

People: Leading the Way Up the Mountain
Presented May 31, 1999
Canadian Association of Law Libraries Annual Conference
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I am honored and privileged to be asked to return to your CALL meeting in this lovely mountain retreat. I last joined you at the wonderful meeting in Ottawa in 1991 when I was President of AALL. I learned many things at that meeting – but mostly how much fun you all are!

I was asked to talk today about the future of law librarianship – a heady topic suitable for the rarified air of this glorious place! This topic is important to me personally because I am a law librarian – this is my career and future we are talking about. I am also most interested in the future of law librarianship on a professional level as I am the director of a program at the University of Washington that helps to educate and mentor new law librarians into our profession. And, this question, "Will there be law librarians in the 21st century?" is a question every one of these people asks – before they can decide whether or not to come to library school.

I would like to begin by quoting from a spiritual reader for librarians. This charming book by Michael Gorman is entitled, [Our Singular Strengths: Meditations for Librarians](#), and was published by the American Library Association in 1997. Mr. Gorman (of **Future Libraries** fame) selects a quotation he thinks appropriate to librarianship, expands on the quotation's meaning to him, and follows this with an "I will" statement. I really like this little book. I inadvertently left it on the corner of my desk one day and found that everyone who came into the office thumbed through it. Now, I leave it there on purpose.

Now I wish to read the Gorman page on "Night Thoughts":

To waste long nights in pensive discontent.

-Edmund Spenser, *Complaints*, *Mother Hubbard's Tale*

Sometimes, late in the evening or at night, I wonder what the world would be like if all the information futurists and advocates of technology *uber alles* are actually right. Because the track record of technological prophecy is, to be polite, dismal, betting against such prophets is safe ninety-nine times out of a hundred. After all, not many of us read microfiche newspapers while taking our personal helicopter to work happily leaving diligent robots to clean our plastic houses. Technology generally confounds our expectations and its consequences, good and bad, are rarely foreseen. Perhaps, then, it is foolish to worry that this might be the one time in a hundred and haunt the watches of the night with the specters of the death of the book, the end of reading, the creation of a huge aliterate

underclass, the reduction of higher education to television and the penciling of "Scantron" cards, and all the other joyless, gray outcomes of the vision of the wired intelligentsia. Anyway, day always comes and the nightmares recede. It is difficult to be pessimistic in the sunlight when both life and libraries look good.

I will be optimistic and remember time heals all futurist fantasies.
Gorman, at 100.

Frankly, it is hard to be optimistic in the face of such radical change. Think how much our world has changed just in the last three years – not to mention the 20+ years I have been in this profession. Interesting and challenging are words used all the time – these are just euphemisms for doing more with less in a constantly changing environment. Changes in users' expectations, changes in traditional publishing practices not to mention constantly changing technology populate our every work day.

What I would like to do now is to review some studies about the skills and competencies that will be needed by all law librarians in this new century. And then to talk about how we get from these high faluting ideals to the practical realities of our day to day work lives.

First, I want to remind you of Ranganathan's Five Laws. He was a mathematician who invented the term library science. He believed that all empirical laws were based on the scientific method. These five laws of librarianship are:

- Books are for use
- Every book its reader
- Every reader his book
- Save the time of the reader
- The library is a growing organism

These universal laws seem to me to embody the values and goals of our profession – even as we head to the 21st century.

Michael Gorman, in **Our Singular Strengths**, fashioned these Five Laws into more current statements:

- Libraries save humanity
- Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated
- Use technology intelligently to enhance service
- Protect free access to knowledge
- Honor the past and create the future Gorman, at 61.

All of the studies about competency and skills for librarianship have these three elements in common: they provide context for our professional work; they describe professional knowledge needed for our success; and they enumerate personal traits and attitudes that

are required in the successful librarian of the next century. I want to review the results of the studies by the Special Libraries Association and by the American Association of Law Libraries on skills and competencies in an effort to understand what our colleagues have already said about how to move gracefully through our professional lives in this information age. Maybe this will help to dispel the pessimism that is easy to be victim to.

In their 1997 work, [Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century](#), the Special Libraries Association identified three major environmental realities for librarians at this stage of history. They recognized the move from paper to digital information and multimedia opportunities, the increasing accountability of everyone in business, and the new forms of work organization and management.

SLA described eleven professional competencies. I have listed them all, but highlight the ones I think are most important for librarians to consider. How are you responding to your organizations' information needs? With imagination and creativity or with traditional services? When was the last time you systematically asked your users what services they used and found convenient? I have reworded these somewhat to fit my presentation.

