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Care and Maintenance of the Successful Career: How Experienced Law Librarians Make Their Work Rewarding

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Care and Maintenance of the Successful Career: How Experienced Law Librarians Make Their Work Rewarding

Experienced law librarians explain how at midcareer they continue to find challenges in their jobs and enthusiasm for their work. Although each offers a personal take, common themes emerge around involvement in profession and community, lifelong learning, and balance of work and private lives.

Introduction*

*Paul M. George***

¶1 At the 2000 AALL Annual Meeting, I coordinated an educational program titled “Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Librarian.”¹ The program was designed to address a common concern of experienced librarians. By midcareer, many of us find that we have achieved either the success we had earlier sought or all that we now can reasonably expect to obtain. We are successful and have worked hard to obtain our professional goals. We may continue to have challenges, but these challenges are often the same (e.g., finding another way to stretch the acquisitions budget or present the training program for associates or law students). We find ourselves envying the new librarians entering the profession and admiring their unbridled enthusiasm. As experienced librarians, we face the significant professional issue of career renewal, of continuing to find challenges and rewards after achieving the professional goals we set early in our careers.

¶2 The program addressed career renewal from many different vantage points. William Lindberg, president of the Ash Grove Group, and Rosemary Richardson, president of Renewal Consulting and Coaching, each spoke about career changes and life cycles. Joan Howland addressed the issues from the perspective of a librarian. Interspersed in the program were short video presentations from five experienced librarians² who each discussed what they did to continue to find challenges and rewards in their careers. These presentations were informative, varied, serious, and entertaining. They also provided those of us attending the program with practical and realistic suggestions on how some law librarians have confronted these issues.

¶3 This collection of essays from twenty-three of our colleagues is an extension of that program. Contributors were asked to explain how they continue to find challenges in their jobs and to maintain their enthusiasm for their work. Beyond

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1. Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Law Librarian, program presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Philadelphia (July 18, 2000) (audiotape available from Mobiltape Co.).
2. Janet Sinder, Brian Striman, Laura Gasaway, Sharon Hamby O'Connor, and Leonette Williams.

that, no guidelines were suggested or imposed. As hoped, the authors have taken a variety of approaches, each expressing individual and highly personal views on careers and lives. What has emerged, though, are common themes revolving around involvement in profession and community, lifelong learning, and balance between work and private lives.

¶14 Originally, we thought I would begin this collection of essays with a lengthy introductory article outlining the various issues in career plateauing and life cycles. I would examine the literature and provide a list of suggestions from the various authorities in this field. As the essays began to arrive, however, it became increasingly clear that each of the contributors is a living example of the advice recommended by the professionals. In essence, they have provided meaningful, real-life examples that are far more relevant to us than any list of theoretical suggestions ever could be.

¶15 Without going into detail on solutions, it is important to realize how common this situation is. What most of us will experience at some point in our professional careers is the common phenomenon of a plateau. It is a sign of success and is to be expected not only in our professional careers, but in our personal lives as well. There are two types of plateaus that we can and probably will experience in our professional lives.³ The first is the career plateau and the second is a content plateau.

¶16 A career plateau is reached when we are entrenched in the organization's hierarchy. For whatever reason, we have gone as far as we can go within the organization and our work takes on a sameness.⁴ We may still have the ability to do more advanced work, but we do not have the opportunity. The greater the hierarchy of the organization, the greater the chance for avoiding this plateau. As organizations follow modern management theory and become increasingly flatter, there is a corresponding increased danger of plateauing. Of course, we should not confuse a temporary plateau or interval between progressions with a long-lasting period of sameness. In the world of law libraries, we have further limited our options by dividing ourselves into specialties—public, private, court, and academic. Crossover is not usual, particularly after a career path has been followed for several years. This vertical stratification, combined with the small number of actual openings for hierarchical advancement, collides with a cultural expectation of success that requires advancement for more money and status. The implied corollary is the notion that without advancement we are less “successful” and therefore less valued.⁵

3. We may also experience a personal plateau. This is usually more profound and, although it relates to our private, nonwork life, it can nevertheless affect our work performance. People who have reached a personal plateau have often allowed work or some other activity to become the most significant part of their life, identity, and self-esteem. See Susan Sonnesyn Brooks, *Moving Up Is Not the Only Option*, HRMAGAZINE, Mar. 1994, at 79, 80.

4. Steve H. Appelbaum & Victor Santiago, *Career Development in the Plateaued Organization*, CAREER DEV. INT'L, 1997 no. 1, at 11, 13.

5. Jane Farmer et al., *Taking Stock: Career Planning for Isolated, Middle-Level Professionals*, LIBR. CAREER DEV., 1998 no. 8, at 3, 6.

¶17 Statistical information on law library careers reveals how common career plateauing is within the profession. A recent AALL salary survey reported that on average law librarians had 8.4 years of experience in their current positions.⁶ This is noteworthy because common views on plateauing within the business world indicate that a person should consider himself plateaued if he has been in the same position for more than five years.⁷ Figures for academic law library directors show an average age of fifty-three.⁸ On average, they have also been in their present positions for fifteen years and have been in the profession for twenty-three years. The associates and heads of departments of academic law libraries have been in their positions for an average of fourteen years and in the profession for seventeen years. They are not significantly younger than their directors, having an average age of forty-eight and a half. Their opportunity for promotion within an organizational structure, either at their institution or at another school, is limited in several ways. First, the sheer smaller number of available directorships limits opportunities for them. Second, the non-J.D. manager is limited without the law degree. Finally, and potentially most important, if they must wait twelve to fifteen years for these directors to retire, they themselves will be pushing close to their own retirement age.

¶18 While it was too difficult to determine through the membership directory who are the senior librarians in the private sector, I found that similar data could readily be obtained for court librarians. On average, the directors and associate directors of major state and federal court libraries have an average age of forty-nine years, with twenty years in the profession and fourteen and a half years in their current position.⁹ We are clearly a group of people who have risen to the top quickly.

¶19 Of course, not everyone may wish to move higher in the organization even if there are opportunities to do so. These librarians are still not free from plateauing issues, however, because they may experience content plateauing in their work environment. This occurs when individuals lack additional challenges to expand their expertise.¹⁰ They have learned all there is to learn in a position and find that the responsibilities are predictable.¹¹

6. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY 1999, pt. 2, tbl. 14B, at http://aallhq.org/members/pub_salary99.asp.

7. Appelbaum & Santiago, *supra* note 4, at 13. One should note, however, that the business world and its five-year concept is also a world where change is expected. Our precedent-based legal world is much more committed to continuity and tradition.

8. The rough data was compiled by first identifying all individuals listed as directors of academic law libraries in the AALL DIRECTORY AND HANDBOOK 2000-2001 (2000). Biographical information on the year they obtained their bachelor's degree, the year of first position, and the year of current position was then collected from the online biographical directory available on AALLNET. The average age was calculated based on the assumption of an average age of twenty-two when the bachelor's degree was earned.

9. See *supra* note 8 for method used to calculate this data.

10. Carol S. Tan & Paul R. Salomone, *Understanding Career Plateauing: Implications for Counseling*, 42 CAREER DEV. Q. 291, 293 (1994).

11. Brooks, *supra* note 3, at 80.

¶10 How do these issues of plateaus fit into the question of keeping ourselves challenged and enthusiastic about our work? At the program in Philadelphia, William Lindberg and Rosemary Richardson addressed this question. For those not at the program, an excellent source to consult for a detailed explanation is *The Adult Years: Mastering the Art of Self-Renewal* by Frederic M. Hudson.¹² For a condensed version, consider that these plateaus can come at different stages and in various aspects of our lives. They are part of the normal life cycle patterns. Whenever we achieve success, whether in a career or school or some other aspect of our personal life, we reach a plateau because we have achieved what we wanted. Hudson defines setting and achieving a goal as the first of four stages in a life cycle, whether that cycle relates to education, marriage, family, or career.¹³ This “Go for It” phase is followed by a second phase in which we try to manage our successes.¹⁴

¶11 These first two phases deal with our success and are of interest to those of us wanting to maintain enthusiasm in our careers. Having obtained our goal, we strive to stay at the peak as long as possible.¹⁵ But we must still exit the plateau phase and return to the initial phase. To do this we have two avenues. The longer route discussed by Hudson encompasses his third and fourth stages of life cycles during which we engage in contemplative reevaluation of our goals and prepare for significant changes and possibly new careers.¹⁶ Fortunately, we do not necessarily have to go through these final two stages after recognizing a plateau. We can return directly to the initial phase by restructuring our priorities and rejuvenating our initial goals and aspirations.¹⁷ In researching these issues, I found that much of the literature focuses on burnout and significant changes in careers, activities addressed by Hudson’s third and fourth stages. What many of us want to hear instead are the experiences of people such as our essayists who continue to build upon their successes.

¶12 Our essayists have indicated how they have maintained themselves at the top of their plateaus. What they do not discuss is how they selected the activities that help them maintain their balance, perspective, and enthusiasm. For this ques-

12. FREDERIC M. HUDSON, *THE ADULT YEARS: MASTERING THE ART OF SELF-RENEWAL* (1999).

13. *Id.* at 56–58.

14. *Id.* at 87–88.

15. *Id.* at 56.

16. The third and fourth stages are labeled by Hudson as the “cocooning” stage and the “getting ready for the next chapter” stage. In cocooning, one is more introspective, seeking to determine the new identity. After identifying that new role, we prepare, network, and train for it, and then move back to the beginning as we reenter the first phase of the cycle. *Id.* at 64–67. These types of changes in life chapters are not new to librarians. Half of the students in library school are career changers. Evan St. Lifer, *The Boomer Brain Drain: The Last of a Generation?*, *LIBR. J.*, May 1, 2000, at 38, 40. Those who come to law librarianship after earning a law degree and possibly practicing law have gone through all four stages. Achievement of the law degree and possibly a career has been followed by thoughts of change, then the change itself as we returned to school and earned our new degrees, and started a new cycle as a law librarian.

17. HUDSON, *supra* note 12, at 96.

tion, I refer the reader to the growing literature in the area of career management and planning.¹⁸ The pressures of career plateaus place a responsibility upon librarians to do career planning—both before the plateau is reached and afterwards. In this context, planning or management does not focus on a particular job we are seeking. Rather, it should help provide a more general guide summarizing work experiences we wish to obtain, as well as a general guide of what we find enjoyable and rewarding in our work.¹⁹ These career goals should be compatible with personal goals and interests.²⁰ They therefore cannot be developed without taking into account the balance we want to have between our personal and our professional lives, a balance that our essayists so clearly articulate. Career consultants often require individuals to list not only promotional goals and job performance objectives but also financial goals, family and home life goals, and social and community goals.²¹ Studies have shown that even if the individual's growth is personal and outside the workplace, there is a benefit to the employer.²² The ultimate goal of career planning is to help individuals realize their full potential, whether by moving upward or by developing in their current position.²³

¶13 Those readers interested in pursuing research on these issues will find a wealth of information about career plateaus, balancing personal and professional lives, and maintaining career enthusiasm. Still, I suspect that you will find, as I have, that the librarians contributing to this collection of essays have provided us with some of the best advice available.

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18. I recommend three journals on this topic. The first is *Career Development Quarterly*, published by the National Career Development Association. Two international journals are *Librarian Career Development* (which contains articles for nonlibrarian professionals as well as librarians), and *Career Development International*.
 19. Jeffrey H. Greenhaus et al., *The Role of Goal Setting in Career Management*, LIBR. CAREER DEV., 1998 no. 8, at 16.
 20. *Id.* at 17.
 21. Jay J. Zajas & Jann R. Mitchener Zajas, *Planning Your Total Career and Life Portfolio—Part 1: A Model for Management Development*, LIBR. CAREER DEV., 1994 no. 2, at 7, 9.
 22. Tan & Salomone, *supra* note 10, at 296.
 23. Farmer et al., *supra* note 5, at 8.

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Has It Really Been That Long? A New Role Can Be Energizing*

*Donna Bausch***

¶1 Twenty years in and no desire to jump ship yet. Is it an absence of intellectual curiosity, lack of ambition, sloth, or entropy? In my view, it’s something far more

* © Donna Bausch, 2001.

** Law Librarian, Norfolk Law Library, Norfolk, Virginia.

positive. Responding to circumstances by redefining my professional role has helped keep me totally engaged in a career that I still find satisfying and inspiring.

¶12 In the early years of my career, as an urban law firm reference librarian, there was no need to fear boredom; the pace was too frenetic. Later, as library director at several midsize law firms, the job itself remained more than challenging as we faced the early challenges of technology. And by being active in professional associations from the start, the mix of the day-to-day crises with larger issues facing the profession was an ideal balance that engendered motivation and inspiration.

¶13 In my second decade of law librarianship, I was compelled by geography to reshape my professional focus. As I followed my oft-transferred corporate nomad husband to smaller cities, I devoted more of my professional energy to association activities. It was clear that there would not be local opportunities for the variety of professional interchange to which I'd become accustomed in the law library communities in Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, but I could not imagine giving up the benefits of involvement just because my "local" chapters were now regional and statewide rather than city-based. In fact, these groups have been more important to me since leaving the "big city." And fortunately e-mail and the Web came along just at the right time to support networking beyond the local area.

¶14 I also became deeply involved with my local library community. For instance, I taught classes in legal reference for non-law librarians at the local public library, local university libraries, and the state library association. Teaching nurtures the next generation of law librarians while serving the local library community. In addition, coordinating a local informal law library network has been a wonderful way to maintain close ties with the colleagues who make it possible to do my job every day at the highest level of quality.

¶15 In law firm and academic law libraries earlier in my career, healthy budgets permitted a focus on collection development and technology applications requiring substantial investments. In recent years, at a public law library with static funding in a high-inflation period, I've had to develop a new vision of law library service—selling research services and developing new products that appeal to our local legal market—while developing fund-raising and grant-writing skills. I've become the rainmaker for my library, not just by attracting paying customers, but also by developing support from the political institutions and professional communities upon which it relies for its funding and continued viability.

¶16 It has been in my self-interest to be visible in the local community. Contacts developed through service on the boards of the Friends of the Old Dominion University Library, the Norfolk Public Library, and the Chrysler Museum of Art Library, as well as being active in the League of Women Voters, become valuable in the most unexpected ways. Whenever I'm asked to make a presentation to the local or state bar, paralegal organizations, college classes, or library organizations, I say yes. After a decade in Norfolk, everywhere I go I encounter library customers, and it's a great feeling to be so much a part of the

community I serve. The more I give to my community, the more public support my library and its mission receive through successful fund-raising campaigns and the support of the bar association.

¶17 The process of creating a new professional role has been energizing rather than exhausting. In my small law library where each of us are reference librarians, money managers, and lobbyists all week long, I continue to utilize every ounce of intellect, diplomacy, and creativity learned over the years from my colleagues.

