

From the President

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AALL Newsletter
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In recent months, library literature has been replete with articles on the closing of library schools (14 have been closed since 1978). This is an issue about which all law librarians must be concerned. After all, where will we get our future serials, reference, or documents librarians if fewer library schools graduate fewer students every year? The closing of library schools is of special concern because geographic convenience is by far the most significant reason students select a particular library school. (See White and Mort, "The Accredited Library Education Program as Preparation for Professional Library Work," 60 *The Library Qtrly.* 1870, 194, July 1990). Thus, the graduate library schools remaining cannot make up the volume of graduates needed just by admitting more students.

Although some geographic areas may be somewhat stable, law library positions abound! Finding highly qualified individuals to fill these new and vacant positions becomes more and more difficult each year.

Last fall, ALA President Richard Dougherty (Professor at the University of Michigan School of Information and Library Studies) consulted with the executive directors and presidents of all ALA-affiliated organizations (including AALL) about an appropriate association response to library school closings. In December, a Special Committee on Library School Closings was appointed, chaired by Russell Shank, the University Librarian at UCLA. Other members include Marion Paris (Assistant Professor of Library and Information Services, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa), F. William Summers (Dean, Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies at Tallahassee), Pat Mautino (Instructional Support Director at Oswego Board of Cooperative Educational Services in Mexico, New York), and Pat Molholt (Associate Director of Libraries at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York).

This special committee has been asked to examine the issues that led to the elimination of Columbia's program, to review past closings to see if there is a general pattern, to assess the general impact of the closings, to report findings in June 1991, and to advise the ALA Council on the formation, composition, charge, timetable and required funding to support a broad-based Special Commission. We will keep you informed.

If you are concerned about the education of the future law librarians, you should make an effort to attend a New Orleans program on Tuesday, July 23 at 1:15 p.m. entitled, "Shaping New Standards for Library School Accreditation: An Open Forum." New library school accreditation standards have been drafted, and this program will give us an opportunity to comment on and discuss these standards.

Currently, the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA) has a Standards Review Subcommittee with members from a wide variety of specialized library associations (including AALL). The revised standards do not speak to the accreditation of specialized programs (law librarianship, for example), but some suggestions will be made about how AALL and other groups can influence library school education.

The Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), the national organization of library school educators, said as part of their statement on the role of graduate programs:

Without a constant and continuing supply of qualified professionals to direct and maintain our libraries and other information centers, our society will suffer inestimably from inadequate personnel and restricted service, hindering the growth and availability for essential resources which are vital to an informed citizenry.

It is critical for AALL to play a role in all of these activities related to the quality and availability of library education on the graduate level. Our Special Committee on Recruitment (whose report goes to the Board in April) has recognized the importance of building bridges from AALL and its members to library schools and library school educators. It is not too late, but we as law librarians must take a proactive stand in this crucial arena. ▲