LEADER PROFILE

LEAD. INNOVATE. TRANSFORM

Like many others in the profession, June Hsiao Liebert was unaware that law librarianship even existed as a potential career path. Nevertheless, Liebert’s background in technology and her lifelong pursuit of new skills have brought her to a leadership position within the profession. As the first Asian American President of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), Liebert is passionate about nurturing a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Association—one that creates a welcoming environment that embraces individuals from all backgrounds.
Liebert first became interested in technology when she and her brother learned to program simple computer games on their TRS- 80 computer. She started college as a music major in Case Western Reserve University’s pre-professional scholars program in medicine, but switched to management information and decision systems after rediscovering her love of computer programming. After graduating with a BS, she worked at a tiny legal technology consulting company in Cleveland, Ohio, where she created the first PC-based asbestos litigation management system that was eventually used by almost 50 law firms. This experience working with lawyers is what inspired her to attend law school at Indiana University, Bloomington.

While in law school, she became the Westlaw student rep and spent a lot of time working in the library. “The Librarians at Indiana were terrific, and they took me under their wing,” said Liebert. “One of the Librarians eventually asked me if I had ever considered becoming a law librarian. I was halfway through law school, and while I enjoyed the study of law, I realized it was the perfect way to combine my interests in both law and data management.”

Liebert received her MLS from Indiana University, and one of her first job interviews was at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Law. “There were two job openings at USC for head of reference and associate director at the time. I wasn’t qualified for either position, but the wonderful Albert Brecht interviewed me anyway and said, ‘well, you’re not really right for our jobs, but I’m good friends with the people at UCLA, and I know they’re looking for somebody.’ So, he told UCLA about me, and that’s how I got my first law librarian job. I had always wanted to live in California, so it was an amazing opportunity.”

Four years later she left UCLA and became the electronic resources librarian at the University of Texas under the guidance of Roy Mersky and Keith Ann Stiverson. She eventually served as the law school’s CIO in charge of IT, data, online, and media services operations. In 2007, Liebert returned to law libraries as the library director and assistant professor at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law, where she began one of the earliest in-house distant education programs and successfully developed over 50 online courses.

She then shifted to the law firm world as Sidley Austin’s first firmwide director of library and research services, and then as director of information services at O’Melveny & Myers LLP, where she still works today. At O’Melveny, Liebert oversees the Information Governance and the Knowledge and Research Services departments.

An AALL member for 29 years, Liebert has served as chair of the Legal Information & Technology Special Interest Section (LIT-SIS), Appointments Committee, Executive Board Strategic Directions Committee, and as a member of the Executive Board Finance & Budget Committee. She also served as chair of the Annual Meeting Program Committee, and as an Executive Board member from 2018-2021.

Liebert has received several awards throughout her career, including the AALL Presidential Certificate of Appreciation & Merit, and was named a 2021 Fastcase 50 award honoree. She was recently named a Fellow-Elect of the College of Law Practice Management. She has been a member of several advisory boards and currently serves as the immediate past co-chair of the Indiana University Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering Alumni Board.

Here, she discusses her goals for the coming year, the importance of DEI within AALL and the profession, and how librarians can utilize AI technology to transform their organizations.

**With your term as AALL President just beginning, what are your priorities?**

I have three primary goals on my agenda. The first is to serve as an advocate for our members about the value and impact of law librarians and legal information professionals, especially to the C-suite, deans, and others outside of our Association. For example, our members are uniquely situated to lead organizations in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) because we are the experts at evaluating, implementing, and using these types of tools, and this is an important message for our organizations. AI and other technological developments are continually transforming legal research, knowledge management, and library services. As law librarians, we embrace these developments, and we will continue to lead the way.

We also face the challenge of the “pipeline”—ensuring that we attract the next generation to law librarianship. At its core, this is a matter of effective communication. How can our Association more effectively engage with the upcoming generation? It’s crucial that we meet them where they are, making them aware and informed about the opportunities in our field.

Finally, DEI is something that’s important to me as the first Asian American President in the 117-year history of AALL. It is critical that all our members and stakeholders feel a sense of belonging within the Association, because our strength comes from our diversity. We need to ensure that our community continues to be welcoming and inclusive of all members.
What goals or initiatives has the AALL Executive Board set for the coming year? What will be their areas of focus?
The AALL Strategic Plan sets out five specific goals for the Association, which will continue to be our main focus over the next year. Each goal has specific strategies that will help us accomplish those goals, and the Executive Board’s Strategic Directions Committee ensures that we will accomplish the right tasks to support those strategies.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, three Special Committees submitted reports to the Executive Board at the July Board meeting. These reports include recommendations for updating the AALL Body of Knowledge, ways to improve the pipeline to the profession, and updating AALL awards requirements. The Executive Board will discuss these recommendations and determine how to best implement them. I also plan to create new special committees this year, most likely focusing on communications and technology-related issues.

