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## Letter to Margaret Axtmann regarding the Southeastern Law Librarian, October 2, 1981

Ann Fessenden

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SCHOOL OF LAW LIBRARY  
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Office of the Law Librarian

October 2, 1981

Margie Axtmann  
National Center for State Courts  
300 Newport Ave.  
Williamsburg, VA 32185

Re: Editorial Guidelines for Southeastern Law Librarian

Dear Margie:

In thinking about editorial guidelines, I found that the main conclusion I came to was that I'm glad I'm not the editor! I also found that I had mixed feelings about the inclusion of many of the "specific questions" you raised in your memo. I am also including a couple of additional categories which I think should be considered. The following is a summary of my thoughts.

1. Book reviews - I think book reviews do have value, but they should be limited to books that would interest most of the membership, not obscure works that only law school libraries might buy. Preferably, there should be a member of the newsletter committee assigned to do reviews on a regular basis, rather than irregular contributions. If contributions are accepted, they should have a maximum word limitation.

2. Advertising - I think ads for used books by libraries (wanted or for sale) could have value, if carried as a regular feature. At present, there is really no medium of exchange for this type of information. (The A.A.L.L. Duplicate Exchange Committee is currently studying the possibility of doing a list of materials for sale.) Placement ads should certainly be continued; commercial ads should not be accepted.

3. Editorials - If you feel an urge to editorialize, I certainly think you should have the right to do so. I think editorials should be of reasonable length -- say not over a page. I think the privilege was definitely abused by the previous editor, but I'm really not concerned about it now. Personally I don't read editorials much, but I think it is an editor's prerogative to include them if he/she wants to.

On the related problem of letters to the editor, or "editorials" by someone other than the editor, I think they should be published "if space available." This would still leave it pretty much to the editor's discretion whether to use or not, but would at least provide an excuse not to. Perhaps a maximum word limitation could also be imposed.

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4. Product announcements and endorsements - I'm not sure exactly what you mean by this category; I assume it's equipment, microforms, and other items besides books. I think the announcement might be valuable but not the endorsement. An objective review would be useful.

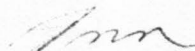
5. Warnings - I notice that the old Southeastern Law Librarian frequently contained warnings about publisher rip-offs, etc. I think this sort of information is valuable, at least if the publication is one likely to be purchased by most law libraries. The warning should be delivered in a calm, professional manner, however, rather than in a diatribe, as was usually the case in the old S.L.L.

I'm not sure how to handle this if the person submitting the information does so in an objectional style. Perhaps a solution would be to rewrite it in an objective manner, but give the contributor credit for reporting the information. I realize it's touchy, but perhaps it could be done diplomatically?...

6. Review of professional literature and news - One feature I always liked in the SWALL Newsletter were the notices of interesting books, articles, or news in the world of (non-law) libraries. I think this type of thing might be especially helpful to librarians in firms and other small law libraries who may not have access to American Libraries, Library Journal, L.C. Information Bulletin, etc. Ideally, a committee member would do a regular column on this.

I hope these comments will be of some help. Let me know if there's anything else I can do.

Sincerely,



Ann T. Fessenden  
Technical Services Librarian

7-13-81

SEALL NEWSLETTER COPY

Beginning with the next newsletter (volume 7, number 2), the Southeastern Law Librarian will be featuring articles on practice oriented material for each of the ten states. The focus of these articles will be on subject treatises, form books, jury instructions, court manuals and handbooks, and publications on continuing legal education. The first article will be on Virginia, and it is being prepared by Ed Edmonds, Associate Law Librarian, Marshall-Wythe School of Law.