¶18 It has been precisely those colleagues who have provided the oxygen that has powered my career. Without the friendship and support of library school colleagues Peggy Jarrett and Victoria Kahn, this journey would have lacked joy and meaning. Though we all started in law firm librarianship in Washington, D.C., but now live in three different cities and work in three different types of libraries, we continue to rely on one another professionally and personally.¹ Supportive mentors have opened doors and served as role models for me.² Today, colleagues³ in MSLL, the Membership Subscription Law Libraries group, are my touchstones. These leaders from the largest and most entrepreneurial libraries have welcomed the presence of my small law library in their midst and allowed me to learn from the masters. One of the most important lessons has been the importance of finding others in venues like your own who have more experience, resources, and programming and then emulating them. Don't reinvent the wheel; hone what others have created.

¶19 How could I fail to be proud of belonging to a profession packed with brilliant overachievers? Whenever I'm tempted to take a hiatus, I think of colleagues with greater personal and professional challenges who consistently do more than I do, and better. They inspire me and make me proud to be a law librarian. I like to think that there are nearly 5,000 of these folks—all my AALL colleagues, each giving their best every day. How could I dream of doing any less?

¶10 There have been other secrets to career satisfaction. Not only is regular attendance at professional meetings a must, but travel has been a wonderful hobby. Reading in preparation for trips to Europe, Oceania, Africa, and the Caribbean provides fodder for study about world history, cultures, and politics. There's always something to look forward to, as there will always remain places to be explored. As our economy and legal system become ever more global in nature, there are practical benefits, too.

¶11 Find your bliss in your work and in your leisure and find a synergy

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1. A great way to develop such "peer mentors" is by attending CONELL, the Conference of Newer Law Librarians, which is conducted each year at the AALL Annual Meeting. My advice is to get such mentors early and stay tight; you'll need one another.
 2. See Donna K. Bausch, *My Mentors Three—Anne Butler, Jim Heller, and Kay Todd*, 91 *LAW LIBR. J.* 188 (1999).
 3. Alison Alifano, Edgar Bellefontaine, James Brink, Kai-Yun Chiu, Shirley David, Charles Dyer, Anne Grande, Pam Gregory, Jean Holcomb, Richard Iamele, Brenda Kelley, Nancy Joseph, Dorothy Li, Anne Matthewman, Judy Meadows, Maria Sekula, and Regina Smith in recent years.

between them. Law librarianship has been a wonderful profession in which to fashion a life. Lifelong learning and service to the public among outstanding colleagues make this a profession that can inspire at all stages of a career.

A Matter of Hats: Maintaining Enthusiasm in the Shadows of Your Career*

A. Michael Beard**

¶1 Since I've had a varied career, wandering from librarianship over to legal publishing and then back again,¹ I think it's a fair question to ask this old dog: how do you maintain enthusiasm, especially after you've been at it for a while? And how would I advise someone to "stay freshened"?

¶2 Here's what I try to do. Mostly, though not always successfully, I think of my work life—no, all my life—as compartmentalized, with me wearing a different hat depending on which compartment I happen to enter. Some days I wear a "Director Hat" in my role as director of an academic (and county) law library. Some days I wear my "Teacher Hat" because another part of my job is teaching legal research to first-year law students. Some days I put on the "Service Hat" since I serve on national law library committees² and at the regional level I sometimes help organize programs for meetings. Other hats I wear include the husband hat, the father hat, and the citizen hat. In truth, most days I wear all these hats at different times during the course of the day.

¶3 The Director Hat occupies a fair amount of my work time (okay, it occupies some of my not-at-work time also). Recently I wore this hat while making decisions about the installation of an upgraded security gate, including much consideration of the divider ropes or ribbons (like the ones in airports) to control access. Another decision involved where to locate the gate. And then there was the time spent dealing with the minor, and sometimes not so minor, leaks from recent heavy rains. Just a few examples of Director Hat duties.

¶4 I spend whatever time is required wearing the Director Hat, although fortunately not as much as some of my director colleagues. I had the good fortune to come to a library where the other librarians had been in place for several years. They all know their jobs and do not need me to hold their hands. For a person who does not like having to micro-manage, this works very well.

¶5 In addition to also consuming a goodly part of my time, maintaining my

* © A. Michael Beard, 2001.

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1. See A. Michael Beard, *My Alternate (or Aberrational Some Might Say) Career!* 93 LAW LIBR. J. 381, 2001 LAW LIBR. J. 20.

2. *Editor's Note:* A. Michael Beard served as a member of AALL's Committee on Relations with Information Vendors, 1999-01. He currently serves as editor of the "AALL Publication Series" published by William S. Hein & Co.

enthusiasm is easiest to do when I am wearing the Teacher Hat. For the most part the students are young, and I enjoy being around young people. I've always been a "people person" and all the one-on-one contact with students makes for a younger outlook than one might expect from a "geezer" like me. Oh yes, there are times when I tire of explaining something about CJS for the fifth time in a morning, but I try to remember that this is new to them. The same goes for ALR, *Shepards*, digests, or any of the other law library mainstays that are so familiar to us but not to them.

¶16 A hat I didn't mention earlier is the "Reference Hat." Although it is a two-edged sword, reference work is probably one of the more fun things I do, at least most of the time. I regularly cover only four hours a week in our library's reference rotation, but those are four good hours for me. Sometimes it's hectic but that's good. It helps me remember that many people *do* need our help. Since we are a county law library as well as an academic one, we have more pro se patrons than many law school libraries. Maybe it stems from my library school days when I worked Saturdays at the King County Law Library in Seattle, but I always have felt good about being able to help someone who needs to know something that I already know. Even if it's just to tell them where the bathroom is located!

¶17 In truth, the thing that keeps me enthused most of all is that there *are* these many different hats for me to wear. There's no monotony if your life consists of doing different things at different times. And so my advice is to enjoy the diversity of the daily routine. Think of the fun you can have in a job when—at any given hour—you may get to put on a different hat and show off your colors.

Would I Do it Again? Absolutely!*

Carol Billings^{**}

¶11 I suppose it's inevitable when one attains senior status in her family or workplace to begin assessing what's really important. My husband and I are both only children, and during the year 2000 both of our widowed mothers died. We've spent many days sorting through what's left of several generations that went before us, understanding how much harder life was for them. Two close friends our age and younger were taken away by terrible illnesses, and another is now undergoing chemotherapy. Our friend struggling with cancer is a great e-mailer of both wicked jokes and profound personal revelations. A retired clergyman who remains actively involved in ministry at the notorious Angola State Prison, he has been deeply moved by the affection and support that "his buddies" confined there have showered upon him. Times like these make one realize how short and precious one's life is. We can't resist taking stock.

¶12 Recently I read that in a *Library Journal* survey conducted last year 44 per-

* © Carol Billings, 2001.

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cent of responding veteran librarians said that if they were graduating from college today, they would probably not enter the field of librarianship.¹ The wider world-view and wisdom that come with age naturally cause us to speculate about how exciting it would have been to be a foreign correspondent, a museum director, or a famous chef. Women such as me whose parents had endured the Depression and the Second World War felt very fortunate if we could go to college and get a nice respectable job paying around \$8000 in the mid-1960s. Practicality and security were high on our list of values, and risk-taking seemed almost irresponsible.

¶13 So here I am, possessor of an M.L.S. degree I earned thirty-five years ago and an employee of the same library since 1976. Do I have any major regrets about my professional life? Not really. Would I do what I did over again? Absolutely! I entered law librarianship more by accident than design when a librarian friend called, interrupting my four-year sojourn with my little daughter and Mr. Rogers, to report that her neighbor, the director of the state law library, was looking for a cataloger. I hadn't even known there *was* such an animal as a law librarian, and all of a sudden I was one. Consequently I feel extremely fortunate to have enjoyed a stimulating, fulfilling career populated with wonderful colleagues whom I respect tremendously. I love working for the public and advocating for their right of access to information. Had I known in the late '60s that I would end up in law librarianship, I would have certainly tried to go to law school. I regularly advise aspiring law librarians to take that route if they can manage it. But I know that people's family obligations, financial circumstances, and personal priorities often make it very difficult to do the ideal thing that will advance one's career the most.

¶14 I'm the first to admit that the satisfaction I feel about my career is largely attributable to the support and forbearance of my family, coworkers, professional colleagues, and friends, and any dissatisfaction to my inclination to spend a lot of time on things other than gaining greater professional expertise. My coworkers will verify—with a smile—that I am definitely not a techie. "Help, Cathy! I have a stupid computer question!" is heard all too frequently coming from my office. I probably should feel more guilty, but instead I've convinced myself that my strong points lie elsewhere. Writing and arguing are my things. Justifying requests for promotions and raises and explaining why our services are worth funding are responsibilities I take very seriously. If I hadn't become a librarian, journalism would have probably been my chosen field.

¶15 When I attended the program at the 2000 AALL Annual Meeting in Philadelphia that inspired this collection of essays,² I was very impressed at the successful efforts a number of our colleagues had undertaken to revitalize their careers. I'm a bit embarrassed to admit that I don't feel I've added much that is

1. Evan St. Lifer, *The Boomer Brain Drain: The Last of a Generation?* LIBR. J., May 1, 2000, at 38, 44.

2. Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Librarian, program presented at 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Philadelphia (July 18, 2000) (audiotape available from Mobiltape Co.).

new and exciting to my repertoire in recent years. “Just keepin’ on” is probably a more accurate description of what I do. I have, however, become very conscious of the importance of leaving things in good shape for the next generation. One advantage of being around an institution for a long time is that you make relationships that help you affect how things work. If you’ve done a reasonable job, your colleagues and those who run the show learn to trust you and depend upon the work that your library does. You develop credibility and a certain amount of *chutzpah* that you can use to correct problems and get things done for your library. Every institution needs a few obnoxious old broads who aren’t afraid to criticize something stupid when they see it.

¶16 Our profession is perpetually decrying the sorry state of our status and salaries. I blame a lot of those poor conditions on library administrators who haven’t gotten up off their duffs and raised their voices on behalf of their staffs. Some of them are comfortable themselves and too insensitive to bother, and some are just plain wimps! I consider it a very important aspect of my job as an administrator and as a member of our profession to mentor younger colleagues and to draw attention to their skills and contributions. Working to get them the best possible compensation, benefits, and professional development opportunities not only helps those colleagues but the library as well. Their enthusiasm and creativity will keep our institution moving forward. We should take a hint from the court administration profession, which came along about fifty years after law librarianship but has managed to make itself highly valuable to the judges who determine its excellent salary levels. I’ve made a point of talking regularly with our court administrator responsible for human resources to find out the intricacies of the judicial branch pay plan and promotion process. Equipped with that information, I’ve sent up a number of trial balloons that have resulted in three important promotions and a good salary adjustment for library staff members.

¶17 Many of my long-time colleagues, especially those who have had occasion to visit New Orleans during the past two decades, are aware of the great granite and marble hulk in the middle of the French Quarter that will allegedly become the new home of the supreme court and our library in late 2002. Since about 1982, we have been told that we would be moving in a couple of years. During the ensuing years we have been through four governors (Edwards twice), sixteen supreme court justices, two teams of architects, and numerous threats by the state legislature to kill the project. The library’s space has undergone so many changes that it has become difficult to keep track of what features we have left. I have vowed that I will not retire until the move is accomplished. So the next two years should be an exciting adventure filled with many opportunities to stand up for the library’s rights.

¶18 In the meantime I manage to keep very busy with my life outside the library. My family, home, friends, and church-related volunteer work mean more to me than anything else and are the source of great satisfaction. For about ten years I’ve been involved in a program called Loaves and Fishes, carried on by eight Episcopal churches to provide meals for the homeless and needy. Once a

month my church's team buys the ingredients, prepares a hot lunch, and serves it to about eighty very hearty eaters. At Thanksgiving and Christmas we distribute groceries, warm clothes, and toys for our clients, and in late summer we give out big bags of school supplies to public school kids who need them. Our volunteer team is diverse in age and race and includes men recovering from addictions. We've become dear friends. My church also participates in a program at Christmas for which we provide clothes and toys for the children of prisoners. Unquestionably those presents are the most important ones I buy. I can truly say that I think these two activities are among the most satisfying things I do

¶9 The law library profession has been extremely good to me. Many of my dearest personal friends are law librarians whom I delight in seeing at meetings and each other's homes. In 1994 my husband and I were fortunate to attend our first meeting of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians. Over the ensuing years we have made many friends among its members and have attended nearly all of their conferences. Unabashed Anglophiles—we have added Ireland and Scotland to our passion—we have been entertained in our friends' homes and have recently enjoyed hosting a favorite couple from London for Mardi Gras. This summer we'll see them in Ireland. Not so bad for an accidental law librarian!

Change Is Good . . . Even When You Love What You Do*

*Ellen M. Callinan***

¶1 Those who know me know how much I love being a law librarian. More than one person has said I should be the poster child for the profession. As the daughter of a librarian, I was practically born into this career, but not just because I enjoyed organizing information. Another important reason I became a librarian was because I saw the type of professional flexibility it afforded my mother as she pursued her career and raised two children. I knew that some day I wanted kids, and I hoped that I'd be able to remain devoted to my first love, albeit on a part-time basis, when those children came along.

¶2 My dream came true, but not in the manner I envisioned. I faced some challenges and disappointments, some adjustments to the loss in status and income, and some times of pure fear when my work required brand-new skills instead of the knowledge I could recite in my sleep. My life today exceeds my wildest expectations and was worth the effort of my full-time years.

¶3 I married late and had children even later, thanks in part to the miracle of modern fertility medicine. The upside of these delays was that I had quite a bit of time to plan for the future. I was a manager at a large Washington, D.C., law firm with responsibility for three departments and what we laughingly called "other

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** Library Web Services Coordinator and Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University Law Center, Washington, D.C.

duties as assigned.” I knew I couldn’t fulfill those responsibilities working on a part-time basis, so I started to focus on things I could do.

¶14 For a variety of reasons, I had developed strong technology skills and learned to love new software programs. Internet technology seemed promising so I started taking HTML seminars on my own time (and dime), just to be prepared for whatever new career I might have when those long-awaited children showed up. I volunteered to work on the firm’s first Web site under my “other duties as assigned.”

¶15 When I finally became pregnant, my strategy was in place. I approached the managing partner and proposed a change in my status. I would resign as manager and become a part-time employee with responsibility for the Web site and for research training. It took some wrangling, but we reached an agreement. My first child was born in February, and I started my part-time job teaching legal research and building the Web site in May.

