



It's my experience that only two or three concepts are retained from seminars or training sessions. Having attended the May 2nd NJLLA program, Time Management and Organizational Skills, given by Marie Radford, one I came away with was- *nothing's perfect –get it done*. So, now more than a month after AALL has concluded my conference notes are transformed into an article that's "done", if not perfect.

I applied for NJLLA's conference grant in the hopes of attending and gaining the benefit of a national conference of 1800 law librarians – an opportunity to interact with people in equivalent positions throughout the country, particularly the SCCLL and LISP special interest sections of AALL. This was important for me this year because I am serving as the Chair of the Vicinage (County) Law Librarians Committee with the

opportunity to make presentations to AOC's decision makers. It was my intention to compare characteristics of NJ's county law libraries to those in other states to identify any practices of exceptional court library systems that NJ could consider adopting. It's my belief that NJ's court law libraries could best be improved if two things can change. (1) As a group, we come under the supervision of a professional librarian and (2) we find a way to consistently obtain professional development.

From past conferences, I can break down the experience into interactions at: programs and training, the vendors and exhibit hall, and social functions.

Vendors and exhibit hall

This year I got a lot of pleasure going around to the tables set up by the various SIS groups and chapters. There seemed to be more of them than in the past- maybe I just paid more attention... As far as interactions with vendors, I sought out the individual in the ALM exhibit with responsibility for licensing the electronic NJLJ and spoke to (read: chastised) her for pulling NJLJ from Lexis and going with a 5 year exclusive contract with Westlaw. Since the Judiciary and some other state agencies rely nearly exclusively on Lexis we are faced with four more years of no searchable access to NJLJ though our primary research tool. Fortunately there's a way to do some searching through the NJ State Library's databases.

At a Thomson West Customer appreciation luncheon, we did have the opportunity to provide feedback on our perceptions of TW. The employee assigned to our table's discussion was Katie Hickey, a customer service person with no selling responsibilities. I found her to be a very intent listener and have no doubt that our table's suggestion will be passed up the hierarchy, where it can then die its death. We weren't directly asked but it was an opportunity to discuss what we'd like from the sales force. It was, generally less sales focus and more product knowledge, especially for the courts/government. Publishers don't concentrate resources on selling to the government sector but West has recently realigned its sales force to allow for dedicated sales reps for government. This is a step in the right direction.

As an example of things you hope to get from a conference but can't anticipate doing so, while at a SCCLL function, I learned of a scholarship opportunity through Marcia Koslov, currently the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Law Library. While she was the State Law Librarian in Wisconsin, she advocated for law librarians to increase their administrative and leadership abilities by taking educational programs through the Institute for Court Management (ICM). In my own experience, NJ's court management can relate to and places greater value on training through ICM

than purely librarian programs. In the Judiciary I have been trying for years to get the organization to recognize that even though AOC can't create its own training programs for the few law librarians it employs, we are capable of finding appropriate training ourselves and just need to be sent.

Social functions

For me, the social highlight of the conference was the SCCLL reception at the beautiful 29 story Thomas F. Eagleton US Courthouse, one of the tallest buildings in St. Louis, with a great view of the arch and Mississippi River. This was followed by an outing to an old time Irish Bar with a group of NJ librarians.



Programs and training

What could I come back to NJ with that could be passed on to other state court librarians? A couple of programs were directly applicable to our group.

One was on AALL's Authentication Survey conducted by the Access to Legal Information Committee. This program reviewed the survey of state websites for the purposes of determining if the information on the websites could be considered official. In court libraries we often receive telephone inquiries for these and need to refer people to free, Internet-based resources. The program pointed out that little attention is paid to authentication, and users frequently can't readily determine the information's reliability.

A program on compassion fatigue made evident that librarians in our positions are often subject to emotional stress similar to that suffered by medical workers, law enforcement officers, and other professionals who deal with a demanding public and the accompanying pressures.

In a LISP open discussion on assisting self represented litigants (SRL's) we confirmed that NJ's court libraries are not the best but to my surprise, discovered that NJ's aren't the worst either. Many other state's court librarians are going through the same struggles and challenges as we are.

AALL offers training for individuals within the chapters serving as officers and leading committees. As current membership chair, I attended a session on developing new members. Good ideas came from the program's

moderators who were mostly chapter presidents. Among those ideas were: welcoming new members and writing profiles on them, assigning this task to one person on the membership committee, and being conscious of being friendly to new members particularly at programs and functions. I was however, disappointed with AALL's membership person who really had nothing to suggest or add to the discussion. I would have thought there would have been more of a resource from AALL on recruitment, retention, etc.

Of course there were many other interactions with librarians, vendors, and AALL's leadership. These all added to the conference experience which was made possible by the NJLLA conference grant. I'm thankful for the opportunity to attend and to the organization for choosing me for the grant.