

## LEADER PROFILE

# VOLUNTEER, INITIATE CHANGE & STAY ACTIVE

For Patrick H. Butler, a career in libraries was a natural fit. He had always loved doing research, and after getting some solid advice from leaders within the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), Butler decided that a career in law librarianship would be perfect for him.

Now, with more than a decade of research experience in both academic and private sectors under his belt, he helps support the attorneys, business development team, and administrators of his firm by providing them with high-quality research, analysis, and guidance on using the most effective legal analytics tools available today.



After discovering his passion for research, Butler initially decided to pursue a career as a librarian. He earned his MLS from St. John's University in New York in 2004 before pursuing a law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law. After earning his JD in 2011, the natural next step in his career evolution was to become a law librarian. "I didn't jump right into it," recalls Butler. "I spent a lot of time talking to people about law librarianship, many of whom were leaders in AALL, before making the decision to pursue law librarianship and not go into practice."

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His first professional position was as an electronic resources and reference librarian and an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut School of Law (his alma mater). After working in the academic environment for a few years, he made the switch to a private law firm. "The switch was actually circumstantial," notes Butler. "I was moving across the country for my wife's career, and my current role was the best fit for my skills. I am actually very happy I landed at a firm. I really enjoy the faster pace, new challenges, and the immediate impact I have on the success of the firm." In his role as director of research services, Butler provides in-depth legal research and analysis, industry and company reports, and links intelligence with strategy. He procures the research and analytics

#### **PATRICK H. BUTLER**

- DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
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tools to support the firm and provide it with a competitive edge.

After joining AALL in 2012, Butler has been active on a number of committees, including the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Committee and Jury Chairs, and as the chair and member of the Leadership Development Committee, to name a few. He has also been a board member of the Computing Services Special Interest Section (SIS), active in the Private Law Librarians & Information Professionals SIS, and a member of the Social Responsibilities SIS. He is currently serving as vice president of the Minnesota Association of Law Libraries and is a former board member of the Southern New England Law Librarians Association.

Here, Butler discusses how he determines what products are a good fit for his firm, the value AALL has had in his career, and what skills he looks for in new hires.

#### **How do you assess whether a product is a good fit for your firm?**

There are so many factors, but first it's important to understand what are the needs of the firm. I try to get to know each practice area by attending practice group meetings and speaking to attorneys informally about the work that they're doing. I also learn a lot just from doing research with them. This helps me understand their needs and some of the issues that they're facing.

I also consider the effectiveness, the value of the product, and whether it's going to provide us as a firm with a competitive advantage and a strong return on investment. I also consider whether people will use it or not. For example, if there is a steep learning curve, it's pretty unlikely that the tool will be adopted. People just don't have the time to learn new products that are complicated.

#### **Discuss your role in assessing and purchasing technology products.**

It's my job, first of all, to pay attention to what's out there. It can almost be a full-time job to keep up with new and existing resources because of continuous development and new innovative products. As I learn about the products, I continuously assess their value in general as well as their potential value for the firm and for the

## QUICK HITS WITH PATRICK H. BUTLER



with my daughter lately, but I also enjoy stand-up comedians, such as Hannibal Buress and Nate Bargatze.

**Favorite travel destination?**

I have two: South Korea and anywhere there is water. If I can be in a boat on the water, I am very happy.

**Guilty pleasure?**

I would have to say pizza, and then partially melted ice cream.

**Superpower you wish you had?**

Teleportation. I waste way too much time in the car, and I would love to have that time to do things that I really enjoy. Plus, I would avoid the actual hassle of traveling.

**Words to live by?**

"Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions" – Dalai Lama

**Favorite TV show to binge watch?**

Witty comedies. I've been watching *Modern Family*

individual practices. If I find something that might be a match, then I'll make a connection and begin the conversation with the vendor to learn more about the product. I'll usually schedule a meeting with a trainer and get an individual trial set up. I do a lot of the individual assessment by myself at the beginning. Then, if it's still something that may be of interest to the firm, I'll introduce it to those who would benefit most from using it, or, if it's for the whole firm, then I'll introduce it to the firm's library advisory committee. The advisory committee has been very key in the past for keeping the firm on the cutting-edge and helping to push things forward. I will then get buy-in from constituents, which can sometimes be difficult but it's definitely a necessary step in the process. Soon after that, I begin the pricing negotiations, negotiate the contract, and finally move into the implementation stage and training.