¶16 The situation wasn’t perfect, but over time we came up with a workable arrangement. I almost had to quit when the firm decided to limit my responsibility to Web site maintenance, but Georgetown University Law Center graciously offered me a wonderful second part-time job. Even with the two part-time jobs, I was still working far fewer hours than I had as a firm manager and was doing only work that I adored—reference, instruction, and Web publishing.

¶17 To be honest, I was a little burned out as a manager. I missed the hands-on interaction of reference, and even my law firm training experiences left something to be desired. I wanted something new, but I wasn’t even sure what it was. Through a combination of serendipity and the groundwork I had laid in earlier years, I was ready to make a change when the opportunities came along.

¶18 I became a law librarian in part because I wanted to improve legal research training, and I engaged in several activities in pursuit of that goal during my full-time career. When I had to find a second part-time job, what could have been a disaster turned into my best professional move. Georgetown offered me the chance to teach its three-credit seminar in advanced legal research, and I found what had been missing in my other teaching experiences—the chance to take a group of students through an in-depth course of study. Watching them grow and learn has been almost as satisfying as nurturing my two children.

¶19 I also became a law librarian because of the thrill of the hunt. At Georgetown I staff the reference desk a few hours a week, and for those hours I’m in heaven. I think that time alone is a sure cure for managerial burnout and other midcareer maladies. Helping lawyers and law students connect directly with the information they need is as fulfilling now as it was in the beginning of my career.

¶10 And, finally, I’m having a ball with Web technology. I learn new programs on a regular basis, scaring myself silly when I try new tricks and jumping with joy when those tricks work. I’m using my old management skills in organizing and collecting content, and I have a creative outlet that was absent in my past life.

¶11 The driving forces behind this career revitalization are, of course, my two

gorgeous, darling children and my wonderful husband. I wouldn't trade them for all the career success in the world, but it sure is nice to be able to participate in my profession in a smaller way while I devote much of my time and energy to the people I love. I'll probably never be a director again, but I couldn't be happier!

Finding Energy in Change*

Cindy L. Chick**

¶1 I was one of those odd kids who liked school. All right, maybe with the exception of the fifth grade with Dr. Anderson, but that's another story. Oh, and library school, which I really wasn't that fond of either. I'm very glad I didn't let that discourage me from librarianship as a career, though. That has worked out very nicely for me.

¶2 Still, when I did leave school for the working world, I expected from the start that I would *not* leave the classroom behind. And I was right. I took classes on such topics as communication and public speaking. (Living within a couple of miles of UCLA came in handy.) I also diligently attended AALL Annual Meetings, local workshops, and institutes of the Southern California Association of Law Libraries. Still do, as a matter of fact.

¶3 When personal computers started appearing, it was time for a computer class. It was magic! I sat there during the three hours a week of the introductory class thinking of all the things I could do with this stuff. Like taking a ledger sheet and putting it into Lotus so that everything added up all by itself! Amazing! Creating my own databases—how wonderful! I could control, to some extent, what the computer did and how it did it. Time marched on. Ah, the joys of DOS and the agony of Windows fatal exception errors.

¶4 So on I went, taking classes in Dbase programming, systems analysis, Access, and database design. Not that *many* classes, really. I scattered them throughout my career as I found something that I wanted to be able to do, but needed more information in order to actually do it. When you're a solo librarian, you either do it yourself, or not at all. I didn't live near UCLA anymore, but luckily there was a downtown satellite, which, by the way, happens to be where I was when the L.A. riots started.

¶5 There weren't *always* classes available for what I needed to know. So I bought every book on the Internet, at a time when there were only three. I "taught myself" HTML with the help of a colleague, Joan Loftus, who tried it first.

¶6 I know, I'm supposed to be talking about how I keep energized after twenty-some years, and it may seem that I'm digressing. But not really so much. Because I consider myself very lucky to be in a profession that has been in a constant state of flux during my entire career. And there's no end in sight.

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¶17 The rate of change in the profession and the world in general can all be quite overwhelming. But how dull it would be if we were still doing things the same way we did them twenty years ago! Still typing catalog cards and filing them by hand? Still digging through annual indexes, one at a time, trying to find a specific journal article? Thanks, but no thanks.

¶18 I just adore figuring out a new way to do something, usually using technology, to make a task simpler and easier. That's the most fun. And continuing education in one form or another helps me do that.

¶19 And that is how I have stayed energized and happy in my work. The profession kept changing and I just kept learning. It's that simple.

¶10 Of course, I would think that, wouldn't I? I'm the kid who liked school!

“Just Do It” to Stay Interested and Fresh*

*Timothy L. Coggins***

¶11 When I was the associate director of the law library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Test to prepare for a staff retreat. It was not much of a surprise to discover that I am an “INTJ” person. INTJs are independent, individualistic, single-minded, and determined individuals who trust their vision of possibilities regardless of universal skepticism. Other adjectives used to describe INTJs are task-focused, action-oriented, tough-minded, decisive, efficient, and productive. (You recognize, of course, that I include here just the “good” qualities!)

¶12 But why, you ask, is this MBTI discussion relevant in an article about how a “more seasoned” law librarian remains fresh in his career? As I look at the INTJ characteristics, I see why I work like I do *and* why working that way enables me to remain excited about my profession and job. A determined, task- and results-oriented personality allows an individual to assume many and varied responsibilities within an institution (hopefully, without detrimentally affecting work quality), and variety is certainly important to me. My own varied responsibilities at Richmond include managing the law library and guaranteeing that its interests are represented well within the law school and the larger university, teaching, helping with technology support, serving as faculty advisor for an online journal, working with development on fund-raising activities, teaming with other administrative personnel to outline goals and objectives for the law school, and handling AALL and other professional association committee work. At Richmond, I also have a fairly unique responsibility for a librarian; I am the manager of the law school's lawyering skills program. This year-long course for all first-year students teaches many skills, including legal research, analysis and reasoning, memo

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** Director of the Library and Associate Professor, University of Richmond School of Law, Richmond, Virginia.

and brief writing, motion argument, negotiation, and client counseling and interviewing. I work with eleven practicing attorneys who team-teach the small sections with a librarian. The regular contact with the practicing attorneys helps me better understand one portion of my job, that of helping law students realize what they will be expected to do as attorneys.

¶13 Why is this variety important? Such a range of responsibilities keeps a person energetic, excited about his or her work, and committed to performing well. While the list of duties shouldn't be overwhelming—no one can do too many things well—a manageable variety encourages a person to concentrate on one responsibility, take the steps necessary to accomplish that duty, and then move on to the next responsibility. You know that you have a lot of responsibilities, therefore you work efficiently and effectively in order to accomplish all of your duties. A variety of work responsibilities also permits a person to actually *perform* tasks and duties himself or herself; you cannot spend all your time meeting, planning, and writing reports (although some is, of course, necessary). Actual hands-on work in a law library is a key to me; it keeps me in touch with staff, students, and faculty and keeps me energized and thinking about new possibilities.¹ It also allows me the opportunity to see immediate results and improvements.

¶14 There are three other important factors that help a seasoned law librarian keep a fresh perspective: students, change, and a life away from work. The library staff at Richmond often remark at the beginning of the school year about how young law students look these days. We joke that they all look like they are twelve years old. And guess what? They all *do* look like they are twelve years old. Most of the current entering classes were born many years after I graduated from college and graduate school. Seeing bright, energetic, and enthusiastic new students each year keeps me excited about my job. Just being around them, listening to them talk, interacting with them, teaching them, advising them, and hearing their concerns and worries gives me a vitality that I otherwise might not have.

¶15 Change is another important factor in work. Reading journal articles, talking with librarians at other law libraries, and studying organizational structure provides impetus to review what is going on in your own institution. Determining how, if at all, some of these changes might apply and working with colleagues to accomplish these changes are exciting endeavors. I must admit (and this goes back to my INTJ personality) that this is an area where I have to be careful. First, I'm willing to try out a different approach to an issue as a "test," even when it hasn't really been adequately planned out yet. Second, I'm one of those people who might be described as liking change for the sake of change. Recognizing this, I have to work closely with the staff to make certain that the change is really important, one that will help us accomplish our work more effectively.

1. I like to work at the library's reference desk because it keeps me in touch with students and other users and their needs. Working evening and weekend shifts at the reference desk really opens my eyes to what actually goes on in the library.

¶16 Finally, life outside work is very important to me. To relax by working in a garden or traveling renews me. It's important to me, for example, to go for long walks on the beach, to attend a concert or play, and, of course, to yell and scream for those Duke basketball teams (men's and women's)! Renewal from activities outside of work makes me a better librarian and manager.

¶17 I'll return now to the MBTI and INTJs' view of life and work as exciting opportunities. Life (and work) is fun, just as it should be!

Variety Is the Spice of Life*

Shelley L. Dowling**

¶11 How do I know the difference between a career and a job? When I have bills to pay, I better have a job; and if I'm lucky, I won't hate the work and the bills will get paid until I figure out "what's next." But when I have work that interests me, challenges me to grow and learn, helps me flow energetically into the future, and surrounds me with dynamic colleagues, then I have a career—even if the paycheck is modest.

¶12 It is within the context of a career rather than a job that I can meaningfully share how I have kept myself fresh through the years. For me, the two most important concepts have been: *know who you are*—what are your strengths, limitations, quality of life criteria, beliefs, and goals? And *know what you like to do*—what are you passionate about? With these in mind, you need to continually grow in the knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable you to successfully progress through your career, indeed, through your life.

¶13 Quality of life considerations encompass my whole life, both personal and professional. To the extent possible I balance my interests and my time among the different roles I play in my life—wife, mother, librarian, friend, church member, new grandmother—and just being myself. The stresses in one part of my life are often balanced or dissipated by activities or interests in another part. After a particularly challenging meeting on information policy issues at work—issues that are of great importance to my profession and my institution—I go home, give my kids a hug, and retire to the quiet of my garden to till the soil (the feel and smell of the earth are renewing). I can feel the stress flow out, replaced by a clear, creative reflection on the issues (as well as by a vision of the flowers or vegetables that will emerge as a result of my labors of love in the garden). In the winter when the garden is not available, it's the treadmill and some great rock and roll music to loosen up my mind.

¶14 There is a relatively new concept in physics called "chaos theory," which to me translates into the more familiar idea that "variety is the spice of life."

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** Librarian of the Court, Supreme Court of the United States Library, Washington, D.C.

Change prods us to react, to think, to move, to grow, indeed, to stay fresh. Change can be chaotic when we don't see it coming, when it is of great magnitude, or worse, when we are too oblivious to even notice it happening around us. I have always welcomed change as the prod I need to continue growing. Change, even when chaotic (loss of familiar controls), is always an opportunity at some level. For example, when a law firm closes down or merges with a mega-firm, the library may be dismantled as part of the deal. Amidst the chaos and sense of loss there are also opportunities—to look at the collection as resources that need new homes, to look at the staff who need new positions, to look at the firm that needs your constructive advice. While this is a painful learning experience, it is nonetheless an opportunity to learn and share your expertise.

¶15 In retrospect, the opportunity to find new work may turn out to be one of the most fortuitous moments in your career. Can we be *sure* at the time it is happening that a chaotic moment is a career opportunity, a moment of refreshment? Probably not. The opportunity is created by how we *respond* to these situations we encounter throughout our careers. Some “future opportunities” can be discerned by knowing yourself and having a sense of what you want to be doing in five or ten years. For instance, five years after earning my M.L.S. degree, I knew I was committed to law libraries and management. Realizing I might want to be a director someday, I enrolled in law school. This was an investment in future opportunities that I could not see then, but that would, I was confident, appear at the right time, at a time when I needed refreshment. Nine years later I was a director, having encountered many refreshing moments along the way.

¶16 Opportunities also can be created by looking beyond our desk, beyond the library, beyond our institution, and yes, beyond our profession. I have always loved to do research—both its detective side (the process) and intellectual curiosity side (the substance) are attractive to me. What I have discovered along the way is how much I love to write about some of my passionate interests, like the history of books and constitutional history. The opportunity to write was beyond my desk, out there in the stacks. There is a wonderful children's book called the *Page Master* that captures the mysterious world that anyone can discover by walking the aisles of the library to find the books and wonderful world of knowledge and adventure waiting silently on the shelves. Writing fills in the quiet times and nurtures personal creativity.

¶17 I am also attracted to problem solving and management. Beyond the library my institution has committees that deal with policy issues, strategic planning, technology, and budgetary matters. As an executive committee member, I better understand the mission of the entire Court and appreciate the needs of the library within the context of the divergent, as well as complementary, needs of other Court offices. Problem solving is not only more interesting and challenging, it is more effective when it is well informed and broadly supported. I like the change of pace and faces that nonlibrary activities add to my work life.

¶18 Beyond the institution I work for, professional opportunities abound locally and nationally. I believe that “more heads are better than one” when it comes to

problem solving and strategic planning, as well as having fun. The sister library association to AALL for federal librarians is the Federal Library Information Center Committee (FLICC) with 5000 members worldwide. As a federal librarian and a member of the permanent executive committee of FLICC, I participate in quarterly meetings where national federal library directors develop policy, provide oversight on educational programs for federal librarians, and participate in strategic planning for the future of federal libraries. I am both energized and well informed by working with these high-level, dynamic federal librarians on issues that affect federal libraries in unique ways such as access to, and preservation of, electronic information and evolving copyright legislation.

¶9 In addition to being a federal librarian, I am also a law librarian. Beyond the local area, the best opportunity for me to learn, grow, and keep a fresh perspective is AALL. Through the Annual Meeting, electronic discussion lists, publications, and participation on committees and the Executive Board,¹ I have discovered how refreshing and stimulating an active career in law libraries can be as I progress through the years. The opportunities are almost always “self-made” by volunteering. I started volunteering for SIS committees twenty years ago. In fact, I often belong to three or four special interest sections at a time because I have so many different interests and the profession covers so many different specializations.² I always want to understand the perspective of all the different types of libraries and the different areas of library expertise. My management skills are improved by understanding the variety of interests and concerns not only across the departments of a large library, but also across the different types of libraries within the legal community. I learn about and understand policy issues on a national stage that invariably affect the policy questions facing my own institution.

¶10 The most rewarding and refreshing aspects of my career and my life are collegial friendships. Going to lunch once in awhile with someone in my institution whom I don't see very often but whose company I enjoy and with whom I can share ideas and interests is a refreshing opportunity that I create. Handling challenging issues in a business meeting is more easily done if interpersonal trust has been developed outside the formality of meetings. I have been in my current position for over twelve years and many colleagues have indeed become friends. The shared history of the institution and our personal experiences nurture my personal enthusiasm and dedication to my work. Beyond the Court, friendships within AALL are my warmest and most meaningful relationships. The collegiality of law librarians is a unique source of refreshment for me; I learn to view issues from a broader perspective and enjoy the sense of bonding that shared experiences pro-

1. *Editor's Note:* Shelley L. Dowling was a member of the AALL Executive Board from 1995 to 1998. She served as cochair of the Local Advisory Committee for the 1999 AALL Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., and as chair of the Call for Papers Committee in 1992-93.

