

LEADER PROFILE

LEADING WITH WISDOM & INSIGHT

Emily R. Florio found herself on the path to law librarianship as many do, by accident. “My mom is a librarian, so I grew up familiar with public libraries and elementary school libraries,” notes Florio. “But when I was finishing library school, I was applying for a job—any, any, any job—and I ended up in a law firm and haven’t looked back.” She became a member of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in January 2006 and has since been very active on committees, special interest sections, and within her local chapter. In her new role as president, she hopes to continue to move the legal information profession forward, to increase engagement with members, and to bring new librarians into the profession. She further plans to grow AALL’s eLearning platform, as well as to provide members with the right education and tools to become leaders within the profession.



In 2004, Florio received her BA in English from the University of Vermont before moving to Boston, Massachusetts, where she obtained her MLS degree from Simmons College. Her first official, though not professional, job was at a small law school in Boston doing interlibrary loan and document delivery, while she worked toward her degree.

She began her career in Boston at Fish & Richardson, where she held various positions, resulting in the manager of libraries and library information systems role. “It’s funny, I think probably a year and a half in I was looking for other work because I was bored,” said Florio. “But my boss at the time started giving me other opportunities that were far more interesting and allowed me to learn and continue on. And that led to my first promotion. After a while it was

for 14 years and has served on several committees, including chair of the Appointments Committee and Executive Board Strategic Directions Committee, and as a member of the Executive Board Finance & Budget Committee. In addition, Florio is a former president of the Law Librarians’ Society of Washington, DC (LLSDC), a member and former treasurer of the Private Law Librarians & Information Professionals Special Interest Section (PLLIP-SIS), and a member of the Professional Engagement, Growth & Advancement Special Interest Section (PEGA-SIS). In 2015, she received AALL’s Emerging Leader Award.

Here, Florio discusses her goals for the coming year, how COVID-19 has impacted her professionally, and how she stays engaged within the profession.

“Law librarians are well-informed, well-educated, and passionate about everything—especially law librarianship and social justice.” [Emily R. Florio](#)

time to move on from that firm and that’s when I moved to DC.”

She then moved to Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, LLP, an intellectual property firm, as the manager of library services, before expanding her role into directing all aspects of the research team, including budgeting, staffing, and training, along with leading the firm’s intranet redesign project. She then became director of library services/research and information services before moving to her latest role in July 2019.

Florio is currently senior research services manager at Hogan Lovells US LLP in Washington, DC, a global top 10 law firm, where she leads the implementation of the global Research Services strategy within the Americas. She has been a member of AALL

Now that your term as president has officially begun, what is first on your agenda?

A lot of special committees. We have at least three special committees that need to have their charges written, in some cases the members updated, and we are also looking ahead to the next year. There is the Law Librarianship as a Career Guidance Review Special Committee, which looks at bringing people into the profession. There will be a special committee for updating the *State of the Profession* report. The third committee doesn’t have a formal name yet, but it will look at racial diversity, inclusion, and equity within the entire profession, but primarily AALL. All of these committees are broadly focused on both the Association and the profession.

What goals or initiatives has the AALL Executive Board set for the coming year? What will be their areas of focus?

The Executive Board will task the various committees and juries to do a full review of their charges, policies, and procedures to ensure that they are both accurate and inclusive. Some of these things tend to get done and then not updated or looked at, so we need to make sure that we are doing this regularly.

We are also starting the second year of our Strategic Plan and we have a lot of different things going on. But particularly in this coming year, we’ll be focusing and looking at our first eLearning course centered on budgeting and then identifying other courses to develop or offer.

EMILY R. FLORIO

- SENIOR RESEARCH SERVICES MANAGER
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QUICK HITS WITH EMILY R. FLORIO

**Words to live by?**

Don't forget to stop and smell the roses.

Best book you recently read?

Dutch House by Ann Patchett

Guilty pleasure?

The all-too-occasional ice cream sandwich or ice cream bar, for sure. I live above a 7-Eleven. It is great and also a major problem at times.

Favorite way to unwind after a long day?

Drinking a Vermont beer, reading a book, and sitting with my cat and dog.

Favorite travel destination?

Visiting my family in Australia, for sure.

and we had a research hub where people came up to the desk and asked questions. We don't have that anymore and I don't know when we will again. So, finding additional ways to interact with our peers, as a team, is crucial. But we also need to provide outreach to our lawyers that isn't just "Oh, don't forget I'm here to help." We need to continue to be energetic about the work we do and provide the best level of service as we remain fully remote.

COVID-19 moved most organizations to a remote environment. What was the biggest challenge? The best perk?

My firm, for quite a while now, far before COVID-19, has a very liberal, agile working policy that allows everyone in the firm to work remotely a few days a week or on a schedule that fits their needs. So, I was used to people on my team being remote on any given day. And our team is also spread across the U.S.

