

Promoting Law Librarians to the Legal Community

by Gail Warren

"Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing."

—John D. Rockefeller

Responsibility for promoting law librarians to the legal community falls across all levels of an organization such as AALL—from individual members, chapters, committees, caucuses, and special interest sections to the Association as a whole. For individual members seeking to begin or improve their own marketing efforts, AALL's Public Relations Committee offers ongoing direction through monthly articles in *AALL Spectrum* and through information, links, and other resources within the committee's site on AALLNET. Recent examples of *Spectrum* public relations articles include Phill W. Johnson's article titled "Desperate Times Call for Practical Measures" in the May 2005 issue and Mark D. Engsborg's article, "On a Mission to Market," in the September/October 2005 issue.

A recent survey of committees, chapters, caucuses, special interest sections, and representatives supports the notion that while law librarians are quite effective at promoting their contributions and value to one another, generally, they do not actively promote law librarians to groups external to AALL. The survey revealed the organizational structure of many chapters includes a public relations, publications, or other outreach committee. The focus of these committees' efforts is the bar, judiciary, legislature, or other groups within their legal communities but external to the chapter—yet, the range of activities varies greatly from chapter to chapter.

Among AALL's chapters there are models of excellent promotional campaigns. The Colorado Association of Law Libraries, Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin, and Virginia Association of Law Libraries each share a history of promoting law librarians through regular columns and member

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articles published in state bar publications. The Minnesota Association of Law Libraries fields a Consulting and Community Outreach Committee offering "individual consultations for organizations seeking to improve law library operations." The Law Librarians Association of Greater New York's Pro Bono Committee offers "research assistance, primarily case law research, to attorneys and pro se litigants who do not have access to a law library."

Chapters are not the only AALL entity that has actively promoted the expertise of law librarians to those outside the Association. In 1999 Cheryl Rae Nyberg, on behalf of AALL's Access to Electronic Legal Information Committee, presented an educational program at the Court Technology Conference (CTC6), a biennial conference sponsored by the National Center for State Courts. Participants range from judges and court administrators to numerous vendors of court technology products and services. In addition to Nyberg's presentation, AALL members offered on-site Web site reviews using AALL's *Web Site Evaluation Criteria* as a guide. Nyberg's program and the Web site reviews were so well received that a second program proposal was accepted for the 2001 Court Technology Conference, and the on-site reviews continued in 2001 and 2003.

The Citation Formats Committee worked closely with the American Bar Association to develop and promote a vendor- and medium-neutral citation format, the *Universal Citation*. At the present time, 16 state court jurisdictions have adopted this format. Rather than rest on the laurels of these successful promotional activities, AALL's committees, caucuses, and special interest sections must continue to promote the value of law librarians in as many venues and as often as is possible.

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Extending Our Influence through the Legal Community

Inside Our Organizations

Law librarians face continuing challenges, often initiated by the organizations they serve. In the present information environment, we cannot assume that our parent institutions understand the value that law libraries provide. It is up to us to assert ourselves and to articulate our contributions to those we serve. It is crucial for law librarians to learn how to deal more effectively and politically in their organizations and for AALL to encourage librarians to be creative and see beyond the bounds of their profession and traditional roles. We need to emphasize our value in providing competitive advantages, making direct contributions to the bottom line, improving productivity through knowledge and training, and assisting our organizations in making better and more informed decisions. We need to create internal networks and improve our management communication skills, while becoming more effective ambassadors and public relations agents for the library.

External Constituencies

One essential element in this effort to promote the profession is to find ways for law librarians to raise their visibility and communicate their value effectively to significant audiences and decision makers in the legal profession: the practicing bar, judiciary, court administrators, the media, law school deans, and legal educators.

The Special Committee on Promoting Law Librarians to the Legal Community has done an exemplary job in this *Briefing*, in which the members describe measurable methods of success in reaching out to the legal community. They explain ways to promote law librarians through writing and speaking targeted to attorneys, judges, and administrators; how volunteers can be appointed and assigned as liaisons to specific people at other organizations; and how to seek out organizations where a fruitful alliance can be built to foster joint programs. The special committee deserves our thanks for highlighting initiatives taken by some of our members that push the profession forward and that can be emulated by others. Keep up the good work!