2. *Editor's Note:* Shelley L. Dowling was chair of the Reader's Service Special Interest Section in 1984-85, and chaired the SIS Council in 1985-86.

vide. During every Annual Meeting, in a new city and a new restaurant, the shared meals and hearty laughter among close friends is an unmatched source of renewal.

¶11 Another personal approach is through AALL's mentoring program where established librarians have an opportunity to be reflective and to share a wealth of experience and wisdom with newer librarians while also staying in touch with the energizing views and goals of the next generation. It's too easy to get in a rut after years of attending AALL Annual Meetings. One informal and fun way I meet new colleagues is to find a table at the opening luncheon or the closing banquet where I don't know anyone already seated there; it's like going to AALL for the very first time. I also like to attend programs that have nothing to do with my everyday work or areas of special interest. I want to see what everyone else is doing and thinking so I can continue to "connect the dots" across our dynamic profession.

¶12 I thrive on routine and continuity, something I know well about myself. While I was committed to every institution I worked for prior to my current position,³ I have discovered that a long-term professional relationship with the Court's library invigorates my willingness to tackle difficult challenges creatively and to welcome opportunities for strategic planning. It seems to me that each person has to discover where his or her long-term personal interests lie and then to identify the type of library and institution that not only shares those interests but also provides opportunities for intellectual, professional, and personal growth. Refreshing an individual's commitment and creativity is ultimately a personal responsibility that can be met from self-knowledge and by actively nurturing and pursuing our interests with each new opportunity that occurs in our daily experiences and throughout our lives.

¶13 Finally, I believe our personal lives and interests play an equally important role in supporting a successful and stimulating career. For me, raising a family and nurturing a career involved many choices through the years; and each choice was made with the quality of my life at the core. Even today, in the midst of a relatively pressured career, taking off into the countryside over the weekend to discover a new antique store or bookshop, or walking the Delaware beaches for a few days with my family can do wonders for my well-being. Just holding my newborn granddaughter in my arms puts my entire life in perspective.

¶14 So welcome a little chaos and embrace a little change in both your personal and professional lives. Making time for a variety of interests and accepting—even looking forward to—the unexpected will refresh your perspective on life and energize your career with creativity and a balanced, reflective optimism about the future.

3. *Editor's Note:* The author's prior positions included serving as Reference Librarian, Kansas City Public Library, 1977-78; Head of Public Services, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, 1978-84; and Head of Public Services, Georgetown University Law Center, 1984-88.

Having Done It Before, What Makes Me Want to Do It Again?*

Charles R. Dyer**

¶1 A local legal newspaper editor once told me that I had one of the most interesting jobs he had seen. As director of a large public law library, I am constantly stimulated by the wide variety of clientele the library serves, the notable people I meet, and the ever-changing technological and political landscape. I am fond of saying that both homeless people and the chief justice of the California Supreme Court have sat in my office chair. I am active in law library associations, public library associations, charitable foundations, and, as part of our never-ending quest for a new building, the downtown San Diego redevelopment agency. I regularly make presentations to civic groups, bar associations, and elected officials at various levels.

¶2 Each year I write a self-evaluation that my board of trustees uses in evaluating me. I have to comment on each of my annual objectives and each element in my job description. The document typically runs thirty pages, but I always feel like I am leaving too much out.

¶3 In answer to the query on how I manage to keep myself challenged and energized after so many years, many in my shoes might answer that they don't have time to be bored. I have seen others in similar positions with that attitude, and they wear out from the stress. But not me. As a teenager with allergies and asthma, I learned to control my stress from teenage angst in order to minimize my asthma. To this day, I am extremely hard to get riled or upset. I often receive compliments about how well I manage stressful confrontations. I sit and listen and hear things out. So I have found, through luck, a position for which I am rather well suited.

¶4 The other really good thing about my position is the people I get to work with. The San Diego County Public Law Library has an administrative board, its Board of Trustees. We also have an affiliated charitable trust, the Law Library Justice Foundation, with its own board of trustees. Unlike law school faculty members or partners in law firms, these board members serve only because they are genuinely interested in the library's welfare—no personal needs or hidden agendas. People on these boards run the gamut of political viewpoints, yet we all get along quite well.

¶5 The staff is also exceptionally good, from a personality perspective. There is a certain mix of toughness, patience, and an altruistic need to do service to one's fellow humans that is necessary to survive in a busy public law library. I have the occasional disciplinary problem or hiring that doesn't work out, but motivation and belief in mission is ever present. I also have a number of young librarians who are growing professionally very quickly and adding many new features to the services we offer. It's a fun time, even with a tight budget.

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¶16 Nevertheless, I do still have several tricks that I use to keep things interesting. Some are meant to keep my mind and body refreshed. I picked up the guitar at the age of forty-two and still play regularly. I like to try new exercise regimens, and California always offers a wide variety of those. I like to go dancing. Whatever the new thing, it must require enough concentration to take my mind away from work, and it must use a different part of my brain. And while I do like reading, television, plays, and concerts, they must provide stimuli challenging enough to counter the stress and routine of work.

¶17 The other tricks I use all can be lumped together as “development of friends,” although this takes different forms. Mentoring is one of those forms, especially when it begins through a casual meeting rather than through organized programs. While I am always pleased when people call out of the blue for advice because they have been referred to me, I rarely hear back from them. They got what they needed. Meaningful, long-term mentoring starts as a budding friendship, one where the other person is willing or even excited to report back the results of my advice. What pleases me is to know that some of my expertise actually helps out. In my own position, most projects take months or years, and, after considerable work, the final result usually arrives with little in the way of a climactic event. Seeing success in another helps to tide me over between my own events.

¶18 Hand in hand with mentoring is the ability to listen to and learn from younger people. On the one side comes the awareness that I often know things that they are just coming to understand. It helps me appreciate their struggle and gives me a clearer picture of just what it is that is crucial within my own frame of knowledge. On the other side I see what conceptual paradigms they now employ. By that I mean that I perceive how people who have always had modern technology available to them think and solve problems. Computers, databases, cell phones, the Internet, palm readers, even management concepts like core competencies and strategic planning, these all are second nature to bright young people, and they cannot imagine achieving solutions without them. By working with them, I learn to employ such things myself.

¶19 I also develop friends outside of work. My music and my wife’s literary efforts have led us to various groups of rather creative people. We are always willing to meet new people and to learn from them. Some mentees and new friends become long-term friends, while others disappear in a few months. The object is to remain open to new experiences.

¶10 From information comes knowledge, from knowledge comes wisdom. The process requires continuous thinking, getting facts, linking facts, discerning patterns, using the patterns to find new facts, and on again. I found great satisfaction when I recognized that HTML code is really just a variation on desktop publishing code. I found great satisfaction when I recognized that both slam poetry and rap have roots in beat poetry. That hip hop came from funk and R&B, which came from blues, we all know from VH1, but I can pick out the individual instruments from a recording, something I couldn’t do twenty years ago. I also can pick

out the chord progression patterns, which I couldn't do five years ago. Older people have it all over young people. Every bit of information can help refine our extraordinary wisdom. But only if we listen and learn about what's happening now. I didn't learn all I need to know some years ago. Indeed, some of what I need to know I haven't learned yet.

¶11 The brain is like a muscle. If you exercise it, it will flourish. If you exhaust it, it will grow back bigger. Use it or lose it. Recent science has shown that, contrary to popular belief, new neurons can develop in the brain all the way into old age. Cognitive intelligence can increase into your seventies and eighties, even as motor skills and short-term memory experience a natural decline.

¶12 Some of my staff get annoyed because I am often slow with paperwork. "He's always off doing something." "He talks too long to staff." "It seems the simpler it is, the less inclined he is to do it." I think they've found me out.

The Joys of a Long Career as a Law Librarian*

*Laura N. Gasaway***

¶1 After more than three decades as a law librarian, I am still excited about my job; in fact, I really have never considered doing anything else. The work still challenges me and I enjoy interaction with students, staff, and faculty on a daily basis along with mentoring newer librarians.

¶2 In June 2001, I completed my thirty-third year as a law librarian. At present, I plan to continue for another ten to fifteen years, so for almost half a century I will have worked in academic law libraries. An early love of books and work in both my school and public libraries when I was a teenager set me on the path to librarianship. A wonderful survey course on types of libraries that I took in my freshman year of college directed me toward law. Upon receiving my M.L.S. in June 1968, I began as a catalog librarian at the University of Houston Law Library, and I started law school there in September. Upon completing law school, I became the director at Houston and started teaching in the spring semester, a seminar on employment rights. I was director at Oklahoma for nearly ten years and have now been at North Carolina for fifteen.

¶3 My job has always consisted of two parts: management and teaching. Library administration is challenging and constantly changing. It is hard to believe how much libraries have changed since the late 1960s, including our missions. Although it was fun to organize library collections when the Library of Congress law classification schedule was new and to provide reference help to users, both technical and public services have evolved into more complicated and more chal-

* © Laura N. Gasaway, 2001.

** Director of the Law Library and Professor of Law, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Law Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

lenging areas. Library collections have grown considerably and the array of available resources has increased to the point that just keeping current takes constant effort. Further, users are demanding more and more sophisticated services. What I find fun is working to recruit a talented staff and assemble the financial resources to enable that staff to succeed. Planning and encouraging a team to work together to accomplish a goal is a pleasure.

¶14 The other side of my job is law teaching. Through the years I have taught employment rights, employment discrimination, women and the law, intellectual property, and cyberspace law. In the past decade, I have focused on IP and cyberspace law, and I continue to find teaching tremendously rewarding. I also team-teach a course in the library school with the associate director of the law library.

¶15 Additionally, I enjoy research and writing, whether it is about librarianship or copyright law. Part of the University of North Carolina Law Library's mission is for all librarians to contribute to the body of scholarly literature in librarianship, law, and legal research. It is very rewarding to help librarians develop strategies for their scholarly work.

¶16 Working in professional organizations, whether library or law organizations, provides stimulation and networking with other library and legal professionals. Best of all is the flexibility that a career in law librarianship provides. It is a comfort to know that I could practice law, become a public librarian, or teach law full-time—maybe that's why I have never considered having another career.

Fire Extinguishers for Librarian Burnout*

*Chris Graesser***

¶11 With more than twenty years of library work under my belt, I feel like a cat that has lived many lives. Given the low pay, support, and prestige that has plagued the profession, particularly in law firms, I've learned many techniques for holding off professional burnout. What follows are a few that have worked for me and librarians I know.

Bond with Your Colleagues

¶12 It is common practice for law firms to hire librarians with little experience, and we all know how important it is to have someone to let you in on those little tricks of the trade. Seek out other librarians in your area, ask them out to lunch. If there is a local law library brown-bag lunch series, plan on going. Join your local AALL chapter, and volunteer—you won't get much out of it if you don't.

¶13 Law firm librarians are especially susceptible to being isolated within their organization—we are neither fish nor fowl. There are others in the same boat, though—the accountants, legal recruiters, records management and information

* © Chris Graesser, 2001.

** Librarian, Brown, Rudnick, Freed & Gesmer, Avon, Connecticut.

systems staff. Work on partnerships with these people. Plan joint training seminars, etc. Work together to establish a manager tier within your firm—you will all benefit.

¶14 Conferences and seminars can be a real shot in the arm, especially if you are a solo, and even more if you are located in an area with few librarians. Just to sit down with other librarians and find that they have similar challenges (it's not just you) can make a huge difference in your outlook.

Get the Hell out of Dodge

¶15 After years of frustration over lack of support on personnel and salary issues, the final straw for me was when my firm wouldn't even discuss a part-time schedule for me when my husband and I adopted a child. After ten years, I deserved at least a discussion of the options. So I started looking around, and after several offers, took a part-time position with another firm. And get this, my new firm agreed to pay me 20% more per hour, so the loss of income wasn't even too great.

Get a Life

¶16 A friend of mine in New York City shifted her emotional energy from her job to other interests, like the ballet and opera. The result was a better attitude about her work, and eventually she was able to put more energy back into her professional life.

Your Best Interests Are Not the Same as Your Employer

¶17 Never assume that your employer has your best interests at heart. Even the most enlightened organization will not put the concerns of employees above its own mission. Law firms are most concerned with profits for partners. It is up to you to communicate to your employer how your concerns will promote their interests. Keep an eye on the economy and how the firm is doing with billables and new clients. Don't take it personally when asked to trim a budget or cut staff. If you are on the ball, you will be able to anticipate such moves and have a response that both you and the firm can live with.

Know Thyself

¶18 It helps to know what kind of work, and work environment, suits you. Do you hate confrontations and always try to please everyone? If so, you would not make a good supervisor. If you like continuity in working on a project, you may be frustrated as a reference librarian or running a one-person library. Some people like the family feeling of a small office, while others appreciate being part of a large library staff, which you would find only in a larger firm or academic library. Even if you can't find the ideal job setting, you can make adjustments in your approach that will make the job easier and more enjoyable. For instance, if you hate being interrupted, schedule a block of time when people know you are not to be interrupted. If you are consistent with your schedule, it shouldn't interfere with reference service.

¶9 If after gaining experience in your job the opportunity to take a new position with new challenges does not come along, change the emphasis within your job. If you've got the catalog up and running, you can put that on autopilot and concentrate your energies on legal research training. In the ten years I was at one firm, I reinvented my job several times and avoided burnout in the process.

¶10 Supervising can be an especially tricky responsibility; if it doesn't go well, you are subject to criticism from your bosses and extra work from your staff. Some people may be born supervisors, but most people need to learn by experience and training, something best accomplished while part of a larger staff with a mentor who shares his or her expertise. You're not going to get this crucial training if you've been hired right out of library school to manage a small firm library. Library schools generally provide little or no training in supervision, and firms take the skills for granted. If you find yourself in this situation, try to find an experienced manager at the firm with whom you can discuss problems with staff. Ask your firm to send you to a supervisory skills class.

Conclusion

¶11 Life is complicated and many-layered. The bottom line for a successful and satisfied librarian is keep adapting—to your workplace, your profession, and your personal life. Above all, have faith in yourself. Librarianship can be one of the most rewarding professions there is, but it's up to you to make it so.

How Do I Stay Interested?*

Karl T. Gruben**

¶1 Upon learning early in my career that Bill Murphy had been with Chicago's Kirkland & Ellis law firm practically his entire career,¹ I said to myself, "How could anyone stand to be in one place for that long—the job would be so boring." At the time, I thought I would be at Vinson & Elkins for three years, four years max, and then move. I have now been with Vinson & Elkins LLP for twenty-three years and have no plans to leave, quit, or, the good Lord willing, be fired. How? I mean *how!* I wonder myself. When Paul George asked me to contribute to this collection, I started to think about my career and about what has kept me in this job so long, even, at times, contrary to my best intentions.

