

From the President

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AALL Newsletter
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For years, the notion that law librarians are better paid than other kinds of librarians has been the perception of most in and outside of law librarianship. Undoubtedly, in some institutions and cities, this perception was and may still be the reality.

Comparing salary data is a little like comparing apples and oranges. In addition, some of the data is confidential, which makes it difficult to determine what the reality is. Though I am not in possession of all the reality, I can give you some figures from the recently released 1990 Association of Research Libraries Annual Salary Survey as an example.

Fiscal Year 1991

	Median Professional Salary	Beginning Professional Salary
ARL (excludes law and medical librarians)	\$34,800	\$23,800
ARL (law librarians)	\$34,663	\$23,995

The median professional salary of academic law librarians as reported in the most recent ABA salary survey is some \$3,000 lower than the \$34,663 figure above.


Frankly, I am outraged by these low salaries! To think we are trying to recruit qualified candidates into law librarianship for a median beginning salary of \$23,995! If we are having trouble filling positions, I suggest we look at these pitiful salaries. What is even worse in the academic arena is to note that academic law library director salaries have nearly tripled in the past 15 years!

I suspect that similar comparisons could be made between law firm librarians and special librarians, public librarians and academic law librarians, and so on. I clearly haven't done all of my homework—but it's time we all spent some time doing a reality check. And let's not perpetuate the myth that law librarians are better paid than other kinds of librarians—unless it's true!

One of the realities that has become clear to me in thinking about this issue is how inadequate our salary statistics are across the board. Every time we talk about salary surveys, we get caught up in the differences between our types of libraries and the positions that represent those specific salary levels. What we don't have that we need is just some simple information. Although the PLL/SIS has published other surveys and is currently conducting the 1991 survey (have you sent in your response?), and the SCC/SIS will gather data for its survey this fall, it's still not enough. What are the average and median salaries currently being paid to law librarians in each different type of law library?

We haven't managed to gather this information on an Association-wide basis because we always get bogged down in the detail and because there are lots of other pieces of information we also want to gather. We slither to a stop because of the enormity of the task.

I suggest that we are operating in a total vacuum without this information. Our efforts at recruitment, retention and public relations are doomed to failure if we can't accurately picture our profession.

AALL's Strategic Plan cannot possibly be implemented if you and I do not *do* something about this state of affairs. Those of us who are law library directors cannot wash our hands of the salary issue. We are all responsible for these low salaries. What information do you need to turn this around? What are *you* going to do about it? 

Penny