The theme for next year’s AALL Annual Meeting is “Lead. Innovate. Transform.” How does this tie into your goals as president as well as the new strategic plan?
I see our members as the leaders and the innovators who transform their organizations for the better. While this has always been true, it seems especially relevant today with the advent of generative AI. As legal information professionals, we have an extraordinary opportunity to lead the law schools, law firms, and government entities we work at by developing innovative uses of these technologies and helping to transform our organizations for the better. Instead of being the “gatekeepers,” I believe we are the “influencers” of the legal technology field who drive the development of new tools by partnering with vendors and guiding our users to better meet the needs of our organizations.

What is your perspective on the implications of AI and the profession? Are there ways law librarians can lead the charge in implementing this technology in their organizations?
I recently attended a data and AI conference, and the main message from several of the keynote speakers was that successful implementation of AI is dependent on the people implementing it and not the technology. They said that the technology already works, but these projects fail because the right people are not involved. The key is to have domain experts who can work systematically with the technologists and the users to move things forward.

As legal information professionals and librarians, we have been using different types of AI for years, but generative AI represents a new opportunity for law librarians to lead the charge in implementing this technology in their organizations.

Describe the AALL community in three words.
Generous, collaborative, unique.

Favorite quote?
“Life is too short, so live your life to the fullest ... every second of your life just treasure it.”
— Commonly attributed to William Shakespeare.

Guilty pleasure?
I am a foodie, and I try to make every meal an opportunity to eat something new or exciting. Why waste a moment on boring, bland food? I also like to watch Korean dramas on TV, and I watch a lot of cooking show competitions.

Favorite way to unwind after a long day?
Aside from watching TV and playing violin with my daughter, I also enjoy playing with my cats.

Favorite travel destination?
Hawaii—I find myself instantly relaxing the moment I walk out into the Hawaiian sunshine.
librarians to provide leadership. There aren’t many experts in the use of generative AI, and it is evolving very quickly. As law librarians, we are perfectly situated to fill this leadership void.

**What are some ways to make the profession of law librarianship more inclusive and diverse?**
The most important thing is to make everyone feel welcome, regardless of who that person is. AALL membership is open to anyone and everyone, so we don’t distinguish one type of member versus another. When you are new to the profession, it’s hard sometimes to feel as if you belong, because everyone else seems so well connected already. When I first joined AALL, I was one of very few electronic resources librarians in the Association, and I was also one of the few female members of LIT-SIS (formerly CS-SIS). Fortunately for me, I met people like Liz Glankler and Ken Hirsh who warmly welcomed me into the SIS, and I finally felt as if I belonged in AALL. If each of us were to take the time to introduce ourselves and welcome someone new into our Association, we would continue to build the kind of strong community that we all want.

**What is one of the most valuable lessons you have learned in the professional leadership positions you’ve held?**
The most valuable thing I have learned as a leader is to appreciate feedback as a gift. There are times when feedback can be extremely difficult to hear, especially when it is negative. As a leader, I embrace feedback because it represents an opportunity to improve. It is far worse to not know that a problem even exists. Giving someone else feedback, both positive and negative, can be equally difficult, but it is usually worse to say nothing at all. When people invest their time to share their perspective with me, it signifies a level of trust, and a belief that their voice will resonate and be valued.

**How do you stay engaged and passionate about your work?**
I enjoy challenging myself with new and unfamiliar things, instead of falling into old habits and routines that can lead to boredom and complacency. This applies to my personal life as well. One of the most unforgettable vacations I have had was a tour of Vietnam a few years ago. It was a completely different experience from traveling to European countries. I have a vivid memory of learning to cross a six-lane road without getting hit by a constant stream of motorcyclists. I left academia to work at a law firm because I wanted to acquire some new skills. The skills I have learned since have been unexpected at times, such as learning how to work with staff in different time zones (including Hong Kong and London).

However, the most rewarding part of my career has been helping other people uncover their passions and channeling them in ways that benefit both themselves and the organizations they work for. Recognizing the uniqueness in each person makes this a unique and wonderful adventure.

**What is the value of being a member of AALL?**
AALL offers members many different services and opportunities, but being part of our collaborative community is probably one of the most valuable. It’s difficult to know who to talk to, especially when you are a new or solo librarian, but I have found that our members are generous people who are always willing to help. The more people you meet, the more likely you will learn interesting and new ways of doing things. There are many ways to network within our Association, but one of the easiest ways is to get involved and volunteer for a committee or an award jury within AALL. Another option is to join one of our many special interest sections. I have received invaluable guidance and support from the AALL members I have met throughout the years, and I can only hope to give back at least some of what I have gained.

**What is the best career advice you have ever received?**
The best career advice I ever received came from an executive coach who taught me to embrace learning and focus on adding new skills to my personal toolbox of skills. He showed me how to turn any situation, positive or negative, into an opportunity to learn something new. For instance, if I faced a challenge or a problem at work, I would use it as a chance to learn a new skill that would help me deal with it better in the future. This mindset helped me grow as a professional and as a person.

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