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** Director of Firm Libraries, Vinson & Elkins LLP, Houston, Texas.

1. *Editor's Note*: William D. Murphy officially served as librarian of the Chicago law firm of Kirkland & Ellis from 1952 to 1981. Thereafter, he was a very active "librarian emeritus." For more about this illustrious law librarian, a president of AALL and a recipient in 1987 of the Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award, see Frank G. Houdek, *From the Editor: Bill Murphy Remembered*, 88 LAW LIB. J. 145 (1996); *Remembrances of William D. Murphy*, 88 LAW LIB. J. 148 (1996) (essays by Jack Ellenberger, Patrick E. Kehoe, Thomas H. Reynolds, Margaret A. Leary, Joyce Malden, Earl C. Borgeson, Ed Strable, and Eileen Murphy).

¶12 I've seen many people who, though burned out, remain in their job. When I was in the air force, we referred to someone like that as a ROAD officer ("Retired On Active Duty"). They were generally disliked because nothing ever happened around them and little got accomplished. Age didn't have much to do with it as there were young ROADs and old ROADs. I've never wanted to be like that. I think the constant challenges of a vibrantly active firm, service work with library organizations, and the need for constant education and learning have kept me interested in what I do and had much to do with letting me stay in one job for nearly a quarter of a century without becoming a ROAD.

¶13 When I started with V&E in 1977, in essentially the position I still hold today, there were 195 attorneys in three offices. Today we have 780 attorneys and nine offices. Sheer growth has created some problems which I had to solve, and, while many of them could be perceived as boring (e.g., rearranging collections, moving satellite libraries, buying collections for new offices), they still stimulated my thought processes. For example, when purchasing materials for a new office, do you go with the tried and true sets or do you try comparable material from different publishers? If you try to do something different, from whom do you have to obtain permission? Do you have to obtain permission at all? And today, do you stay with print resources or try to convince the partners that electronic ones are a cheaper and better alternative? Finally, what do you do when, inevitably, someone starts griping?

¶14 Technological growth has contributed greatly to my satisfaction with the work environment. I brought the first TI Silent 700 to the firm, to communicate with Dialog at the "blazing" speed of 1200 baud. We already had Lexis, and I got the local rep to increase the speed of that modem from 1200 to 2400 baud. These were important issues in the late 1970s, and if you think about it, they are the same issues we have today—bandwidth, just different levels. Using a personal computer was also a learning experience. One day it arrived on my desk, and there it sat, mocking me. I would occasionally turn it on and get a "c:\\" prompt, but I didn't really know what else to do. One day I got tired of doing that and bought a DOS handbook. After some perusal I could do simple DOS commands and realized that software was where the action was, so I joined a local PC users' group and began to learn, downloading shareware and freeware and going online and learning about PCs.

¶15 So my education in computers was self-taught, with me reading everything I could get my hands on about modems and settings and shareware and available resources because, you understand, no real money could be spent until something was worked out in advance by yours truly. And now, we have the Internet and Internet/Intranet products. The challenge presented in keeping up with that is pretty self-evident.

¶16 In the mid-1980s, I joined the chorus of AALL voices singing "the Annual Meeting programming isn't meeting my needs" blues, as my needs at that time seemed about three to five years ahead of those of everyone else. Instead of getting the grease I needed as a squeaky wheel, I got appointed to the AALL

Education Committee, which at that time put together the Annual Meeting program. I soon found out that this undertaking—developing a program for an Annual Meeting—took a great deal of time and effort from many more people than I had imagined.² I recommend getting on this committee (now called the Annual Meeting Program Selection Committee) if you really want to see the breadth of our Association. Most of the programming comes from AALL chapters, SISs, and committees, and they are a widely diverse, richly eccentric group.

¶17 Regarding education, somewhere in those early years at V&E I went to law school at South Texas College of Law, graduated, and passed the bar. Given a choice (this is code for what I will do when I win the Texas lottery), I would probably go back to school on a part-time basis. No particular degree plan, just take whatever suited my fancy. My time in law school was the most intellectually stimulating experience I have ever had. Trying to hold two contradictory thoughts in my mind at the same time and articulate either upon demand is difficult for yours truly. (Heavens, I got through most of my undergraduate schoolwork based on what I had learned in high school, and I went to “Big State University.”) Law school made me think, and think in a different manner. I doubt I can still do that work, but it would be fun to learn other new things. I have taken courses in the evenings since law school but, as with most people, time is a very precious commodity and I have other demands on my time.

¶18 While I am styled as the “Director of Firm Libraries” at Vinson & Elkins, I generally regard myself as a reference librarian. I spend about half my time dealing with administration, planning new stuff, and fixing old stuff that doesn’t work too well anymore, but the rest of my time is devoted to frontline reference. Working in a large law firm gives me the opportunity to deal with an incredibly wide variety of questions, ranging in difficulty from “where is the bathroom” to “where can I find the civil code of Venezuela in English?” (or “a tax convention between Greece and Latvia, please”), and all needing to be answered in the space of fifteen minutes. The great thing is that this range of questions is not a sometime thing—it is almost always an everyday thing. (Well, generally people around here do seem to know where the bathroom is but, since two of the conference rooms on this floor are just off the library, we do get outsiders without a clue.) When people ask me what I do, though, I am sometimes at a loss because to explain what I do would take much more time than they would want to devote to the subject. If they make the wrong crack, though (“Oh, you get first crack at all the bestsellers” is my all-time least favorite), they have to stand still and get the full lecture from Library Science 101.

¶19 But working at a growing, mentally challenging firm is not the entire answer to a fulfilling career. The adrenaline wears off, some of the questions begin

2. *Editor’s Note:* Karl T. Gruben certainly should know about the work involved in planning an AALL Annual Meeting program—he served on the committees responsible for the educational aspects of the Annual Meetings in 1988, 1990, and 1991.

to repeat themselves, and, much as I like to help people, there are a finite number of ways to direct people to the loo. Now I find that much of what I enjoy in my career comes from the service work I do with library associations. Not just law library associations, though I've done a lot with them on committees, SISs, and the executive board.³ I also work with our statewide library association and our local Friends of the Public Library group. My work with the Texas Library Association goes back further in time than does my association with AALL, as I joined TLA while I was in library school. Shortly after I took a professional job, I was elected chair of one of their four divisions. As with most associations, TLA will keep calling as long as you keep saying "yes." Over the years, TLA has called on me to lobby our state legislature, work on the steering committee of a Governor's Conference on Libraries, and serve on its executive board. I was lucky to have a library school professor who convinced me that all libraries are essentially the same, and that we all have ideas we can share with one another. While we work in different environments (mine is four hundred feet up in a downtown skyscraper while the school librarian in the suburbs is in a single-story public facility), we have many of the same goals, such as providing quality information and protecting First Amendment rights. I am certain that I have picked up some of my best ideas from school librarians.

¶10 I have also been a member of the local public library's Friends group off and on over the past twenty years. Currently I am "on," rejoining a couple of years ago at the urging of two law librarian friends. These friends run the annual Friends' book sale, which is not a small event in a city the size of Houston. Our group goes to a suburban un-air-conditioned space (that means no heat in the winter and no cooling in the summer) where we open and sort the books from mounds of boxes into Dewey Decimal categories. The opening of the annual sale is much like the land rushes of the late nineteenth century—don't get in the way or you will be trampled. The money created by the sale is used to fund major collections of art books, a film library, and a circulating collection of art reproductions, as well as helping to support professional development for the library's staff members. We have a good time at the sorting and I have made friends with people I did not know very well, as well as reacquaint myself with people I've known for twenty-five years. To one used to dealing with a very small facet of the world of books, the diversity of the world of English-language books is fascinating and, occasionally, overwhelming.

¶11 So, how have I stayed interested? My environment has changed over the years, though I've stayed in the same place. I've continued to learn and develop new skills. I have engaged in service work. And, oh yes, I'm married to an attorney. We talk about the law. When she talks about legal issues, I understand what

3. *Editor's Note:* Karl T. Gruben is currently serving as treasurer of the American Association of Law Libraries, filling a three-year term (1999–2002). He previously served as president of the Houston Area Law Librarians.

she is saying and it helps her to verbalize those issues in increasingly complicated and nebulous areas of emerging law. Talking with her also helps me to understand the problems my firm's attorneys face and to appreciate the amount of work and time it takes for them to accomplish the quality legal representation they must provide. Talking about the law with your wife is fairly geeky, I'll admit, but after all, I'm a librarian.

I Am Not Bored—And Here's Why*

*Penny A. Hazelton***

¶1 Just for the record, I have had the same job (and job title) since 1985. Before then I worked in academic and court law libraries for ten years. If I can add correctly, that means I have been in this business for twenty-five years—plenty of time to be bored! Somehow, though, I am not bored. In reflecting on why I still like my job, I have decided there are four things that have kept me interested and excited: teaching, my library staff and professional colleagues around the country, the variety of my responsibilities, and outside passions.

¶2 Teaching smart law and law librarianship students forces me to learn new things. The information world is changing quickly around us, and it is very hard to keep pace. I went to law school even before there was a Westlaw or LexisNexis—the really *olden* days!

¶3 Students today are computer savvy and approach research and the use of legal research tools differently than I do. They help me see alternative ways to teach important principles. They help me improve library services. They challenge me to have answers to questions I have not even asked myself yet! I have learned to accept that they will know things that I don't know. But I still know some things they do not know, so we are even! And all the time and effort spent preparing, correcting papers, and trying to make research interesting is worthwhile when a former student seeks me out at an alumni affair to tell me that, in her job as a clerk for the Supreme Court, she is using on a daily basis the research skills that I helped her learn. Wow! That kind of feedback keeps me going for weeks and weeks!

¶4 I was not using the Internet very much in my daily work, so I agreed to teach a series of continuing legal education workshops on Internet Legal Research. I was terrified of this teaching opportunity. What if the participants in these hands-on sessions knew more than I did? (I assumed they would, of course!) Could I figure out how to use the laptop and video projector in a professional manner? With a lot of help from the wonderful Gallagher Law Library reference librarians and some faculty colleagues, I managed to get myself up to speed enough to teach almost a dozen of these three-and-a-half-hour sessions over the past two

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** Law Librarian and Professor of Law, Gallagher Law Library, University of Washington School of Law, Seattle, Washington.

years (my reference librarian colleagues teach these as well). This teaching has given me the confidence I need to experiment more with Internet work in my Advanced Legal Research class, to the great delight of my students.

¶15 Teaching the Selection and Processing of Law Library Materials course (an overview of technical services in a law library with a heavy emphasis on collection development) offers many opportunities to think about the big picture that defines what we do every day in the law library. Student assignments are often based on real-life issues, and the ideas generated in class inform the decisions made in the law library. I love teaching this class! The interrelationships between teaching and the practice of law librarianship are cool.

¶16 I have been directing the Law Librarianship Program at the University of Washington Information School (formerly the School of Library and Information Science) since 1985. Students with law degrees come for a year of study and work to become law librarians. There are new, fresh students every year—from two to a dozen. They remind me of when I began my own career in law librarianship—what I didn't know then! Yikes! And that reminds me of how much they must learn before they, in turn, enter this profession.

¶17 I not only have these students in two classes during the year, but I work with them as they look for employment in law libraries. This responsibility keeps me in regular contact with my colleagues in various law libraries all over the country as I help place the students in jobs and academic fieldwork positions. That's why I got into this business in the first place—law librarians are so great! The network of friends and colleagues you build in this business with only a small effort is quite remarkable. The law librarianship students constantly remind me of my great fortune in finding this profession.

¶18 The opportunity to work with remarkably smart and capable law librarians and staff at the Gallagher Law Library is one of the other things that keeps me on my toes and far from bored with my work. Each day they challenge me to be a better librarian, better boss, better teacher, better mentor, better leader—basically, a better person. No standing still here.

¶19 The variety of work also keeps me interested and excited about my job. I teach, help train new law librarians for the profession, do administrative and management work to keep the library running day-to-day, act as faculty business manager for two law reviews, and squeeze in some writing and other professional work. Sometimes the variety makes me nuts as I commit to too many things that need to be done by Thursday. But, truly, the variety is what keeps me going through the hard, time-consuming, or unpleasant tasks.

¶10 Recently, I have spread my wings a little further. I worked with the law school to redesign and reconceptualize its Web site. This taught me a great deal about cooperation, communication, the need for a purpose and shared values, and the challenges of working with a staff who did not report to me! Oh, and I also learned a lot about Web sites—the design and especially the staff time it takes to keep them current and relevant.

¶11 Since I have been here at Washington a fairly long time, I find I am now one of the senior female faculty members. I feel a special responsibility to participate more fully in law school and faculty affairs and governance. I have chaired the faculty Initial Appointments Committee for the past two years, making six permanent faculty hires. (Now there is a job to tear your hair out over!) This experience taught me how challenging it is to work with faculty on a regular basis. They never volunteer for anything, they don't like to be told what to do, and they will always second-guess faculty committee recommendations. I remembered why I like working with librarians and library staff.

¶12 The last thing that keeps me interested in my job is that I really enjoy going home. Family, traveling, reading, gardening, cooking, stamp collecting, and quilting are a few of the other things I love to do in my life. You will notice that none of them require a computer or other electronic gizmos. Doing something completely unlike what I do during my day job makes me eager to come to work every day. Maybe it is that variety thing again.

¶13 I learned long ago that my professional work would never be done or caught up. So why work fourteen hours a day, seven days a week? Balancing the work I get paid to do with the other things I love to do is a great stress-reliever. My job is not boring because I look for ways to force myself to learn what is new (or my students or staff or colleagues force my hand!) and try to apply that in the day-to-day world. And because I refuse to let my job, alone, define who I am.

Life at Midcareer: An Opportunity to Reflect*

*Jean M. Holcomb***

¶1 When the e-mail arrived offering me the opportunity to share my thoughts as a midcareer law librarian about the challenges and opportunities available at this point in my working life, I couldn't resist a chuckle. The author of the e-mail obviously hadn't met me in person before issuing the invitation to participate in this exercise.

¶2 Some would suggest that there's little to laugh about at being pegged as midcareer. I disagree wholeheartedly. An unrepentant optimist, I choose to define my placement in this midcareer set as a compliment.

¶3 My first library position and my first job began more than fifty years ago as a preteen working in the summer for my next-door neighbor, the local school superintendent. That summer and each year until I graduated from high school, I processed the new books that had been ordered by the faculty for the school library. The excitement of discovery as I opened each box of books remains one of my fondest memories of that time in my life.

