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Recommended Citation

Timothy L. Coggins, 1999 Annual Meeting: Strategic Initiatives Sessions, 4 AALL Spectrum 30 (2000).

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1999 Annual Meeting Strategy Initiatives Sessions

by Timothy L. Coggins

The Superintendent of Documents with the U.S. Government Printing Office ...

the Law Library Director of the Tel Aviv University School of Law ...

Justices of the Supreme Courts of Virginia and Oklahoma ...

Deans of three library schools ...

Several law school professors ...

the President of the American Judicature Society ...

Judges from other courts ...

plus many AALL members.

These were among the more than 45 individuals who participated in the "Strategic Initiatives" sessions following the Sunday and Monday programs at the 1999 Annual Meeting and Conference in Washington, D.C., in July. The final report from these "Strategic Initiatives" sessions is available now at the following URL: http://www.aallnet.org/events/99_strategic.asp.

Background

"Because so many special guests participated in our Annual Meeting, we wanted to seize the opportunity to identify common interests, and strategies for addressing legal information issues, shared by all members of the legal and information communities," said AALL Past President Jim Heller. Along with 1999 AMPSC Chair Timothy Coggins and members of the 1999 Annual Meeting Advisory Committee, Heller invited a group of AALL members and other guests, including speakers, Chapter VIPs, and State Justice Institute grant recipients, to participate in several small group "Strategic Initiatives" sessions during the Annual Meeting in Washington. The sessions were designed to reflect on information policy issues addressed in the Sunday and Monday programs, to identify possible action-oriented strategies, and to build new (and enhance existing) alliances between AALL and other organizations and associations.

Six Discussion Groups

The "Report of the Strategic Initiatives Sessions" summarizes the issues raised by the discussion participants and suggests many possible initiatives and activities. Each of the six discussion groups focused on issues relating to a particular type of law library or a particular issue. The groups and the AALL members who served as the conveners were:

- Academic Law Libraries and Legal Education: Sally Holterhoff
- Access to Government Legal Information: Susan Tulis
- Intellectual Property & Copyright Issues: Anne Klinefelter
- Library Education: Margie Axtmann
- Private Law Libraries & Law Firm Issues: Hazel Johnson
- State, Court, and County Law Libraries & Courts: Carol Billings and Marcia Koslov.

Common Themes

Several common themes and ideas were generated during the discussions. Not surprisingly, every group identified issues relating to the increased use of, and reliance on, electronic legal materials and resources. The Academic group discussed how electronic access might impact the ABA/AALS accreditation standards. The Access to Government Legal Information group addressed standards for electronic information, including issues relating to the need for "authentic" digital information. The Private Law Libraries group discussed collection re-balancing, licensing (rather than ownership) of information, and how these issues relate to billing practices.

A second common theme was the need to work with other organizations—and with units within our institutions—to educate our users and to effect change. This issue was particularly important to the State, Court and County group, which wrote that judges, clerks, court administrators, lawyers, and librarians should participate actively in each other's meetings.

The groups were also concerned with law librarian education and training and the changing job market for law librarians. The Library Education group suggested that AALL work with library and information science schools to develop a "certified" curriculum for a law librarianship specialization. Finally, each group expressed the importance of being aware of legislation and regulations affecting access to information. The Intellectual Property & Copyright group noted how important it was for AALL to continue its work and to alert members about the importance of their and Chapters' participation in this endeavor.

Many of our guests complimented law librarians for their broad-based initiatives to preserve access to information. Stephen Elias (President of Nolo Press), who participated in the Intellectual Property & Copyright session, reported that the Nolo Press/Texas Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee case gained most of its momentum when AALL and the Texas Library Association became involved as named plaintiffs. Lawrence Okinaga (President of the American Judicature Society) said the AALL meetings had made him aware of law librarians' interest in and knowledge of issues relating to pro se litigants, prisoners, and other individuals seeking legal information.

Chapters and SIS leaders are especially invited to take a look at the report, which offers ideas for Chapter and SIS initiatives. The participants in the "Strategic Initiatives" sessions hope that AALL and its Special Interest Sections, its Committees, and related Chapters and other associations and organizations represented by the invited guests will review the report and include relevant portions in their strategic planning endeavors. Again, you can see the full report at http://www.aallnet.org/events/99_strategic.asp.

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