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Partnering with Decision Makers in Your Institution

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Partnering with Decision Makers in Your Institution

In the course of my presidential activities this year, I attend many meetings. Most recently I went to the ABA Council of the Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar meeting in San Diego in December and the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) meeting in Washington, D.C., in January. While engaging in conversations with lawyers, judges, and professors, I make a point of asking them whether they have asked their librarians for assistance on the issues they are involved in. I am always elated when they comment on how good the service is. Sometimes, they say that they have not thought of asking their librarians for help, even though they know that they should.

Recently, a lawyer from Miami asked me about knowledge management in law firms, and a law professor asked me about international resources on law and aging. I encouraged them to ask their librarians to do background research. I emphasized how knowledgeable librarians are in any area of inquiry and that if they don't know the answer, or have the materials onsite, they will know where to find it or who to ask for an answer.

My question to you for today is **what if we all made a big effort to partner with decision makers? What if we made ourselves indispensable to our parent organizations and their leaders, whether**



they be judges in court, lawyers in law firms, or faculty and students in law schools, as well as administrators and other staff in these entities? We have

terrific services to offer and special skills to meet their needs.

But we should be proactive and reach out to them, since they may not know all that we can do for them. One way to do that is to engage in informal, social conversations in the hallway, at meetings, or at every opportunity so that very naturally they will think of asking us a question about Google or about their research issues of the day. Another way might be to invite a decision maker to lunch, as an equal partner, so that we become colleagues with our institutional decision makers.

I would love to receive your success stories, as well as challenges, so that they can be shared with others. Please send them to cgermain@aall.org.

AALS in Washington, D.C., January 2006

I represented AALL at the recent AALS meeting in Washington, and I would like to share my impressions with you as to the impact of the discussions on our work as law librarians and on our profession.

The AALS annual meeting was relocated to Washington, D.C., this year, from the original location in New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina struck in September. Many references were made to the 1,000 or so New Orleans law students who were hosted by law schools nationwide.

Empirical Scholarship, Theme of Conference. The general theme of the conference was "Empirical Scholarship," a relatively new area of research, which uncovers and analyzes facts and draws conclusions based on particular methodologies appropriate to the specific inquiry. Many of the sessions presented different ranges of ideas, methodologies, and projects involving different types of empirical research, with the hope that law faculty would be encouraged to add an empirical component to its own scholarly agenda. Some methods include exploiting underused or difficult-to-access databases, making creative use of social science methods, and communicating the results of empirical studies effectively to a broader community. Some exemplary empirical projects mentioned investigating the effects

of caps on damage awards, documenting patterns of black land law, comprehending crime trends, and studying judges and juries. I attended the plenary luncheon on behalf of AALL at the head table and had the pleasure to listen to a brilliant lecture by Judge Guido Calabresi on "The Lawyer as Institutional Empiricist: the Case of Law and Economics."



AALL President Claire Germain (left), Dean Kenneth Starr of Pepperdine University, and Filippa Anzalone of Boston College gather during the Association of American Law Schools annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in January.

Transnational Law in U.S. Law Schools Workshop. As many of you know, I have published a book, *Transnational Law Research: a Guide for Attorneys*, in loose-leaf form since 1991 (2006 update soon to be released) at a time when "transnational" was the buzzword. Other terms then came into vogue, particularly "global," to refer to the internationalization of law practice and world economies. It pleases me that "transnational" has reappeared as the preferred term and that a whole day's workshop was devoted to it during the AALS meeting.

With the globalization of activities, students will inevitably confront transnational legal issues and challenges in legal practice. Any informed national discussion of important policy issues also includes transnational law. This has led to the new focus of introducing transnational perspectives in the *first-year curriculum*, rather than in specialized upper-class courses, and has made transnational law an integral, rather than peripheral, part of legal education. U.S. lawyers addressed the new roles they play in a multinational legal world—the way in which foreign and international law routinely affect the practice of law today and the importance of knowing about other legal systems so that U.S. lawyers know how to deal with foreign lawyers.

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Kudos to Virginia Law Librarians

Kudos to all the law librarians who wrote most of the December 2005 *Virginia Lawyer* issue, the official publication of the Virginia State Bar. This great accomplishment features a photo of Gail Warren, state law librarian, on the cover of the issue with the Honorable Leroy R. Hassell, Sr., chief justice of the Virginia Supreme Court. Congratulations to Paul Barron, Hazel Johnson, Kent Olson, Jennifer Sekula, Lyn Warmath, Gail Warren, and Gail Zwirner for a wonderful job that reflects so well on our profession and that can be emulated in the other 49 states! The issue is available online at www.vsb.org.

I also attended a specialized session on integrating transnational law in the first-year civil procedure course. What is transnational law? I have an elaborate definition in my book in Chapter 1, at section 1.01.3. It involves public international law, private international law, comparative law, and the domestic law of foreign countries. There are practical library applications to this phenomenon. The library literature is expanding with transnationally-oriented books. West is starting a series of supplements with a transnational focus, geared for use with U.S. textbooks, e.g., a forthcoming 200-page book by Thomas Main on “Global Issues in Civil Procedure: Cases and Materials,” intended to supplement any first-year civil procedure casebook.

Dialogue between Law Deans and Law Library Directors. The Section on Law Libraries co-sponsored a program with the Section for the Law School Dean, which turned out to be most successful, with more than 200 people attending—many of them deans. Titled, “How I see it: a Dialogue between Deans and Law Library Directors,” the program was quite lively, with each speaker speaking for five minutes on a topic, using the point and counterpoint technique, and then opening the floor for discussion with the audience. The three topics were “Space and Collections,” “Faculty Status for Law Library Directors,” and “Oversight of Information Technology in Law Schools.” The three librarian speakers were excellent, eloquent, and persuasive: Penny Hazelton (University of Washington), Barbara Bintliff (University of Colorado), and Billie Jo Kaufman (American University). The law deans included Kenneth Starr (Pepperdine), who moderated the panel; David van Zandt (Northwestern); Nancy Rogers (Ohio State); and John Garvey (Boston College). Many thanks to Filippa Anzalone (Boston College), who organized the panel as chair elect of the AALS Section on Law Libraries.

It was very constructive to hear how deans talk about libraries and their respect for the work done by librarians. This first dialogue was continued at the ABA Midwinter meeting in Chicago in February at a deans’ workshop focusing on the library in the law school, with Chris Simoni (Northwestern) and Keith Ann Stiverson (Chicago-Kent) representing the law library perspective. ■