Claire M. Germain
AALL President, 2005-2006

How to Develop a Symbiotic Relationship with Your State Bar Journal Editor

by Gail F. Zwirner and Lyn Warmath

Members of the Virginia Association of Law Libraries (VALL) have worked hard on their campaign to spread the word about librarians' talents and skills to the Virginia State Bar's publications editor and readership. VALL's members are justifiably proud of the scores of articles published in its state bar publication, *Virginia Lawyer*, since 1997 when members began their publishing initiatives.

Virginia's bar editor and a number of VALL's writers most recently collaborated to produce the fourth all-librarian issue of *Virginia Lawyer*, which was released in December 2005. Here we offer a few tips and guidelines for those interested in starting a campaign to publish and work with their bar editors.

- **Find the right person to chair a publications committee.** To spearhead your campaign, find a member of your association who is passionate about librarianship: a member who is compelled to broadcast to the entire bar the multiple and varied talents of your organization's members.
- **Start with a phone call.** We called our state's bar editor out of the blue, introducing ourselves and offering to submit book reviews of *specific* titles that we *knew* would interest bar members. The bar's editor was delighted, and we were off and running. The editor was so delighted, in fact, that not long after submitting a few reviews and articles, the editor *approached us* about collaborating on an all-librarian issue.
- **Invite the editor to lunch or to an association meeting.** It's hard to find an editor who is not looking for good copy these days. Inquire about the structure of the journal and its goals. There may be some topical requirements, such as specialty section issues, where a writer can capitalize on a topic. Alternatively, there may be restrictions on some topics, such as ethics. In Virginia, for example, those ethics articles are handled by a separate publication within the association.
- **Start small; test the waters.** Ask the editor about gaps or trends in the law literature and offer to get started by writing one article. Once you establish a positive relationship, the editor will want more. Editors soon discover what librarians have known all along: librarians are reliable, meet deadlines, and can write well.
- **Know the audience.** Editors of state journals will probably emphasize the preference for state-specific material. Don't offer something he or she will likely reject. That creates frustration for the coordinator and the contributors.
- **Don't reinvent the wheel.** Coming up with a topic sometimes is the toughest part. Search sites such as LLRX.com and AALL's Publishing Initiatives Caucus (PIC) Web site (www.aallnet.org/caucus/pic/index.htm) for myriad fresh topic ideas (read more about PIC on page 3).
- **Identify the writers in your group.** Writing is stressful for many, but others are naturals. Recruit members who contribute regularly to library professional journals. Other possible writers are authors of legal research texts. Brainstorm with a friend or committee to develop a list of topics and writers. Approach potential authors with topic ideas in mind. We found that having an idea in hand yields many more positive replies than a vague or general call for volunteers.
- **Identify the specialists in your group.** Read the new member columns of your association newsletters. Approaching a member who, for example, just graduated from law school with an emphasis in environmental law would be a good source to tap. That person might also be flattered to be asked to jump in and contribute to the association. Any academic law librarian who is accustomed to receiving or rejecting gifts of book collections could turn that experience into useful information for a bar association's "Senior Lawyers' Section" article about eliminating and valuing library collections.
- **Recycle, recycle, recycle.** Encourage published writers to spin the articles they wrote for library association journals into articles for bar associations. Writers can also adapt articles published in their organizations' newsletters. For example, writers whose firms have recently moved or downsized their libraries can help other firm managing partners to prepare for their own events by sharing their expertise.
- **Be prepared for deadline changes.** Editors report first and foremost to the bar association's board. They work together to set up a schedule of issues and topics for a year or more. Plan early, but be prepared to be bumped to a later date.
- **Enjoy the results.** Be prepared for positive feedback. Practitioners read these journals, and Web access broadens the distribution. A librarian who wrote in our most recent issue received calls from across the country complimenting her article. That same author's first article, appearing in our premiere all-librarian issue, also achieved a singular distinction. Her first article attracted more hits than articles in all the other issues of the bar magazine combined.

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Promoting Law Libraries and Law Librarians through Blogs

by Bonnie Shucha

The following comments came from a survey of law library bloggers conducted during the summer of 2005.

