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What is the Value of Associations, or is It Safe to Row Alone

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The End of the Row but Not the End of the River

It is hard to believe that my year as president is almost at an end. We have had quite an eventful and successful row together. I can just see the lights on in the boathouse ahead. As I anticipate passing the gavel to Jean Wenger, I would like to thank you for your support and hard work as AALL members this past year and for the opportunity to serve as your president. We should be proud of what we have accomplished to enhance our profession and our professional Association in one short year.

As Past President Claire Germain so eloquently stated, "The role of AALL president plays in a continuum. Each president picks up where the last one left off." I continued the work of Past President Joyce Janto, and Jean will take on some of my unfinished work. In that way, the leadership work of the Association remains as seamless as possible, allowing for easy transitions going forward. We may have reached the end of the row with me as coxswain, but I will merely change my seat in the boat as Jean steps in to guide us and I join all of you again as a team member.

As I look back on the past year, I see a time of great activity and success, change, and transition. Some of what we have accomplished together is set out below.

Vendor Colloquium Task Forces

I began the year by appointing two task forces that were recommended from the report of the Vendor Colloquium 2011. The Vendor Colloquium, which was held in February 2011, produced an extensive list of recommendations. Those recommendations were distilled into the report of the Ad Hoc Vendor Colloquium. Two task forces were responsible for creating first steps following recommendations from the report—the *AALL Guide to Fair Business Practices* Revisions Task Force (chaired by Kay Todd, senior legal researcher at Paul Hastings LLP in Atlanta) and the Library Procurement Process Improvements Task Force (chaired by Tracy Thompson-Pryzlucki, executive director of the New England Law Library Consortium, Inc. in Albany, New York, and Katherine Lowry, director of information resources at Baker & Hostetler in Cincinnati). I look forward to receiving their reports for the July 2012 Executive Board meeting.

Futures Summit

My first major initiative was hosting the very successful Futures Summit in November 2011. A planning committee chaired by David Mao—former deputy director of the Law Library of Congress and AALL treasurer, now law librarian of Congress—set out an agenda that called for AALL Executive Board members to spend two half days with a diverse group of our members analyzing ways to engage newer members, anticipate the direction of the profession, and revitalize the Association.

I appointed a small group from the summit to summarize and prioritize the results. That group, Futures Summit Report Drafting Group, headed by Robyn Hagle, librarian at Perkins Coie LLP in Seattle, recently submitted its report to the board.

The group focused the report on four goals: (1) advance the relevancy of law librarianship; (2) increase the transparency of AALL; (3) improve Association responsiveness and personalize the member experience; and (4) provide for crosspollination opportunities . . . among Association members. In addition, the group identified action items to achieve each goal. We are already working on some of the recommendations, such as the need for better communication and transparency. I have appointed a small group from the board that is charged with creating a chronological and prioritized action plan for submission at the July board meeting in order to carry forward that important work.

Annual Meeting Evaluation

During the spring of 2011, AALL hired a consultant, Velvet Chainsaw Consulting, to evaluate all aspects of our Annual Meeting, including planning, program selection, and program presentation. The consultants attended last summer's Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, where they attended programs, met with individual members, and observed the operation as a whole. In the fall, they released a lengthy report summarizing their findings and offering recommendations for the Association going forward. I appointed a committee of the board, chaired by Diane Rodriguez, librarian at Hassard Bonnington LLP in San Francisco, to gather input from members regarding the report and to make recommendations for our Annual Meeting going forward.

That report was voted on and passed by the board during a conference call in March 2012.

Many of the items recommended in the report have already been adopted for the July 2012 meeting. Some of those include reinstating the Association Luncheon, expanding on "learner-centric" programming, creating a technology "track" through a partnership with the International Legal Technology Association, and moving special interest section meetings to times that do not conflict with educational programs. In addition, the report recommended that the Annual Meeting Program Committee become more strategic in its focus so it becomes a proactive creator and facilitator of programming rather than a receiver of programs. I am very excited about these changes for our Annual Meeting in Boston and future Annual Meetings.

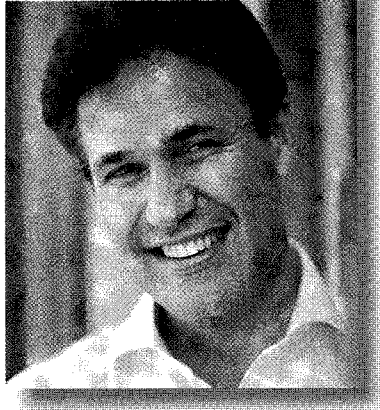
Communication and Transparency

Communication in most organizations is difficult. With a national association like ours, there are additional layers of difficulty in accessing information over the internet due to geography and diversity of systems. As I stated, the Futures Summit identified communication (and transparency, in particular) as a problem. Since the summit, I have added a weekly E-newsletter that comes out on Mondays in the Members Open Forum community. In addition, the monthly E-newsletter has been expanded to include more information about the Association and its members (please send information you would like to share to Ashley St. John, AALL's marketing and communications manager, at astjohn@aall.org). Finally, we are now sharing the board meeting agenda and materials prior to the board meeting. Members gain access to those materials at the same time that board members do.

UELMA and Other Advocacy Successes

I am most proud of our recent federal and state advocacy efforts. Under the leadership of new Government Relations Director Emily Feltren, we are forging ahead to create new partnerships, get AALL's name out there, and support the important information policy initiatives for which we are well known. One of those initiatives—our belief in





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