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** Law Librarian, King County Law Library, Seattle, Washington.

¶14 It would be decades before I next found library employment.

¶15 I accepted my first law library position as a reference librarian at the University of Alabama Law School Library in 1985. After two years, our family moved to Norfolk, Virginia. The local bar association had just completed the transfer of its century-old proprietary library to a nonprofit organization whose mission would be to provide public law library service. The initial library board hired me as its first librarian. I spent five exciting years as the director of the Norfolk Law Library. In that position, I had the opportunity to meet and develop professional and personal friendships with many amazing individuals who became my mentors and role models.

¶16 In 1992, our family moved to Seattle when I became the director of the King County Law Library. The library board, my bosses, encourage my participation in AALL activities. They recognize the value that exposure to a wider community of law library professionals brings to our library's efforts to create and sustain a new operating service model. They also recognize the deep sense of personal satisfaction I derive from the opportunities membership brings for individual growth and development.

¶17 A recent *New York Times* article profiled a series of eighty- and ninety-year-olds hard at work and filled with excitement for what they do.¹ The story highlights changing attitudes about retirement. We are living longer, healthier lives. Whether out of economic necessity or intellectual curiosity, labor force participation by those over the age of seventy-five is accelerating. If, as the article suggests, I am at the mid-point of a work span that extends for decades, what do I envision for myself in the future?

¶18 I envision a life of work that will always contain a core of similar elements. The presence of these core elements makes my current position exciting and rewarding. They will frame the boundaries of my future work path.

¶19 I expect that the map of my path to a happy life of work will include the following elements:

- An environment where it's possible to say "I have an idea," and an opportunity to ask "what if?"
- An environment that will provide an opportunity to collaborate with others to translate "what if" into action.
- An environment that encourages personal growth.
- An environment that celebrates individual and collective achievement.
- An environment that offers the opportunity to be of service to others.

¶10 These core values may be found in any number of settings. Identifying and applying lessons from those around me to ensure that my life at work will

1. Douglas Smith, *To Be Old, Gifted and Employed Is No Longer Rare*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 14, 2001, Bus. Sec., at 1.

reflect these same values will be challenging. Work will continue to provide the opportunity for passionate involvement in the world around me.

¶11 If a life at work is a lifetime path, then I'm truly at the midpoint and right in step with others of my generation who will be testing the boundaries of what it means to have a productive and rewarding work life.

Believe in What You Do*

*Judith Meadows***

¶1 Like many others sharing their thoughts in this collection of essays, I have been a practicing law librarian for well over twenty years. What may be unusual about me is that I have had the same position in the same law library for nearly seventeen years. Early in my career I could not imagine staying in the same place for even a third of that time! What has given me the enthusiasm to stay and still be excited in my work? Changing environment, excellent staff, a supportive board, active involvement in professional associations—these are all important. But I think the biggest reasons for my continuing passion are the ability to invent the library as I go along, and the very nature of a public law library.

¶2 I work in an environment that is always changing. Public law librarians literally never know what is awaiting them when they arrive at work each day. Our clients are varied and can easily include appellate judges, practicing attorneys, college and high school students, and pro se litigants all within the same hour. Their problems and concerns are my guiding light, and they help determine the library's priorities. My staff members all take the clients' needs seriously. We are small enough in number that we all are able to meet in my office, where we discuss and sometimes debate an appropriate direction. I always have believed in collaboration as the best way of decision making for most scenarios. A staff that has a thirty-seven-year age difference, not to mention political and social diversity, also helps keep me on my toes.

¶3 This has been the best of times to be a librarian. To actually have been "there" as we moved into the electronic world has been a real pleasure for me. I've seen the rollout of LEXIS and Westlaw in the 1970s; the experimentation of the 1980s that brought us fax technology, CD-ROMs, and simultaneous remote database searching; and the arrival of the Internet and the online catalog in the 1990s. I have had the pleasure of taking a library that had a single OCLC terminal with a direct dial line to Dublin, Ohio, and helping it become one with an innovative program of digitizing legal briefs and other documents in order to provide users with remote access. The challenges, of course, have raised complex issues such as filtering and viruses that I never studied in library school twenty-five years ago. But

* © Judith Meadows, 2001.

** Director, State Library of Montana, Helena, Montana.

they are also part of what makes the job so interesting. And who can imagine what lies ahead in the years I have before retirement?

¶14 I believe in the value of the law library—we are the ones who provide equal access to the law. In order to do that effectively, efficiently, and fairly, we must continually reconsider what we do and how we do it. Working at the reference desk each day reminds me of exactly how the library's services are used and how our intervention and assistance can make a difference in someone's life. Seeing someone who walked into the library bewildered, or even belligerent, leave thirty minutes later with an appropriate answer or referral is the reason I joined this profession. In my position of state law librarian I get to see laws being considered and passed in the legislature, interpreted by the judicial system, and applied by the citizenry. So, even though the prestige of holding an elective office,¹ the adventure afforded through travel, and the delight of sharing friendships across the United States have all helped make my career very special, I can honestly say that the *best* part of my professional life has been the actual library work. I have been blessed.

The "Oprah" Effect*

Anne K. Myers**

¶11 It was an "Oprah moment"—literally. Watching *Oprah* one day last fall, I heard Cheryl Richardson talk about life makeovers, and realized that was exactly what I was looking for. When she mentioned her book,¹ I hopped right onto Amazon and ordered a copy. Much to my amazement, reading it was better than hearing about it, and it clarified some things for me about reviewing my life and my career while I'm in a "midlife crisis" stage.

¶12 After more than twenty years as a librarian, how do I keep myself energized and challenged? It's getting harder—the work keeps coming, staff keeps turning over, the pace keeps speeding up, and I'm feeling further behind, scrambling to keep everything in order. But reading *Take Time for Your Life* helped me realize that I already *have* taken steps to move forward, and as I work through the points it raises, I find more energy and creativity to bring to my job. So what did I learn?

¶13 I have a right to a full life that's more than a job. That sounds very elementary, but it wasn't true for me for a long time. It's easy for me to stay late and take work home, but in doing so, I miss out on building relationships with people who aren't librarians and on giving myself a break so that I can return to the library rested and ready to dive back in. That was something I could actively work on—

1. *Editor's Note:* Judith Meadows has served as both treasurer (1992–95) and president (1997–98) of the American Association of Law Libraries, as well as chair of the State, Court and County Law Libraries Special Interest Section (1991–92).

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** Head of Technical Services, Boston University Pappas Law Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

1. CHERYL RICHARDSON, *TAKE TIME FOR YOUR LIFE: A PERSONAL COACH'S SEVEN-STEP PROGRAM FOR CREATING THE LIFE YOU WANT* (1999).

and I have made a commitment to myself that I will leave the office at 5:00 P.M. at least three out of every five days. It would be unrealistic to say I'll do it every day, but three of five is doable. That gives me time for the gym, choir, a class or two, dinner with friends—I love feeling both in control and more rounded. One of my new activities is a life makeover group! In the process of changing my routine, I've discovered that I'm more efficient in the way I use my time at work, since I don't plan to spend more of it there. I'm still accomplishing what needs to be done, but I have more time for myself.

¶14 Professionally I needed to broaden my circle. I love my tech services colleagues in AALL and the Annual Meeting, but I need more than that to keep me fresh. So I've branched out and become active in the Innovative Users Group and with a local government documents group. What I learn is directly relevant to my job, and I feel that I contribute as well as learn. The balance is healthy.

¶15 I have also taken on AALL committee assignments, such as Annual Meeting Program Selection and the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV), that have expanded my professional contacts within the law library community. Because committees are a careful mix of librarians from different types of libraries, I have met, worked with, learned from, and enjoyed expanding my circle of professional colleagues to include (*gasp*) firm and court librarians as well as academics.

¶16 It's important to find things in the job that bring joy and to make sure they are part of the routine, even in small doses. No one loves everything about any job, but one thing I do that makes me especially happy, relaxed, and creative is working with Web sites. I decided to learn HTML six years ago before I really knew what to do with the new skills I was acquiring. I practiced by designing a Web site for my father on his seventieth birthday (he can't use a computer but he loves having a Web page). From there, I made a small site for my department and that, in turn, led to my director asking me to take an active role in working with our library Web site. I now design and maintain Web sites for other groups as well, including CRIV, which lets me feed the creative as well as technical side.

¶17 Ten years ago I had no idea the Web was going to be in my future, and I can't predict what will be in store for me ten years down the road. What I can do is keep myself balanced, happy, and involved in my field and with other people, and look ahead with anticipation to whatever comes.

Fifteen Years and Counting, or Why I Love My Job*

Lee R. Nemchek**

¶11 There are a lot of things I don't particularly care for that I have to deal with on a regular basis in my capacity as a multitasking, multi-office information resources

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** Information Resources Manager, Morrison & Foerster LLP, Los Angeles, California.

manager at Morrison & Foerster. In fact, there are so many things I don't like that I can make a list:

- I dread writing performance reviews and dealing with personnel problems.
- I don't like training new employees.
- Annual summer associate season is not much fun.
- Annual budget preparation is even worse.
- Integrating new lateral partners is a drag. (They create havoc for the records management department with their hundreds of boxes of incoming files, and they always want library materials from their old firms that we don't have.)
- Opening new offices is exhausting.
- Negotiating service contracts with vendors is depressing.

Need I go on?

¶12 One might wonder how I continue to thrive in an environment that seems to present so many negative aspects. The obvious reason is that I don't consider them to be negatives. At worst, they are annoying interruptions, keeping me from activities that I would much prefer doing. At best, they are opportunities to develop an ever-higher level of skill in performing certain specific tasks. For example, after fifteen years I can state with a fair degree of pride that I write a darn good performance review. Every year my budget projections hit closer to the mark than those I submitted the year before, and I'm almost to the point of reducing the RFP process to an exact science.

¶13 Nevertheless, becoming good at tasks that I don't really enjoy wouldn't have kept me here for fifteen years if that's all there was to it. And I couldn't envision another fifteen years if all there was to look forward to was more of the same. No, I stay at Morrison & Foerster because I can't imagine finding another employment environment that would provide the freedom to grow professionally that I have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, here.

¶14 I have found that there are two important requisites to happiness and fulfillment in a particular position. First, you must work for people that you like and respect. I use the word "for" rather than "with" because it is more important to love your bosses than your staff. Yes, problem personnel can be a real pain, but such problems can usually be dealt with within the parameters of the employee review/discipline process. A problem boss—be it a library director, an office administrator, a managing partner, or a library committee—is a horse of a different color that can make both your work and home lives miserable. Deciding whether to stay or leave a job may be the only measure of control an employee has in a bad boss situation. If you feel that your work is undervalued, if you get little or no administrative support for your department, or if you're not given the freedom to do your job without oppressive meddling and micromanagement, leave the job! For the past fifteen years, I've been lucky enough to work with supportive managing partners and, most especially, with two individuals who surely must be the best legal administrators working in any law firm *anywhere*. These "bosses"

are half the reason that I continue to toil away in the private law firm environment.

¶15 The second requisite to job fulfillment concerns the work itself. In order to stay happy over the long term of a professional career, you must identify at least one task, activity, responsibility, etc. that you love—one that drives you and keeps you passionate about the work—and incorporate that activity into your job. If what you most love to do isn't an element of your job description, find a way to add it. At the very least, find a way to make time for the activity in your regular work schedule. As a direct result of my work at Morrison & Foerster, I've been able to engage in what I really love to do, which is research and professional writing.¹ I've initiated many research endeavors and other pet projects over the years,² and the firm has indulged me in all of them without complaint. Similarly, find an employer that will support your passion—whatever it may be—and stick with that one. There lies the path to job satisfaction and longevity.

¶16 If your situation is similar to mine and you've been blessed with great bosses and professional freedom, do what you can to provide the same environment for your staff. You have it within your power to be a great boss, too, and to enrich the professional lives of those employees who report directly to you. Be the reason that someone loves his job; doing so will make you feel doubly good about yours.

Two Tramps in Mud Time*

Sharon Hamby O'Connor**

¶11 In college I was introduced to “Two Tramps in Mud Time,” a poem by Robert Frost that includes lines that became my favorites:

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.¹

¶12 I have been lucky that my work in libraries, particularly in the Boston College Law Library, has allowed me to live this lesson. My work has not been a four-letter word, it's been a three-letter word—fun. Working with great people has been the primary reason for this, but three other developments in the past ten years have added spice and kept boredom at bay.

1. I suppose that in a utopian world I would have been a university professor instead of a law firm librarian, assuming I could figure out how to do that without actually having to teach classes.

2. *Editor's Note:* For a recent example, see Lee R. Nemchek, *Records Retention in the Private Legal Environment: Annotated Bibliography and Program Implementation Tools*, 93 LAW LIBR. J. 7, 2001 LAW LIBR. J. 1.

* © Sharon Hamby O'Connor, 2001.

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1. ROBERT FROST, *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, in A POCKET BOOK OF ROBERT FROST'S POEMS 114 (1960).

¶3 The first in time was the opportunity to design and build a new law library. For eighteen months we labored over a plan for renovating our old library only to discover that renovation is more expensive than new construction. We were told that, instead, we could start from scratch and build anew. That experience was all-consuming for at least two years—fun, scary, hectic, and ultimately rewarding. The new library has lifted everyone’s spirits and, with its technological readiness, allows us to offer a more sophisticated array of programs and services than we were ever able to offer before.

¶4 This new “wired” library points toward the second major event that has forced me to remain on my toes. The law library was already into the electronic age with its own systems and operations when we took over responsibility for providing technology support to the entire Boston College Law School community, faculty, staff, and students. In addition to library operations, we are now responsible for policy development, planning, asset management, network administration, frontline support, training, database development, and Web support, as well as the operation of the computer lab and the introduction of technology into the classroom. It is no stretch to say that every day there are concepts to be learned, decisions to be made, and problems to be resolved—many about developments that I feel as though I barely understand!

¶5 The reorganization of the law library staff has also made the past few years interesting. We all realized that the demands on our time from our user community were changing dramatically and that we were not organized in the most efficient way to respond. With the facilitation of a consultant and the participation of all twenty-two members of the library staff, we came up with an entirely new organizational structure. This redefining of positions has had many positive benefits: more varied and interesting jobs for the library’s entry level staff; many more opportunities for teaching and faculty support for the reference librarians; and, as mentioned above, the ability to take on computing support for the law school as a whole. The commitment and enthusiasm that I see every day from all staff members make for an active workplace, with new ideas emerging from all quarters.

¶6 So—after twenty-one years—it is still a joy to come to work. I think Robert Frost would approve.

