ALL-SIS is currently evaluating the research needs of legal practice. We can learn a great deal about this issue by debating the merits of program proposals from private law librarians.

Maintaining the current system for evaluating programs will support the AALL Strategic Directions for education, which directs the membership to develop “specialized educational programs addressing the diverse needs of members.” The VCC report suggests that programming should be selected in alignment with AALL’s strategic goals. In that vein, it would be counter to the AALL Strategic Directions for the organization to follow the VCC suggestion of focusing on the interests of the four largest SISs.
Regarding Educational Programming: Specific Suggestions

Presentation Skills

ALL-SIS would be delighted to see more education available for members to improve their presentation skills. The report critiques the AALL programing as having speakers who are not very good.

Many librarians, particularly those in academia, regularly teach students, faculty members, and other library patrons on a variety of topics. Each of us would be happy to improve our presentation skills. Presentations during AALL are in a way a chance for people to practice teaching and learn from each other.

The section also suggests that AALL provided each accepted program with presentation support throughout the year. The organization could match presenters with coaches or mentors. It could also make available a collection of training material related to presentation skills. Our ranks include several exceptional speakers able to mentor others.

In addition AALL could offer a “certification” program that focuses on education theory, instructional tools, and classic rhetoric considerations of energy, voice, and pace.

Types of Presenters

One critique of AALL programing is that we do not bring in enough new ideas partially because of a scarcity of speakers from outside the law library community. For example, programs rarely discuss issues already addressed by academic librarians or the information-technology industry. We recommend that the AMPC support and actively promote an increase in the number of non-law librarian speakers. South by Southwest Interactive (SXSWi) and ACRL conferences are valuable models in that both organizations bring experts from different fields to collaborate during “talking-head” programs. SXSWi programing is exceptionally valuable because technology experts, marketers, and representatives from government agencies come together with librarians. SXSWi 2011 was nick-named the “Year of the Librarian,” because librarians were the only ones able to help technologist, marketers, and users understand how to work together. AALL could help bring law librarians into this discussion.


2 In her article Connelly writes: “I met with Justin Grimes, a Ph.D. candidate at University of Maryland who has done significant work on open government standards, and works with the formidable Carl Malamud on digitizing federal archives. I told him about my theory that librarians were the lens through which to view SXSWi, and he started nodding. ‘Librarians are the boots on the ground,’ Grimes told me. ‘We don’t care what the tech is, we care about what the user actually needs. That’s our mandate.’... “There was, by my count, a panel or a meet-up showcasing librarians every day of this year’s SXSWi.” Id.
Format of Presentations

ALL-SIS suggests that AALL provide ongoing guidance or coaching regarding the format of each educational event. The report explains that AALL membership prefers non-talking head programming. However, we caution against doing away with large format presentations. AALL already provides a variety of learning experiences throughout each conference (roundtables, small group meetings, informal gatherings, hands-on presentations like those done by CS-SIS). We believe that participants enjoy large group programs in part because they need to spend some time sitting alone in the room—a break of one sort for those who are mentally and physically exhausted after their conference efforts.

As an aside, the section disagrees with a few specific format suggestions in the report. For example, the report suggests that programming should happen in larger rooms, which may not make small group activities or other formats/activities easy or successful. Even in the mid-sized rooms, people often leave gaps in the seating, and that would be exacerbated in a larger room—further hindering small group discussion/work. Additionally, the report’s suggestions for more “learner-centric” experience, such as having an expert interviewed, does not sound that different than an expert speaker presenting a PowerPoint slideshow.

AMPC Assistance

ALL-SIS supports the suggestion that the AMPChelp members develop program proposals. It would be helpful for the AMPC to provide guidance about topics of interest, make strong suggestions regarding presentation formats, and to issue focused “calls for proposals.” This would especially help people who want to participate but need a topic or structure to build a program around. However, as mentioned earlier, ALL-SIS believes that programming should remain broad and avoid efforts to limit the subjects covered. For similar reasons, we also support the addition of last-minute program selections.

Co-Sponsorship

Although the VCC Report did not address the process of SISs co-sponsoring alternative programs, ALL-SIS recommendsthat AALL promote and support that option. It is likely that several SISs may wish to co-sponsor alternative SIS programs, but individually don’t have the funds or infrastructure. This year, two such programs were put forward by ALL-SIS and RIPS-SIS, for example. The co-sponsorship of programs among SISs is a trend likely to continue as the groups work together and identify common interests in programming. It is likely that the extra time available for people to plan and propose programs this year allowed ALL-SIS and RIPS-SIS
to co-sponsor the program—if the time for program submission continues to be extended, this situation is likely to arise more often.

**Evaluation Forms**

We offer a specific suggestion regarding the VCC report’s recommendations regarding speaker evaluation forms. Please consider offering forms customized to include the learning objectives for each program. Doing so would help evaluate whether the speaker met the program’s learning objectives.

It would be welcome for the evaluation forms to be available in a mobile-compliant format. That would allow participants a chance to provide evaluations during or after the presentation. Some members are already tweeting during programs and providing real-time public evaluations. Formal evaluations should be just as easy as following those tweets. In addition, evaluation reports should include the tweets related to the program.

ALL-SIS agrees that live-streaming of conference content may be useful for members—more useful than live-blogging. Additional training to assure that speakers were addressing the virtual audience would be necessary. Live blogging would be supplanting live tweeting, a grassroots commentary by members.

**Timing**

The section requests that AALL announce programming earlier so that members can better select their professional development opportunities. Not hearing back about proposals until winter may limit presenters’ ability to prepare, but more importantly it may limit peoples’ ability to seek funding for the conference. Many scholarship deadlines are before February, and many institutions are not financially supporting members to attend conferences unless the member is a presenter. When members are able to seek institutional funding for conferences in the Fall, they may secure the funding before it is ‘used up’ for the fiscal year.

**Program Materials**

ALL-SIS opposes the elimination of paper program materials. First, prior program materials are not easily available in electronic format, and novice program proposers may find reviewing past programs helpful in proposing their own programming. It is also useful for members to be able to review past programs to identify recent topics—maybe it’s not worth repeating a similar program from two years earlier. As it is currently difficult for users to review prior years’ programming materials, it is not yet appropriate to ‘do away’ with the print. Additionally, although the conference area itself may have free wi-fi access, not all members are able to access online program materials freely in their hotel rooms or hotel conference rooms; the conference program is something people should be able to access freely and easily from all points in the conference.
Conclusion

ALL-SIS appreciates the willingness of AALL to review its educational programming to provide a better experience for the collective membership. Once the concerns articulated in this document are addressed, we believe the association will continue to build innovative conferences and educational programming for its membership. We hope that the suggestions regarding assessment will be implemented, allowing AALL to provide consistent, excellent educational opportunities for its members.