- "I largely started this just to discover what blogging was about, and it brought a lot with it I did not expect: a higher personal profile, great self-confidence in my expertise, speaking opportunities, writing opportunities, and a reputation as an expert of sorts."
- "[Our blog] is usually the second most retrieved page on our Web site. People e-mail me that it is useful, and they offer links for content."
- "The media are really tuned into blogs. Many library issues can be heard, and re-publication opportunities will become possible, if we give these issues attention via our blogs."
- "It is the single most important advertising tool we have for the effort and money spent."
- "Our profession can get great value from blogging. Publishing is power, but the only way to embrace the power is to get involved."

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Thinking Collaboratively

by Scott Fisher

Here's a crazy idea. What if AALL worked with the American Bar Association to create a "law library" section on its Web site, ABANET? The page could contain links of useful legal research Web sites and pathfinders. An ABA/AALL Online Legal Research Web Site Committee could be formed to create, evaluate, and update the links and information on an ongoing basis.

But wait, there's more. The Web page could list the law librarian members involved that year (with bios and photos), thereby providing these individuals with greater visibility as research professionals. If successful,

local chapters could be encouraged to do the same for their state and county bar association Web sites.

Through such a collaborative venture, law librarians and attorneys could interact to create a legal research tool that brings value to the attorney researcher and greater visibility to law librarians. Ultimately, it could offer tangible evidence of what law librarians can bring to law firms.

Just a thought.

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Seeking Inspiration?

by Elizabeth LeDoux

The Publishing Initiatives Caucus (PIC) was organized in 2004 to inspire and motivate law librarians to write articles for a variety of legal publications read by practicing attorneys, legal administrators, law professors, judges, and others in organizations that employ members of AALL, as well as encourage member writing for other publications as a way of promoting individual law librarians and the profession.

PIC works with AALL's chapters, special interest sections, Public Relations Committee, and the Committee on the Economic Status of Law Librarianship to develop publication projects. It also works cooperatively with other law-related groups interested in publishing articles by or about law librarians. An active online discussion forum facilitates the sharing of tips on writing articles and the best way to ensure they are accepted for publication.

Most importantly, PIC's Web site includes a list of published articles. Those articles about state-specific topics might serve as models for other AALL authors who may be interested in submitting an article to their own state publications. Some of the articles could be re-purposed for printing in additional publications. Simply reading through the list of published articles provides excellent inspiration for law librarians looking to reach out in their own communities.

Check out the PIC Web site at www.aallnet.org/caucus/pic.

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Promotion "To Do" List for Chapters

- Provide immediate access to a PDF version of your chapter brochure via a "point and click" button on your Web site.
- Challenge your Public Relations Committee to complete at least one externally-focused activity each year. And if you don't have a Public Relations (or similar) Committee, create one.
- Don't hesitate to borrow ideas from other chapters or retool presentations originally prepared for members.
- Create a "Speaker's Bureau"—a list of qualified member speakers who would be willing to present a program on a particular topic to your local bar, local civic association, state library association, or state bar association.
- Market your "Speaker's Bureau" to a local or state bar newspaper and to the judicial education department in your state or states, if you are a regional chapter.

Promotion "To Do" List for Committees, Caucuses, Special Interest Sections

- Provide immediate access to a PDF version of your group's brochure via a "point and click" button on your Web site.
- If your committee, caucus, or special interest section presents an award (or many awards), consider publicizing this award beyond the membership of AALL. Send a news release describing the award and the recipient's accomplishments to his or her home state's bar journal and/or legal newspaper. Library and law school alumni publications welcome news of successful alums.
- Survey the broader legal community for natural alliances and establish a relationship. Invite members of this group to your meeting, develop an AALL program proposal that would take advantage of this organization's member expertise, or, better yet, offer to present an educational program at *its* annual meeting. Some examples of natural alliances might include:
 - Private Law Libraries-SIS and the Association of Legal Administrators
 - State, Court, and County Law Libraries-SIS and the National Association for Court Management
 - Diversity Committee and minority law student associations, such as the Black Law Student Association
- Document Delivery Caucus and the Association of Legal Administrators.
- Once you've established the above alliance, make sure your Web site includes links to this organization or the sub-group within a larger organization. Ask if the organization is willing to reciprocate—all it can say is no.

Members of the Special Committee on Promoting Law Librarians to the Legal Community include Chair Gail Warren, Scott L. Fisher, Lori A. Hedstrom, June S. Kim, Elizabeth LeDoux, Bonnie Shucha, Cindy Spohr, and Gail F. Zwirner.