For Love of the Game*

*Alvin M. Podboy Jr.***

¶1 I have been working in law libraries for thirty-two years. That is a long time; for people in the military or federal government it can be a career. When invited to contribute to this collection, I thought back to the original program at the 2000

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** Director of Libraries, Baker & Hostettler LLP, Cleveland, Ohio.

AALL Annual Meeting from which it was conceived.¹ I thoroughly enjoyed the program and marveled at the career vignettes offered by the participants. In considering what to say about my own career, my first inclination was to identify changes in libraries and service to my patrons and clients as the things that have driven my tenure in the profession. But as I thought about it more deeply, I concluded that the title of a little book—*For Love of the Game*²—by one of my favorite authors, Michael Shaara, more accurately reflects what has kept me in law librarianship for so long. I truly love what I do.

¶2 In 1977, at my library school graduation, I was extremely impressed by the welcome that the president of the Case Western Reserve Library School Alumni Association gave to us newly enrolled members of the association. She said, “I love being a librarian.” I thought that was really one of the “neatest” things I had ever heard. To have a job that you truly love has to be one of the things that we should all strive for. I have found that job. I come to work every day looking forward to the challenges—and the game—of librarianship.

¶3 My love of libraries started very early in elementary school when I was introduced to the school library and found in it a huge world filled with books. (My favorite book revolved around some children who found and adopted a pet stegosaurus.) The love of libraries continued into my high school days, helped along by the local public librarian who had enough confidence in me to lead me down the road of multiple explorations. In law school I found a still deeper love of libraries and especially law libraries. I worked as student filer, shelver, and night circulation and reference assistant. I learned to love the hunt for legal information. I was surrounded by an extremely supportive library staff at Case Western Reserve University Law School Library—people whom I still call friends after all these years. They supported me in my legal education and taught me to love and respect their field of endeavor. My mentor, Simon Goren, director at Case Western, started my librarian education and continued it until his recent death.³ While he was the individual who introduced me to law librarianship, two other men were also very important in helping me discover my chosen profession. They were my father and my father-in-law. Both were entrepreneurs. My dad was a tavern owner and very successful at his chosen vocation, although it was a job he did not love. He did it simply to provide as best he could for his family. He died young, doing this job he disliked. He was the most supportive member of my family when I changed professions from attorney to librarian. He truly understood my search for something I loved doing. My father-in-law, a barber by trade, loved what he did, and loved

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1. Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Law Librarian, program presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Philadelphia (July 18, 2000) (audiotape available from Mobiltape Co.).
 2. MICHAEL SHAARA, *FOR LOVE OF THE GAME: A NOVEL* (1991).
 3. See Kathleen Carrick & Alvin M. Podboy, *Memorial: Simon L. Goren*, 92 *LAW LIBR. J.* 249, 2000 *LAW LIBR. J.* 22.

the people he worked with and served. And he was extremely good at it. He was a wonderful model for doing something that you love to do and doing it well.

¶14 So the easy answer for how I have stayed in this profession for thirty-two years is that I love it. But that is not the whole answer. Why do I love it? First and foremost are the people. I have had the pleasure of working with many outstanding law librarians, both at Baker & Hostetler LLP and on the national scene. Most of my best friends are librarians, either in the Cleveland community, in the Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries (ORALL), or in AALL. Other people who nurture my love for librarianship are my coworkers, the attorneys and staff at Baker & Hostetler. They are a wonderfully supportive group of people. They are my clients and my friends. And still others are the lawyers I have met through my work on various bar association committees, the editors I have dealt with from various publications, the professors at law schools, and my friends in the publishing community.

¶15 Second, I derive great joy from service. To truly love the profession, a librarian must have a service mentality, must truly enjoy helping others. I enjoy helping everyone with whom I have contact, whether they be my attorney clients, the administration of Baker & Hostetler, the staff, or the firm's clients. I enjoy searching for the answers they seek. I enjoy keeping them up-to-date, watching for material they need to make them better at their jobs. Doing so makes my job a continual puzzle, one that changes and grows every day.

¶16 Third, I love the way the profession changes, how it continually redefines itself. What is a librarian? The answer changes with each new technology. It keeps my job new. To do it well, I must embrace the changes as they arrive. This attitude lets me have the eyes of a child and to look at my professional world with wonder every single day. Changing formats and new technology keep me young. I enjoy the challenges change brings—challenges of the budget, challenges of downsizing or upsizing, challenges of collection development and working with the different formats.

¶17 Fourth, I love the opportunity my job gives me to teach on a daily basis, one-to-one, every time an attorney or legal assistant enters my office with a problem they have not encountered before. I love passing on knowledge and information. I also love the more formal teaching I do, either through presentations, papers, or as a college professor. This is another part of my job that keeps me young. Not only do I learn more from my students every day than what I impart to them, I find teaching is just plain fun. It's another reason why I love coming to my job every day.

¶18 Fifth, I love my work with different professional associations: AALL, ORALL, the Ohio State Bar Association, and the Cleveland Bar Association. Baker & Hostetler has been extremely supportive of these activities and that includes both firm management and my fellow librarians and staff. Working with these groups has deepened my appreciation of the profession because it has expanded the scope of my audience.

¶9 Sixth, I love where I work. Baker & Hostetler is an outstanding place to be employed. I work with great people, brilliant people, and very professional people. The firm is truly one of the outstanding law firms in the country, and it gives me an opportunity to do what I love to do.

¶10 Last, I love the freedom of law librarianship. I have a wonderful boss who, through his trust and support, has encouraged me to develop myself as a professional. I have a staff that, because of their confidence and their support, allows me the freedom to explore other areas of my professional life.

¶11 Librarianship is a profession that meets my needs. As I have said on numerous occasions, I would continue to work as a librarian even if I won the lottery. I am not ashamed to say I love the profession of librarianship.

Good Times (No) Riches . . . with Apologies to Jimmy Buffet*

*Gitelle Seer***

¶1 I sometimes think that only a complete lack of imagination, or profound inertia, has kept me at the same firm for lo these many years. I often tell those who look at me incredulously when they learn how many years I have been here that my birth certificate states my place of birth as Dewey Ballantine. Of course, it could be that the structure and patterns of my job, which I find reassuring, combined with the recurring elements of fluidity and change, which I find challenging, are what have kept me rooted for so long.

¶2 I wish I could say that my career followed a master plan, but that would be stretching the truth. My tenure at Dewey Ballantine LLP began over thirty years ago, when I casually stumbled into the job as assistant librarian. I came to meet the head librarian, Beatrice McDermott, in her capacity as job placement coordinator for the Law Library Association of Greater New York, the New York chapter of AALL. We spoke for no more than a few minutes when she told me that she had just gotten approval to hire a professional librarian as her assistant and asked if I wanted the job. She must have known instinctively that it would be a good fit, just as did I. So with no more thought than that, I started my career at this firm. I'll skip the part where the senior tax attorney who subsequently interviewed me asked if I planned to get married or pregnant—I think it was in that order—any time soon, to which I convincingly answered “no.” In those days the question was not illegal, although perhaps in questionable taste. And five years later, during my first baby shower (thankfully he had retired by my second), this same partner looked me straight in the eye and said, “But you promised!”

¶3 There is no more reassuring way to start a career than by having an exacting but encouraging mentor. Bea McDermott was that person in spades, as were several of her contemporaries—professional librarians who graciously took me

* © Gitelle Seer, 2001.

** Director of Library Services, Dewey Ballantine LLP, New York, New York.

under their collective wings in my fledging stage as an enthusiastic, but often clueless, librarian. Frankly, I don't know how she tolerated my endless questions and need for reassurance in those early days. But if I drove her patience to the limits, or made her question her own judgment in hiring me, she never once showed it.

¶14 I suppose a good deal of the satisfaction that I get from my job derives from the high comfort level that I have at Dewey Ballantine. The environment, culture, atmosphere—whatever you call the ineffable feeling of rightness—has provided a great deal of independence. I realized very early in my career that I enjoyed working for a partnership, a business form that is structured without being rigid. Although the lack of multiple layers of management or complex reporting relationships sometimes means it is unclear to whom to turn for support, over the years I have developed both formal and informal conduits to the partnership and the firm management.

¶15 By nature I am not a whiner, and I consider myself very adaptable (although my family might disagree!). No doubt this trait has seen me through the bad times. And there certainly have been a few, such as the downsizing that we, along with many other law firms and businesses, went through in the early 1990s. My approach was to get with the program rather than rail against the unfairness of the process. Well, okay, I did quite a bit of railing too, but mostly to myself and a few close colleagues. In fact, that is a very useful survival technique—find that group of like-minded, realistic, and sympathetic professional colleagues who can act as your sounding board and your safety (or should I say sanity) net.

¶16 There have been a number of energizing influences in my career. One of the most important has been my involvement with the various professional associations and publications that support our field. I am a firm believer in the value of networking and have found that almost every interaction with professional colleagues over the years has yielded some benefit to me or to my firm, whether in the form of information or affirmation. The opportunities to contribute to our collective professional growth are many and can be as all-consuming as holding elective office,¹ or less time-intensive but equally satisfying as mentoring.

¶17 And of course there is my staff. Working with a professional and talented staff, many of whom seem to have the same nesting instincts that I do, has made me look good countless times in countless ways over the years. I try to make sure that the firm recognizes what a group effort it is.

¶18 The other major energizing factor has been the introduction and adaptation of technology. Much to my surprise—and this from the woman who can't program a thermostat, let alone a VCR—I have found myself in a decades-long love affair with technology. With the enthusiastic cooperation of my creative staff I have been able to imagine, and then implement, many exciting changes in the way in which we manage the business of providing information.

1. *Editor's Note:* Gitelle Seer has served as the president of the Law Library Association of Greater New York (1978–79) and secretary of the American Association of Law Libraries (1986–89).

¶9 As I began to see the impact of computers on our lives, and our livelihood, I consciously set out to learn as much as I could about technology infrastructure, not wanting to limit myself solely to the applications that we provide and support. I knew that it would be important to be able to converse with our “techies” in their language, while respecting the often-amorphous boundaries of our respective domains.

¶10 Similarly, years ago I saw the importance of running the library as a business and began to develop better budgeting and financial accountability systems. Perhaps it is the perception of control, but I actually enjoy the fiscal responsibility that comes with this job. Although not one for quantifying every move we make (or every breath we take), I can usually assemble the figures that I need to make a point or defend a position.

¶11 Despite the trend toward self-service information, I see our role as information professionals growing. Quite honestly, I am not particularly adept at self-promotion in the larger sense within my firm, but I am not half-bad at highlighting—at every opportunity—the ways in which our talents and resources contribute to the high quality products that our firm generates, whether it is legal advice, speeches and articles, or our Web presence. I think that being so involved in these processes—business development, recruiting, marketing, Internet and Intranet design—is ultimately what keeps the job fresh and challenging.

¶12 I know that I am not the first law librarian to publicly declare that I get paid for having a good time. So is it a testament to the profession, the firm, the changing nature and challenges of the industry, or all three? I can’t say for sure, but I do know that I intend to continue having a good time for quite a few years to come.

You’ve Been There *How* Long?!*

*Merle J. Slyhoff***

¶1 When people ask me how long I’ve been at Biddle Law Library at the University of Pennsylvania, I either respond “too long” or mumble some incomprehensible number. Eventually I admit to twenty-four years, but quickly explain that “I’ve had the unique opportunity to change jobs five times without having to move.” It’s one thing to stay in a profession for twenty-four years, but to stay at the same place for that long and still find the job challenging is a feat in itself. So what’s my secret? Honest, there are no secrets.

¶2 My professional librarian career began as acquisitions/serials librarian at Biddle (Job No. 1), a position I held until a new director brought new ideas for the library and the possibility for growth for me. Asked if I was interested in starting a media department that would include microforms and videos, I jumped at the

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** Document Delivery and Auxiliary Services Librarian, Biddle Law Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

opportunity. Since I would also help out at the reference desk, I became media/reference librarian (Job No. 2). This was 1985, when video was relatively new to law libraries, and I was being given the opportunity to develop a new and exciting department. I was familiar with the basics of video production, having taken a class in library school, but this was different; I needed to know more. I attended workshops and read whatever I could find on the subject to keep up with the changing technology.

¶13 When the director suggested we explore a fee-based service to meet the needs of the legal community, I asked if I could help develop the program. The idea didn't meet with resounding enthusiasm from most of the staff, so I wasn't stepping on anyone's toes by volunteering. This led to my overseeing the operation. We called the program Attorney Services. I dropped my reference duties and became the attorney and media services librarian (Job No. 3).

¶14 Attorney Services grew to Document Delivery when I was asked to head our interlibrary loan department, and we launched a faculty document delivery operation. Now I was the document delivery and media services librarian (Job No. 4). But media services was moving too fast. I could no longer keep up with the technology or the demands of the faculty, and I gladly relinquished the media duties to the law school's newly formed Media Technology Center. Knowing, however, that the center's staff would be media professionals, I asked if I could maintain responsibility for the library's video collection. There was quick agreement to this request.

¶15 But what would I do with my "spare time"? Was I interested in researching grant opportunities and writing proposals? How about involvement with the electronic library that was beginning to play an increasingly important role at Biddle? Would I resurrect the library's newsletter and tackle publications, public relations, and marketing—in addition to my document delivery and video collection responsibilities? Yes, yes, and yes. It sounds like too many varied and disjointed job duties, but it really isn't bad. Once priorities and hierarchies were set, the prospect of having a variety of job tasks rather than just one or two was very appealing. Except for the occasional high-stress periods when everything needs to be done at the same time, this variety is a key for me in keeping my job challenging and fresh.

¶16 But once again I needed a new title. We pondered it for weeks and finally settled on document delivery and auxiliary services librarian (Job No. 5), with "auxiliary services" covering all the non-document delivery components of my job.

¶17 Throughout my career I have been active in AALL¹ and the American Library Association. Despite enjoying my library duties, I find great satisfaction in

1. *Editor's Note:* "Active" is putting it mildly. Among other things, Merle J. Slyhoff has chaired the following: 1996 Annual Meeting Program Committee, 2000 Annual Meeting Local Advisory Committee, Technical Services Special Interest Section, Micrographics and Audiovisual Special Interest Section, SIS Council, Exchange of Duplicates Committee, Publications Committee, Public Relations Advisory Committee, Education Committee, and Task Force on AALL's Public Relations Program. She has also twice served as president of the Greater Philadelphia Law Library Association.

these outside library activities. Perhaps it's because they bring challenges that are work-related, or because I learn new skills to take back to the job. Maybe it's the colleagues I meet and the business and social networking. Whatever the reason, I know I can attribute a great deal of my work gratification to my involvement in these activities.