SLA Professional Competencies

1. Has expert knowledge of content of information resources – evaluate and filter information
2. Has specialized subject knowledge
3. **Develops and manages convenient, accessible, cost effective information services aligned with the strategic directions of the organization**
4. Provides excellent instruction for users
5. Assesses information needs and markets value-added services
6. Uses technology to acquire, organize, and disseminate information
7. Communicates importance of information services to management
8. **Develops specialized information products**
9. Evaluates outcomes of information use
10. **Improves information services in response to changing needs**
11. Is an effective member of the senior management team

The personal competencies are very enlightening. Again, I have listed them all, but highlighted the ones I think we must pay particular attention to in order to be successful in our chosen profession.

SLA Personal Competencies

1. Committed to service excellence
2. Become the information leader
3. Sees the big picture
4. Looks for partnerships and alliances
5. Creates an environment of mutual respect and trust

6. Has effective communication skills
7. Works well with others in a team
8. Provides leadership
9. Plans, prioritizes and focuses on what is critical
10. Committed to lifelong learning and personal career planning
11. Entrepreneur
12. Understands the value of professional networking and solidarity
13. Flexible and positive in the face of continuing change

AALL took a hard look at the profession of law librarianship, specifically, and published their findings in 1997 in [Toward a Renaissance in Law Librarianship](#). This report recognized that fundamental changes are challenging law libraries. In particular, the report noted the great changes in technology – the digital revolution – and the economic and social changes, including smaller budgets, the globalization of law, vendor mergers, and diversity. The report goes on to conclude that there will be a future for law librarians (thank goodness!).

The Renaissance Report redefines law librarianship: "The ideal law librarian is in harmony with the values at the heart of the legal profession and librarianship, is *completely* knowledgeable about *everything* relevant to legal information, and has *all* the necessary character traits, attitudes, and skills to be a *superbly effective* legal information specialist. This librarian has also integrated an appreciation of the importance of library services into the larger culture of the library's parent organization." (emphasis added)

The AALL Report identifies professional values, professional knowledge, and personal traits, attitudes and skills needed by the successful law librarian.

AALL Essential Values

1. A genuine belief that the world is a better place with optimum access to information
2. Faith that the world is a better place when the rule of law prevails
3. Conviction that serving the information needs of the legal profession is a noble calling
4. Belief that democracy is the best political order
5. The firm conviction that an effective democracy requires ready public access to the law
6. Opposition to censorship
7. A commitment to foster equal participation of diverse peoples in library services and employment

AALL Professional Knowledge

1. Solid grounding in the liberal arts, especially the humanities and the social sciences to provide context
2. Knowledgeable about the legal system and the legal profession

3. Well informed about information and library science theory
4. Knowledgeable about legal resources and legal research
5. Well informed about information providers
6. Knowledgeable about information technology
7. Well versed in the culture, structure and likely future of the parent organization
8. Well versed in management and administrative functions

AALL Personal Traits, Attitudes, and Skills

1. Creative
2. Innovative
3. Imaginative
4. Flexible
5. Service-Oriented
6. Versatile
7. Adaptable
8. Revel in Change but not technological determinism
9. Skilled instructors
10. Equanimity in face of frustrations
11. Work collaboratively as a team member; network

At a NOCALL meeting a couple of years ago, participants identified these personal traits. I would add to the list:

12. Tenacity
13. Sense of Humor
14. Patience
15. Political Savvy
16. Assertiveness

On our long drive from Montana to Banff to attend this meeting, my friend, Judy Meadows, Montana State Law Librarian and Past President of AALL, told me a story that I think illustrates the point I would like to make here. I would like to share that story with you.

There was a frog on the riverbank. He needed to get across the river, but there were hundreds of alligators swimming in the river! The frog knew he would never make it to the other side by swimming. So he looks up and down the bank for some way across the river. Finally, in dismay, he sees an owl sitting in a tree. The frog thinks – the owl is wise – maybe he can tell me how to get across this river. So the frog says to the owl, "I need to cross the river. What can I do?". The owl responds, "Fly across the river." The frog thinks about this and, then, deciding that the owl is wise and must know what he is talking about, decides to give the flying a chance. The frog backs up from the river bank to get a long, hopping start. Giving himself a great push, the frog heaves himself out over the river --- and slowly begins to drop right into the middle of the river and those hungry

alligators! On his way down, the frog shouts to the owl, "Frogs can't fly!" And the wise old owl says, "That's a matter of implementation. I'm into process."