My role in assessing and purchasing products begins with identifying the resources and continues through to implementation and training. And that process doesn't stop once we have the new product implemented; we have to continuously assess the products to make sure they are meeting the needs of the firm and provide ongoing training to make sure users are aware of new developments and functionality.

**How do you stay on top of developments in legal technology?**

I read a lot. I subscribe to vendor publications and have email alerts set up to keep me updated on product development. I pay attention to listservs and a number of different publications such as blogs and *AALL Spectrum*. The International Legal Technology Association (ILTA) is also a great resource.

I also stay aware of what's going on by talking to colleagues and keeping a close relationship with the vendors. I have conversations internally with the practitioners in my firm, but I usually hear about newer developments in technology prior to the practitioners. I think it's important to get out in front of development as well. I always look for opportunities to influence development, such as sitting on an advisory board. I want to see the best product possible, so if I can get an opportunity to influence its development, that's ideal.

**How has participation in AALL impacted your career and/or leadership capabilities?**

Being active in AALL has been key to my professional development. I think, most importantly, it's been the people I've met through all of the activities I've been involved in. There are so many people that are very bright in this organization, and I haven't met anyone yet who wasn't willing to help me in some way if necessary. People have assisted me by giving me career advice early on, advising me on committee leadership skills, and helping me think like a leader in the profession and in my office.

I've greatly benefited from each and every volunteer role that I've taken on, whether it was volunteering to be a greeter at a session during the AALL Annual Meeting or chairing the Leadership Development Committee. One of the most valuable experiences was actually attending the AALL Leadership Academy in 2014. Not only did I meet a great group of future leaders, but I also learned a great deal that impacted my day-to-day work and prepared me for my future roles, including my present position.

**How has your past work experience benefited you in your current position?**

I'm going to start by going back to when I was in middle school and I worked in retail. At that time, I primarily learned about work ethic and customer service, and those skills have been incredibly valuable throughout my life, including

in my current position. The work that I do today is nothing like what I was doing then, but that job taught me to do something very well, take pride in the work that I produce, and to be aware of the needs of those around me. My past library experience has directly helped me in my current position by giving me a well-rounded understanding of library functions and the needs and issues that libraries face. I've worked in acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, reference, and in electronic resource management. I have a lot of experience assessing products, reviewing and negotiating contracts, reducing budgets, and evaluating processes to increase efficiency. I've participated and led numerous committees and had the opportunity to teach legal research. I use each of the skills I've gained over the years in my current position.

### **What professional development opportunities would you suggest to students and law librarians just starting their careers?**

Find a few things that interest you and look for opportunities to get involved. I think it's important to start small and slow but to keep it up. It's really important that those who are new to the profession participate actively. When you volunteer to be on a committee, you have to take it seriously and contribute. Then, as you gain more experience, you can take on additional roles and maybe volunteer for more than one committee. But it's important not to overdo it, especially in the beginning. You need to be able to balance your work and your professional development. I would also add that students and newer librarians should do what they can to attend the AALL Annual Meeting. There are a lot of grants out there that can help fund your way, so take advantage of them.

### **What's the value of attending the AALL Annual Meeting?**

There's so much value. The AALL Annual Meeting is a great place to meet and learn from others who face the same or similar issues as you. It's an event that's filled with fantastic educational programs that you can gain from and then take back and integrate into your everyday work. It's a place to meet and learn about the community that we belong to. AALL is a fantastic community to be a part of.

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### **When hiring, what makes a candidate stand out? And what's a deal-breaker?**

I value initiative above all else. I want to see that individuals can be creative, take initiative and come up with solutions, efficiencies, and new ways to contribute to the organization. I think the deal-breaker is just the opposite. I'm not interested in hiring someone who's simply interested in clocking in and clocking out. I really want someone who is motivated to make a difference, seek new approaches to doing things, and who wants to actively contribute. For me it's important to show the organization that we care about the value we bring to the organization and that we have a lot to offer. I think most people don't understand what librarians can do in today's legal environment.

### **What do you wish everyone knew about law librarians?**

I wish that they knew that we are versatile problem solvers. I think the days of the stereotypical librarian are long gone. Now we're a dynamic, innovative group of people.

### **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I really enjoy the challenges, particularly project management. I like taking an idea, concept, or even a product and seeing it through to completion in order to make things better for the firm as a whole. Whether it's the assessment, acquisition, and implementation of a new product, increasing the efficiency of processes, or even managing a research project that brings clarity to a difficult issue, I enjoy all aspects of the job. ■

**P+L** Professionalism + Leadership At Every Level

**M+B** Management + Business Acumen