

From the President

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AALL Newsletter
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The *Newsletter* is published monthly with the exception of January and August.

AALL Newsletter Deadlines

Articles are due at the editor's desk by the following dates:

1991	Issue	Deadline
Vol. 23, No. 1	September	August 1
No. 2	October	September 5

Copy sent through a columnist should be sent to him/her a few days prior to the monthly deadline.

The advertising deadline is the second Thursday of each month.

The *Newsletter* is a free benefit of membership in the American Association of Law Libraries. Nonmembers may subscribe to the *Newsletter* for \$50 per year. For membership and/or subscription information, contact the American Association of Law Libraries at the address above.

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From all over the country, we hear the same refrain: budget cuts, staff cuts, "downsizing," serials cancellation projects, "don't expect a new building every 20 years." We have been through hard times before, but it looks like the 90s may be a different kind of tough.

The 1990s will require more attention to the bottom line—in every environment, personal and professional. Just this week, the *Seattle Times* had a three-page article entitled, "Some Lessons in Less; Want to Get Back to the Basics?" (*Seattle Times*, May 5, 1991, at K1). This at the same time all of us know that we need more resources, not fewer. More money for appropriate salaries, more money to use new technology to improve access to information and service, more money to buy the new, relevant legal materials needed by our users, more money for professional development and staff training. More...more...more.

Everyone is trying to maximize income, budget revenue or profits. Academic, subscription and county law libraries are offering services for a fee. Private law librarians are billing clients for their time. Publishers are demanding that their copyrights be protected. Even state institutions are heavily into the development/fund-raising game. We are all looking for ways to enhance the bottom line, either by saving resources or generating more funds.

In these difficult times, professional development and staff training tend to be hit first and hard. Suspending some or all out-of-state travel, discontinuing the payment of professional organization dues, and other such cutbacks seem to be the norm.

For law librarians, this may mean sending one instead of two professional librarians to the AALL Annual Meeting or discontinuing the practice of paying the librarians' dues to AALL or the local AALL chapters. Fundamentally, cutbacks in professional development funds affect the skill and efficiency with which we can do our jobs. How many days go by that you do not call on a colleague to help with a tough question, to borrow a book, or to provide you with a copy of an item desperately needed?

Our colleagues are unlikely to stop answering our questions just because we no longer belong to AALL. On the other hand, our collective ability to do our jobs well is seriously diminished if a law library is no longer listed in the *AALL Directory* (think what it would be like *without* the *Directory*!), or if local union lists cannot be produced because no one will volunteer to work on the project, or if a law librarian cannot attend a professional educational meeting to gain an understanding of the application of the federal copyright laws in the commercial setting.

In tight times, sharing resources and expertise is more important than ever. And yet, we are often party to or acquiesce in the decision to cut funding for professional development activities. When is the last time you suggested cutting the cost of one copy of an extra looseleaf service in order to continue the funding for staff development? One looseleaf subscription would send one librarian to New Orleans!

Ask yourself where *your* priorities are! Many of our colleagues, especially in the public sector, have for years paid their dues and educational meeting expenses personally. Perhaps professional development is not an all-or-nothing deal. While I will strongly agree that employers should fund professional development adequately, surely part of a loaf is better than none at all.

I do my job in the best possible way because of the community of wisdom and creativity provided by a network of wonderful law librarians. Don't let the value of that network be diminished by your inability to participate in it. You need us, and we need you.

See you in New Orleans!

