



## A Look at Leadership in AALL

In 2005 AALL's Executive Board approved our current Strategic Directions. The directions serve as AALL's blueprint for action and form the basis for setting priorities and making decisions.

Guess what? This year marks the halfway point on the time frame set for these directions, 2005-2010! Therefore, I plan to use my next few "From the President" columns to reflect on where we are and what we still need to do to reach our goals.

The Strategic Directions have three goals: leadership, education, and advocacy. The focus this month is on **leadership**. Our Strategic Direction goal says: "Law librarians will be recognized and valued as the foremost leaders and experts in legal information, research, and technology." The objectives are to:

- Provide tools to increase members' abilities to position themselves as essential to the mission of their organizations.
- Provide leadership training opportunities.
- Expand mentoring programs and opportunities.
- Increase AALL participation in organizations within the legal and library communities.

This spring AALL led the legal community by organizing a national summit on Authentic Legal Information in the Digital Age, which brought together AALL members and officials from national legal organizations and state and federal government to discuss possible solutions to a critical emerging area of information policy. We are continuing to educate the leaders in legal fields on the critical importance of this issue.

The Publishing Initiatives Caucus has promoted the expertise of law librarians to the wider legal community by writing articles on legal research topics for bar journals and legal newspapers. The second edition of our *Guide to Fair Business Practices for Legal Publishers* was approved by the board in 2006 and is being adapted for use by several other international law library organizations.

This summer the Executive Board approved an expanded representatives

program, which will result in AALL having official representatives to a wider range of law and library organizations. Our committee structure is receiving a major overhaul

for the first time in 20 years, and a new chair/vice chair approach will provide for better mentoring of new leaders and more continuity in committee operations.

Leadership is the focus of two special committees that I've appointed—the Leadership Development Special Committee and the Developing Law Librarians for the Future Special Committee. The Leadership Development Special Committee is already well on its way to developing plans for an annual AALL leadership institute. The Developing Law Librarians for the Future Special Committee is performing a comprehensive review of how we recruit, educate, and mentor future law librarians.

### Are You a Leader?

But what does all this really mean to you? Does every law librarian have to be a leader?

You don't necessarily have to be the director of the library, the chair of a committee, or the president of your professional organization to be a leader. Leadership skills are needed and can be practiced every day in your job and in your personal life. In AALL's recent essay contest on "Why Do You Belong to AALL?" (June 2007 *AALL Spectrum*) one of the winners, Joseph Novak, wrote, "The measure of any group of people is not the leadership, but rather the people themselves...It's the people that will carry this organization in the future, as it does now, as it has in the past."

I've read several articles about leadership in the last year or so, and one consistent theme is about change. Leaders don't stand still. They look ahead and try to determine where their organizations need to go and try to figure out how to get there. Doing a good job at what they've always done just isn't enough. They must have the courage to go beyond their comfort levels.

All of this sounds to me like the daily life of a law librarian. Our roles, our resources, and our responsibilities seem to change almost daily. We have to constantly prove our value to our organizations or our libraries may cease to exist. It is both an exciting and frightening time. But whether you are in a law school, a law firm, or a court, and whether your role is the library director, the cataloger, or the reference

librarian, you need to lead in your area of responsibility. You need to develop a vision of how to do things better or how to bring new services and value to your users.

### Leave Your Footprint

How can you do that? By keeping current on new developments in your field, by learning to manage change, and by being willing to push ahead into new areas.

Law firm librarians are evolving new roles as competitive intelligence specialists, court librarians are partnering with other organizations to expand their services to the public, and law school librarians are extending their roles as teachers. Law librarians in all types of law libraries are experimenting with podcasts, Webcasts, blogs, Library 2.0, and the list goes on. Law librarians are also leading in their larger employer organizations.

So gather your courage and lead in a new direction—write an article about research for a newspaper or magazine that is read by your stakeholders or volunteer for a committee or work group that cuts across the departmental lines of your organization. Share your knowledge by mentoring a newer colleague in your work environment, on a discussion list, or at a chapter meeting or annual conference. Apply for an AALL/BNA Continuing Education Grant to develop a program. Tell a promising student or library technician about law librarianship. Consider whether the time is right for you to lead in a more formal manner, and, if it is, try presenting a program or running for office in your chapter or special interest section. If you've done that already, try running at the national level.

Many articles about leadership talk a lot about vision. This sounds like something really grandiose that many of us may not feel like we have. But do you have an idea for a new service, a new way of doing things, a new role? Take that vision and make it a reality!

One of the most interesting definitions of leadership that I've read comes from an article by Jonathan Byrnes in Harvard Business School's *HBS Working Knowledge* newsletter. He quotes a graduate school admissions officer as describing leaders as "people who leave their footprints in their areas of passion." If you have read this far, then I know you are passionate about law librarianship! So, where can you leave *your* footprint? ■