So, here is the challenge. How can we become the successful law librarians of the next millennium? We know what competencies and skills we must have. How do we get and keep those skills and attitudes? I think we can do several things. First, invest in staff training and development. Spend the time and money to keep your staff a peak performance. Besides sessions on using various software, don't forget to give workshops on learning styles, effect of change on an organization, and other such seminars. All library employees, including librarians, need to be life-long learners.

Second, look for the right competencies, skills, and attitudes in the new employees we hire. We can affect the way our organizations respond to changing times by hiring employees who have the skills and attitudes that will guarantee success. Third, help train the new generation of law librarians by teaching in a library school or teaching a legal research class for paralegals or other librarians.

And fourth, preserve the human moment in your day-to-day activities. I recently read an excellent article from the **Harvard Business Review**. Dr. Hallowell, in "[The Human Moment at Work](#)", claims that we are in danger of losing the human moment. He defines the human moment as an "authentic psychological encounter that can happen only when two people share the same physical space." He feels that toxic worry has replaced the human moment in many of our lives.

"Indeed, strategic use of the human moment can help reduce the confusion and ambiguity of electronic communications, develop confidence and trust as only in-person meetings can, and reduce the toxic worry, mental fatigue and disconnection associated with the excessive use of electronics. Technology has created a magnificent new world, bursting with opportunity. It has opened up a global, knowledge-based economy and unchained people from their desks. We are all in its debt – and we're never going back. But we cannot move forward successfully without preserving the human moment. The price we pay for not doing that is too high, for individuals and organizations alike. The human moment provides the zest and color in the painting of our daily lives; it restores us, strengthens us, and makes us whole. Luckily, as long as we arrange our lives properly, the human moment should be easy enough to preserve. All we have to do is take heed – and make it happen."

This is where you come in – you are the frog. It is all implementation. You can try to fly or you can think about other ways to cross that river that use your intelligence, networking, and creative skills.

Try this:

"I will give library users what they want – balance between the old and new." Gorman, page 69.

"I will be optimistic and remember time heals all futurist fantasies." Gorman, page 100.

Thank you.

Apologies to all of you who attended the CALL Meeting and heard my speech. I cannot write out every word before my presentations. This was the best I could do to reconstruct what actually did come out of my mouth that day. This was what I meant to say! Also, this is not a written paper and does not meet the exacting standards that we come to appreciate from edited papers with lots of footnotes.

Ulla de Stricker and I each had time to comment on each other's presentations. We also had some good questions from the audience. I don't remember everything, but I did want to jot down a few things that Ulla and I said at some time during the session. I will give credit when I can remember who said it.

Ulla:

Just because we can do it, does not mean we should do it.
Computers have a quality I have always missed in men – they do what they are told.
Perception is the reality.
Chart our way past service – librarians are not servants.
Know what your organization knows and what it does not know.
Librarians are partners in building the success of our institutions.
Drop the library lingo.
You have 30 seconds – give the elevator speech.
Exercise the NO muscle.
Schmooze and ooze.

Penny:

What am I doing well that I don't need to be doing at all? (I first heard this from Don Dunn, now Dean at Western New England School of Law)(In response to a question from the audience about how to keep doing more with less – short answer – figure out what you don't need to be doing – even if you are doing it well.)

Closed days – We close the library the Monday after each of the 4 academic quarters. Staff are not supposed to do their regular work. The first time, everyone cleaned out their desks. We restocked the staff lounge and supply room for

months to come! And we weeded over 1 ton of paper from files, desktops and the like! Now, the benefits are more personal to each staff person. But overall, these days make many of us feel more in control of the paper on our desks and in our files, our email inbox and files, and our other electronic creations.

My personal favorite comment was from the audience. The librarian challenged all of us to "Take time to think." What a novel idea!

References:

American Association of Law Libraries, *Toward a Renaissance in Law Librarianship*, West, 1997. www.aallnet.org Out of print, but in many law library collections.

Gorman, Michael, *Our Singular Strengths: Meditations for Librarians*, ALA, 1997

Sample chapters:

www.ala.org/editions/openstacks/insidethecovers/insideexcerpts3A.html

Interview with M. Gorman:

http://www.ala.org/editions/openstacks/authors/word_gorman.html

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Hallowell, Edward M., "The Human Moment at Work", Harvard Business Review (Jan/Feb 1999) Harvard Business Review, 1999

Abstract and ordering information:

www.hbsp.harvard.edu/products/hbr/janfeb99/99104.html

Special Library Association, *Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century*, SLA, 1997

Ordering information: www.sla.org/pubs/ or call 202-234-4700, ext.673 or email order, books@sla.org