But it was still a drastic change when suddenly we were all remote. We had no access to our print. We had an increased need for online sources, and things that had worked seamlessly in the office were suddenly not working. Folks truly needed alternative work schedules because they were suddenly schooling their kids at home. Ultimately, I think we did an excellent job with how quickly we adjusted. I don't think anybody could say there was a lapse in our service level, but I think the hardest thing was how quickly we had to do it and how many unknowns there were when we all went home that first time.

I really miss seeing my team in person, stopping by someone's desk to chat about their weekend, or talking through a research request that came in. Ultimately, the hardest part is the unknown of when we'll see each other or be together again as a team outside of the virtual space.

My best perk isn't job-related necessarily, but I adopted a new cat and a dog early on in the pandemic, and they are keeping me happy and sane while I work remotely, and they bring me much joy. They also remind me to take breaks, sometimes by their laying across my keyboard or waiting patiently at the door.

With millennials joining baby boomers and Generation X in leadership roles and Generation Z now in law school and the workforce, what are your thoughts on making the most of this generational diversity?

I think we have a lot we can learn from each other. We've all been through different things

We are also looking at a review of our membership survey and structure, particularly with the special committee I mentioned above, as well as a renewed commitment to identifying and developing our future leaders and continuing to bring folks into the profession.

As we continue to be physically apart, it's important to stay connected to each other by identifying opportunities for collaboration amongst the associations or special interest sections, chapters and caucuses, and also related organizations. As this remains ongoing, we will be offering additional Coffee Chats and potentially looking at other digital avenues, whether it's to share stories or request help, or just other ways that we can connect within the Association with one another as we remain apart.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, what new challenges are law libraries facing right now?

I think we're going to see more staffing reductions and reduced budgets for resources—both database-specific and people-centered resources. We were hit pretty hard in 2008-2009 by the Great Recession and I'm hoping it won't be as bad this go-around, but time will tell. I think another new challenge as we're entering month five of being remote is continuing to find other avenues for outreach. My team went to practice group meetings and talked to people directly,

in our lives. But at this point, everyone has probably dealt with some kind of adversity or worldwide issue. We can certainly build on our generational strengths and sort of help fill whatever gaps we might have. But I think having so many generations working together can be more positive than negative, for sure.

I have a couple folks that I hired that are definitely Generation Z. They're 26 years old, but they are joiners, probably partially because I was their boss and made them so. But I think it takes change and adaptation from everyone to learn how to deal with all of the different generational differences.

What role do you see for law librarians in the fight for social justice?

Law librarians are well-informed, well-educated, and passionate about everything—especially law librarianship and social justice. I think we are in a time where social justice is seeping into everything that happens around us and impacts everyone, whether it's on a personal basis or even in the news they read. It's nationwide and it's international.

We as law librarians and legal information professionals are well equipped with our knowledge, our experiences, and the resources we have at our fingertips to help in the fight for social justice, whether it is helping get out the vote or educating people on societal changes that need to be made. But I think we've at least seen within AALL over the last few months the passion that our members have, both for social justice at large as well as within the profession and the association. Our Government Relations Committee works hard to advocate for issues most important to our profession, such as access to justice, copyright, and privacy.

How do you stay engaged and passionate about your work?

It's a fine balance. I find that I am working far more and longer hours than I would have with a commute. It used to be that I would walk to work, work my hours, log off, go to yoga, go home, and then if I needed to, log on again, so there was more of a break between work and home. Now, I just make the trek from my bedroom to my living room. I'll admit I'm not always the best at taking a break. But I think that is because I'm so engaged and passionate about my work.

I draw a lot from connecting with my friends and peers. I'm someone who if I get in a pinch and want to know what other law firms are

using for a certain tool, or if I need advice on how to deal with a personnel issue or something goes to my friends first and foremost. Obviously, I can still do that with a phone, but I miss seeing people. That's always one thing I love about the in-person AALL Annual Meeting, the people you may only get to see once a year.

So, I would say I remain engaged and passionate, because I know when to take a break (most of the time). But I also have so many colleagues who started as professional acquaintances who have now become friends. It's easy to sort of be with people and talk about work but also not have my whole life revolve around work.

What is one of the most valuable lessons you've learned in the professional leadership positions you've held?

Don't be afraid of or fear asking for help. I think sometimes it's perceived that asking for help shows weakness. But I prefer to think of it as showing a willingness to learn and do what is best, since no one person has all the answers. The first 15 years of my career were in certain types of law firms. So, I knew law firms, but I didn't know all of the broad subject areas that my current firm handles. I'm a good leader and I'm a good manager, but I had so much to learn on the research side, and that it's necessary to ask for help sometimes. I'm not always the best at this, but I've gotten better.

What do you find most rewarding about your job?

I still love the rush of connecting someone with the information that they need. We really are research experts. We keep so much in our brains and remember the nitty-gritty little things, and we're able to tie everything together. I love that I can learn something new every day without even trying.

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