¶18 So, that's the history of my career as a law librarian, all of it at the Biddle Law Library. And in case you haven't figured out the main ingredient to staying in the same profession at the same place for almost a quarter of a century and still enjoying the job, it's *change!* You don't need to physically move in order to change. When I started my career in technical services, I never imagined I would switch to public service work or to more nontraditional library jobs such as grant research.

¶19 But how do you make these changes? *Take risks.* Volunteer to investigate and develop new library services. Branch out into areas that are new to you and to your library. *Learn new skills.* At Biddle the librarians are encouraged to get involved in the production of Web pages. For most of us this is new territory, so we're given the opportunity to take workshops and classes. Grant research and writing were new to me, but workshops and books on the topic helped me jump into my new duties. *Keep up with new trends.* Keep abreast of developments in law librarianship. Find out what's new and how it could benefit your patrons. *Get involved.* Involvement in AALL, ALA, or Special Libraries Association committees and SISs helps to develop skills that can benefit your daily work experience. By attending ALA meetings, for example, I've acquired ILL skills that otherwise would have been difficult to learn.

¶10 And what's on the horizon for me? As I write this we're in the process of interviewing candidates for the director's position at Biddle Law Library. A new director could again bring new directions and more growth opportunities. Or reorganization and different job duties. There may be more changes ahead and new job titles. But having these opportunities to change and grow only contributes to making a long-term career choice, and a long-term stay at one library, a rewarding and challenging experience. Not everyone will stay at the same library, or in the same profession, for twenty-four years. But even if it's only five, seven, ten, or fifteen years, the job can remain fresh, challenging, and relevant if you adopt these simple workday tactics.

Of Rubber Bands and LTMs*

Brian Striman**

¶11 How is it that some law librarians are able to maintain a high degree of *balance, vitality and enthusiasm*, and *interest* after ten, twenty, or thirty years in our

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** Professor of Law Library, Head of Technical Services and Catalog Librarian, University of Nebraska Schmid Law Library, Lincoln, Nebraska.

profession? In this short essay I hope to partially answer that question with lessons learned from my twenty-five years of experience as a law librarian. The comments are a distillation from my video vignette that was presented at an educational program offered at the 2000 AALL Annual Meeting.¹

¶2 The program was held in a huge room, with most seats occupied. I sat in the last row to gauge the reactions of my colleagues. My vignette was probably the wildest one of the bunch. About midway through the video some in the audience began whispering to each other, followed soon thereafter by outright laughter. People seemed relieved that I couldn't *really* be serious about some of those ideas. I spoke of rubber bands, sleeping, exercising, eating, and LTMs (licensed massage therapists); of doing silly things throughout the workday; treating yourself and your staff with goodies like doughnuts; low-cost ways to dress up from time to time; finding niches in the organization that can be exploited; publishing; and volunteering. Some of these topics challenged my colleagues. In the remaining paragraphs I'll show how they relate to three large areas that encompass one's work life.

¶3 **Balance.** Your career is just a *part* of your life. If any portion of your life gets out of balance, eventually it will affect your career aspirations. It's easy to forget how important the interplay is between your career and the rest of your life. On rare occasion, getting off balance can lead to an unexpectedly *better* career path. You need to have balance both at work and in the rest of your life—imbalance in one can lead to imbalance in the other. For example, getting less sleep than you need—a nonwork imbalance—very likely will lead to problems at work. Sleep deprivation eventually creeps into your career path. Eating habits are another potential problem area. If your mood at work switches toward irritability around midmorning, it may be due to the doughnut and thirty-two ounce espresso you inhaled while coming to work. Danger!—it all becomes *normal* after awhile. If this sort of imbalance becomes routine, it can block the vitality and enthusiasm you could be bringing to your work place.

¶4 **Vitality and enthusiasm.** These dynamic energies work in consort. Vitality is an inward energy that moves in positive ways to keep you engaged in what you are doing moment by moment. Enthusiasm is a natural outpouring of vitality, a force usually noticed by others that can be spread to those around you. You need the energy of vitality to create enthusiasm. It's impossible to have either vitality or enthusiasm if you are sleep-deprived or aren't eating right. Some catalysts for vitality and enthusiasm are "treats and rewards" you give—in moderation—to yourself and to others: favorite food and beverage treats like M&Ms; chocolates; soda, coffee, or tea; fresh fruit; or bagels. Another way is to break your daily routine—watch the vitality start up. For example: you come home, your shoulder and

1. Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Law Librarian, program presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Philadelphia (July 18, 2000) (audio-tape available from Mobiltape Co.).

neck muscles are so tense they're as solid as a smithy's anvil. Is a box of cheese puffs and half a pint of Jack Daniels going to get those shoulders properly toned? No. So how do you deal with ongoing, long-term muscle tension? You find a good LMT. Hot tubs, saunas, and whirlpools are helpful if you just can't get past the LMT concept.

¶15 Some may think these things are too expensive or too much trouble. Really? Do you want to climb out of drudgery and minimal energy or not? Honestly, you need to look at your overall attitude and plug it into your career path. What's it going to take for you to get vitality and enthusiasm and then to *maintain* them for the long run? Maybe by calendaring every Thursday as a day to bring in something to share with your colleagues. Also, introduce a quality of the nonroutine to work and express it daily by doing something out of the ordinary. Dress up on Fridays. Shoot a rubber band at a coworker who you know will get a kick out of something silly like that. Bring in a harmonica and toot it once in a while. Oh, and try smiling more often. Engage yourself with those around you. Don't get so self-absorbed with your own job responsibilities that you trap yourself in isolation. Break the social or institutional patterns of isolation that are used as a "survival" technique by sharing rewards and treats with your coworkers.

¶16 **Interest.** Once you've got balance, vitality, and enthusiasm, the next element in your path to career longevity is "interest." Think of interest as encompassing a broad spectrum that includes being motivated, aroused, engaged, involved, and curious. Generally, once you've got balance, vitality, and enthusiasm, interest in your job responsibilities will come automatically. Some individuals, however, exude vitality, enthusiasm, and balance in professional association activities at the expense of using those qualities in their own organizations. Danger!—something's not in balance. One way to develop job-related interest is to focus on something that needs doing but that no one has shown an inclination to do. For example, if you have an interest in e-mail encryption but no one knows much about it in your library and no one wants to take the time to learn, this is a niche that you can fill. You exploit it and become an expert in it. Then you ask around to see if anyone wants to learn more about it and you start teaching and educating people on its usefulness. Soon people are asking you more questions about it. Niche-finding exists in all libraries. You just need to become aware enough to find the niche and dig into it and become a local expert on it. In other words, you "cultivate" an interest that enhances the esteem of your colleagues and provides you with a means of self-motivation where you naturally become involved, curious, and productive. The more one's individual interest grows, the more likely it is that a subtle sense of ownership and interest in the larger picture of what the organization is all about will occur. The more you practice your "interest" skills, the more you equip yourself to maintain a high degree of balance, vitality and enthusiasm, and interest, even after ten, twenty, or thirty years in our profession.

Isn't the View Spectacular!*

Gail Warren**

¶1 “Hey, come over here. Isn't the view spectacular!” My feet move slowly, inching along the carpeted floor. The closer I move to the floor-to-ceiling windows, the larger the knot in my stomach grows; a thin bead of perspiration is spreading rapidly across my upper lip. I plant myself approximately three feet from my colleague, who is leaning over the railing that spans the wall of windows. Her nose almost touches the glass. “Yes, it's beautiful,” I reply, “I can see everything from right *here*.” Slowly, but deliberately, I inch my way back to the bank of elevators in the middle of the room and wait, breathlessly, for the next elevator going down.

¶2 “Listen, you have to do this. Just stand here between us and don't look down. It will be great!”

¶3 As the Monongahela Incline begins its ascent up Mount Washington, I'm wondering how I ever let myself get into this predicament. The familiar knot is rising in my stomach; as we approach the top, a huge sigh of relief escapes. But there's more. Of course one can't take the incline to the top without sightseeing along Grandview Avenue, appropriately fitted with overlooks. “I can see fine from here,” I mutter as my colleagues rush to the edge, the *edge*, of the precariously positioned concrete overlook. Perhaps they don't notice the glistening sweat on my upper lip—after all, we have to take the incline back down to the bottom.

¶4 “Where are the guardrails?” I'm laughing, but my stomach is doing flip-flops as the jeep follows every twist and turn of the snakelike road, Route 1, the “Pacific Coast Highway.” Fortunately, my seatmate traded places and now I am sitting on the passenger seat behind the driver, positioned on the *inside* edge of the road and not the outside, right at cliff's edge. “Oh Gail,” she says, “There aren't any guardrails!” After she pulls over, parking the jeep in the small gravel wayside, we tumble out for a better look. Again, I plant my feet firmly and take a big breath.

¶5 I not only survived each of these experiences, I'm a better person for them. Some readers may even remember these adventures because they all happened at outings with friends during AALL Annual Meetings or institutes. When asked to write about the ways I continue to feel challenged and energized in my career, more than eighteen years into the same position at the same law library, I thought the answer would be simple. Actually, it is simple, just not the one I first thought it would be.

¶6 My family supports my participation in professional activities and accepts my “absences” while traveling and attending library meetings, and that is certainly important in terms of balancing one's obligations at home and at work. My employer also supports these activities through professional encouragement and financial support. I've always known that my active involvement in professional

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organizations such as AALL provided that extra boost of energy to my work life. After each Annual Meeting I return to work re-energized, enthusiastic, and ready to tackle the most daunting project. Most of that energy is drawn from the wonderful friendships I share with law librarians from both coasts and the heartland in between—friendships we celebrate at the Annual Meeting and other events. So, I think, the answer to a long, productive career is simple—it's the friendships with library colleagues, friendships nurtured through shared experiences, long conversations, and lots of laughter that keep my career “young.”

¶17 Yet, that isn't really the answer. When I invoke memories of shared experiences in my professional career, for some reason I automatically think of the “heights” I've scaled. Until now, I've never made this connection. To you this might not be notable, but to me, forever fearful of vertical elevations—like high bridges with long spans (1992 Annual Meeting in San Francisco), the top of the Sears Tower (1987 Annual Meeting in Chicago), or even the rooftop patio of the Maryland Science Center (1997 Annual Meeting in Baltimore)¹—it's really something. But what's even more noteworthy is that while I've been “forced” to join these outings at almost every AALL venue, my colleagues also have encouraged me to take other risks—risks such as chairing a committee,² writing an article for *AALL Spectrum*, or speaking to a room full of peers early on a Sunday morning. Those who skydive and bungee jump have nothing on me. Accepting the inherent risk, pushing the fear aside, and moving “upward” is exhilarating. The answer is not solely active participation in my profession and it is not simply the very personal memories of those excursions to see local sights, it is the combination of both, inexplicably intertwined, that keep me coming back for more.

A Balancing Act*

*Leonette Williams***

¶1 In developing his program on career renewal for the 2000 AALL Annual Meeting,¹ Paul George probably asked me to be one of the videotaped speakers because I belong to the small group of librarians who haven't moved around much in their careers. I'm one of what I believe to be a small percentage of law librarians who have spent their entire career working in the same law library. In my par-

1. Acrophobia is defined as an “abnormal dread of being at a great height.” WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY 20 (1993). Of course, “great height” is rather relative, isn't it?

2. *Editor's Note:* Gail Warren has chaired AALL's Preservation and Nominations committees; the State, Court and County Law Libraries Special Interest Section; and the SIS Council. She has also served as president of the Virginia Association of Law Libraries.

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1. Gateway to Career Renewal: Paths for the Experienced Law Librarian, program presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Philadelphia (July 18, 2000) (audio-tape available from Mobiltape Co.).

ticular case, not only have I worked at the same library for over twenty years but I have held only two positions during this time and have worked for the same director. Based on those facts alone, it's reasonable to conclude that I should be mentally burned out and probably ready to call it quits. But in all honesty that is not true. I feel as enthusiastic about my work as I did twenty years ago, even after, as Paul put it, I've "done it all."

¶12 Respected philosophers, religious leaders, and self-help gurus offer their thoughts on how to live a fruitful and productive life. A good deal of what they have to say can be wonderful guides to life. Most law librarians have many years of higher education; somewhere along the line this probably included some study of philosophy. Many either practice or have had some exposure to the beliefs of a major religion, and probably quite a few have been exposed to self-help teachers and gurus preaching "Burnout Busters." Most of us have thought about our lives and what is important to us, and have considered our presence in the universe and our immediate world. To paraphrase some well-known sage, we each have to seek our own way. My goal for this essay is to briefly share with you the beliefs and practices that I have found work for me. I leave it to you to decide whether they will work for you.

¶13 My most basic guideline is to actively participate in many areas of life. For whatever reason, I categorize my own life into six areas: God, family and friends, community, profession, society, and myself. If I lived an ideal life I would be engaged in each of these areas on a daily basis. I don't achieve this ideal, but I keep it in mind as a reachable goal. I truly believe that active participation creates a balanced life and a balanced life results in a happier individual. With little effort I could probably present endless definitions of the six areas of my life and offer multiple ways in which I participate. But I will just offer a few highlights from each.

¶14 **God.** Worship, prayer, song, communal sharing. This area may be defined by some as "Nature," with the substitution of meditation for prayer. Look at and appreciate the natural wonders of the world.

¶15 **Family and Friends.** Spouse, children, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, pets: people and creatures who receive our attentions first. Since we enjoy them so much, we need to show them our love and appreciation, preferably on a daily basis. Share not only good times but bad and troubling times as well. Occasionally these commitments will leave time for little else. In those times of need, forget balance and concentrate on the beloved.

¶16 **Community.** The neighborhood and town or city in which you live. I walk my dog every day and this has allowed me to get to know several people in my neighborhood that I normally would not have met. Spend time getting to know the people who live in your community. Not everyone will be to your liking, but there will probably be a gem or two in the group. Work on mutual concerns with your neighbors.

¶17 **Profession.** AALL, regional chapters, other library associations—join committees, run for elected office, serve on an executive board, create a program, serve as a speaker, and write an article. I'm fortunate to work at a university with various professional organizations that I have had the opportunity to serve: Faculty Center Board of Directors, Women in Management, Feminist Counsel.

¶18 **Society.** The United States of America, the world. Take an active interest in the world—there is literally no end to the opportunities for involvement.

¶19 **Yourself.** Intellectually and physically; the mind and body both need to be used to prevent atrophy. I personally believe the ancient Greeks got this one right—a healthy mind and a healthy body. Intellectual stimulation from scholarship, reading, or hobbies, combined with some type of physical exertion, be it a regular workout routine at the gym or daily walks or a particular sport. An added bonus is using your mind and body with others!

¶10 So that's it. No great words of wisdom, just a few examples of ways to participate in the many areas of one's life. Trying to achieve a balanced life by active participation has been the key for me to retain enthusiasm not only for my career but for everything else as well. It just may be worth a try.

