From the President

Even though some of you had the pleasure of hearing Dick Danner’s speech in Minneapolis, I wanted to make sure his message reached all of you, and was preserved in the annals of AALL history. The groundwork he laid in his year “Beyond Excellence” was a perfect example of his thesis. Thank you, Dick.

Defining “Beyond Excellence”

The idea for this year’s Annual Meeting theme came up first on a very, very cold December day in 1988 when Joan Howland and I paid our first visit to Minneapolis to begin planning for the meeting. When we decided to use “Beyond Excellence” as the Annual Meeting theme, the phrase remained largely undefined—excellence itself seemed like a lofty enough goal, what would it even mean to go beyond excellence?

It is certainly true that, for a time, excellence and how to achieve it were popular themes in management literature. Tom Peters had perhaps the best seller out of these books with his Search of Excellence, but if only a few years ago we were still searching for excellence, how could we go beyond it in 1990?

Of course, if you pay any attention to the business and management sections of your local bookstores these days, you know that writing about excellence is now passé. (And I say that, realizing that perhaps the best book on the subject—George Will’s Men At Work, a book about baseball, came out only this year.)

The new trend in popular management literature for the 1990s is leadership. Library Journal acknowledged this in its annual review of business books with a section called “Leadership is the Name of the Game.” Featuring books with titles such as On Becoming A Leader, The Art of the Leader, Leadership is an Art, and, my favorite: Superleadership, defined in the subtitle as “Leading others to lead themselves.”

It is easy enough to joke about much of the popular management literature: its trendiness and basis in the vanity publications of successful business people make it an easy target for satire and ridicule as books by politicians. Can we look at this literature, then, for a idea of what really lies “beyond excellence”? Is it leadership?

It is clear that we law librarians know our business. We understand the structure of the literature of the law; we can categorize it, locate it, and teach others how to perform legal research. We know about computers, we can install automated systems, and design and carry out sophisticated searches on online databases; we can build modern library facilities. We can anticipate the needs of our users, be they law students and faculty, attorneys, members of the judiciary, or the public. We strive for and for the most part have attained excellence in the services that we provide. Our continued search for excellence was demonstrated once again by the attendance at the Minneapolis Annual Meeting.

The question that we have to ask in 1990, however, is whether our continued striving for excellence in service is enough. Will it be enough for us to provide excellent service to our parent institutions without exercising leadership within those institutions and outside them? Within our institutions—be they law schools, law firms, courthouses, or businesses—librarians have often been the first to introduce productive uses for automation. From the beginning, librarians saw computers as means to facilitate storage and retrieval of information, not as ends in themselves. Now, automation permeates all aspects of our workplaces. Law faculty members, attorneys, and judges all have PCs on their desks for writing and research. Law school admissions data, student and alumni records are held electronically; case records, forms, briefs, docket entries, and other data are stored and indexed electronically. Everybody now has a computer and everybody thinks about the material that they work with as information. Librarians are no longer the only information specialists in the workplace, and many of the others who think of themselves as information specialists don’t necessarily think of librarians as part of the

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From the Editor

Mary Ivansky

As we begin another volume of the AALL Newsletter, you will notice several changes. First and foremost, we welcome four new column editors. Seme Dugan of Southern Illinois University is taking over the Chapter News column; Patricia Stern from Baker and McKenzie's New York office will compile the Committee News; and two North Carolina members, Connie Matzen of Smith Anderson Brunt Dorssett Mitchell & Jerrigan and Anne Washburn of Smith Helms Mullins & Moore will be sharing responsibilities for the Special Interest Section column. Connie is the person to send SIS announcements to, while Anne will be compiling a bibliography of interesting articles from SIS newsletters. Please make their jobs easier by keeping them informed of new developments. Frank Hoekse is not retiring completely from the Newsletter staff. In the months to come, you will find articles from Frank on the history of the Association.

This month's issue also contains an article from Taylor Fitchett about her "job search" at the University of Cincinnati. Whether you missed the story in the Wall Street Journal or you are curious about Taylor's side of the story, you'll want to check this article out. In addition, Cary Bales from the St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami has written an informative article about providing students with off-campus access to LEXIS and WESTLAW retrieval systems.

Finally, the centerfold of this Newsletter contains lists of the 1990/91 Executive Board officers and members, SIS Chairs, Chapter Presidents, and AALL Representatives. Please advise Headquarters of any necessary corrections in these listings. We will update the list periodically throughout the year.

Special Projects Requests Due This Month

The next AALL Budget contains $32,000 to fund Special Projects to benefit the Association. August 31, 1990 is the deadline for submitting the requests to Headquarters, in order to be considered for funding in the 1990/91 fiscal year. Chairs of Committees and SISs, Chapter Presidents, and Representatives have received copies of the guidelines and request form. Additional copies may be requested from Headquarters.

From the President

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group, or of libraries as holding information in the sense they are talking about. But in the next few years, new information systems and networks will be built throughout our institutions. If librarians are not involved in the development of these systems—indeed, if we don't seize a leadership role in their development—we may well lose our vital roles in the organization. If the new local area network will bring LEXIS and WESTLAW access to faculty, students, and the general public, it will be up to the librarians to decide how the system will be used and how the new service will be managed. The library's representatives will be happy to do the training, and the librarians can be left to take care of the books and the terminals left in the library.

We need to be in charge of these things, and we need to be involved in developing the systems that will provide them. The need for leadership is as true in areas outside the walls of our institutions as for things within. As more and more information is created and stored in electronic formats, legal information no longer is something listed routinely by government bodies or re-packaged and sold to libraries by a law book publisher. AALL's effectiveness during the past year in shaping the tauntontions of the Paperwork Reduction Act, our testimony on electronic dissemination through GPO, our urging of the GPO to become an access point for electronically disseminated Supreme Court opinions, and our lobbying for continuation of the Department of State Bulletin all reflect the need for leadership in managing change in the legal information environment. Government and commercial information vendors have their own interests, which do not necessarily coincide with law librarians' conceptions of service to their constituencies.

In particular, who will represent the public interest and exercise leadership in ensuring equality of access to primary legal information? It doesn't seem to be a major concern of the government, and it cannot be a primary interest of the commercial publishers and database vendors. Leadership in this area also is not something that our professional association has traditionally provided. Both within our institutions and in dealing with the shifting sources of the legal information we supply, law librarians in the 1990s will need to be leaders. And we have the skills and abilities to do it. Only this spring Business Week featured an article with the thesis that businesses are looking increasingly to not-for-profit and service organizations for ideas, management expertise, and leadership.

For continued excellence in service will always be a major goal for us all. To maintain that tradition of excellence in service, however, we will need to go beyond excellence. A\w beyond excellence is leadership.