

## From the Editor: On Continuing Education

Considerations of professional education continue to be of concern to law librarians. The last issue of the *Journal* included the final report of the Special Committee on the Future of AALL, which identified education as the highest priority of Association members;<sup>1</sup> this issue includes comments on and reactions to the report at a recent regional chapter meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Law librarians are not alone in their concern with educational issues. Next year is the centennial of the opening of the first library school—Melvil Dewey's School of Library Economy at Columbia. To mark the anniversary, *Library Trends* is publishing a two-part symposium on library education. The first part, in the winter 1986 issue, contains papers on the history of education for librarianship covering such topics as Dewey and his legacy in education, women in library education, the development of teaching materials in library science, and patterns in research in library and information science.<sup>3</sup> There is, as well, a timely paper by Elizabeth Stone, chronicling the development of continuing education programs for librarians.<sup>4</sup>

Stone's history extends back to the late 1800s, but concentrates on events since the 1960s. She notes that as recently as fifteen years ago, continuing education held a low priority for leaders in the library profession. Her report, however, lists a variety of actions by library schools and educators, the state and federal governments, and professional associations to develop and maintain continuing education programs for librarians.

Stone discusses the continuing education initiatives taken by the American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, the American Society for Information Science, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association. She does not examine AALL's continuing education activities, a brief history of which is presented in Lolly Gasaway and Steve Margeton's 1977 *LLJ* article, "Continuing Education for Law Librarianship."<sup>5</sup> That article provides background on early AALL programs in contin-

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1. *Special Committee on the Future of AALL 1983-85, Final Report, November 1985*, 78 *LAW LIBR. J.* 351, 352 (1986).

2. *Commentary: The Report of the Special Committee on the Future of AALL*, 78 *LAW LIBR. J.* 519 (1986) [hereinafter cited as *Commentary*].

3. *History of Library and Information Science Education*, 34 *LIBR. TRENDS* 357 (1986).

4. Stone, *The Growth of Continuing Education*, 34 *LIBR. TRENDS* 489 (1986).

5. Gasaway & Margeton, *Continuing Education for Law Librarianship*, 70 *LAW LIBR. J.* 39, 43-48 (1977). The article's history section was based on a history of the Education Committee compiled by Pat Piper. *Id.* at 43 n.3.

uing education, the beginnings of the certification program (1966-84), and the rotating institutes in basic education for law librarianship (1964-75). The focus of the article, however, is not on history, but on the results of a 1975 Education Committee survey of the AALL membership designed to ascertain needs and preferences in continuing education. The published results showed member preferences regarding both subject content and program format. The results also confirmed comments made to the Committee and the Executive Board about the basic institutes program: that the profession's composition had changed, and members' needs were less for basic information on law librarianship than for programs to help members develop specialized and advanced professional knowledge.<sup>6</sup> The article discussed the Education Committee's plans to address these needs through institutes and workshops on specialized topics offered in conjunction with AALL's annual meeting, and announced that "[n]ew programs will offer a variety of formats, greater participation, varying levels of emphasis, topics of special interest, interdisciplinary faculty and possibly published or recorded proceedings."<sup>7</sup> The survey also showed that members wanted to maintain the basic institutes, but at the chapter level.<sup>8</sup>

Interest in continuing education programs at the advanced and specialized levels was expressed again at a panel discussion sponsored by the Education Committee at the 1979 AALL annual meeting.<sup>9</sup> As part of the panel, Sally Wiant presented Education Committee proposals for continuing education programs and for the appropriate role for the Committee in their planning and organization. The thrust of the proposals was to establish the Education Committee "as the clearinghouse for approval, advice and assistance of all AALL CLE [continuing library education] activities."<sup>10</sup> It was recommended that the Committee coordinate the content of programs presented at the annual meeting in addition to approving workshops and institutes associated with the annual meeting. Additionally, the Committee's structure would be revamped to ensure representation of the chapters and special interest sections and the annual meeting program chair. Commenting on the recommen-

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6. *Id.* at 53. This contrasts with the theme of a 1962 *Law Library Journal* symposium, organized by Morris Cohen, chair of the 1961-62 Education Committee. See *Educating Law Librarians: A Symposium*, 55 *LAW LIBR. J.* 190 (1962). The symposium articles dealt largely with problems of basic education in law librarianship. In an epilogue, Cohen made six proposals, only one of which (for an institute on foreign law) was for advanced training. See Cohen, *Epilogue to Educating Law Librarians: Ubi Fuimus—Quo vadimus*, 55 *LAW LIBR. J.* 238, 238-40 (1962). The success of the basic institutes no doubt did much to create the need for more advanced programming, which became evident later.

7. Gasaway & Margeton, *supra* note 5, at 52.

8. *Id.*

9. *Toward the More Effective Continuing Education of Law Librarians*, 72 *LAW LIBR. J.* 586, 591, 593 (1979).

10. *Id.* at 594 (remarks of Sarah K. Wiant).

dations, Wiant noted the need for an overall AALL education policy and for more programming at the chapter and local levels.<sup>11</sup>

Many themes from that presentation and from the Gasaway and Margeton article are sounded again in the recent report of the Special Committee on the Future of AALL and the commentary reported in this issue of the *Journal*. These include the needs for advanced training, for programming at the local level to reach law librarians unable to attend annual meetings, for greater coordination of the Association's educational efforts, and for revitalization and restructuring of the Education Committee. The Special Committee report and the commentaries all document continuing education's great importance to the membership and the feeling that educational opportunities need to be provided at several levels of knowledge.

The membership's concern with advanced and specialized programming came through clearly in the 1975 survey and is becoming more evident as the profession gains increasingly in experience and knowledge, and as more members enter with solid training in librarianship, law and other fields. Claire Engel's point regarding an experienced membership's need for longer in-depth workshops and programs offered *during* the annual meetings<sup>12</sup> should be considered seriously. While integrating workshops with annual meeting programs would require greater involvement by the Education Committee (or an education director) in programming for the annual meeting, the change also would help achieve a coordinated approach to AALL's educational planning.

The importance of continued professional education is captured in a list of objectives and policies provided by Elizabeth Stone in the conclusion to her review of the history of continuing education for librarians.<sup>13</sup> She notes there the significance of change as a force creating the need for continuing education in the professions, the joint responsibilities of the individual and the profession for fostering professional development, and the means through which effective educational programs can be developed. Her most important point is saved for last. It is a simple statement of why we need continuing education programs and why thoughtful professionals are concerned with continued professional education as their careers develop. Continuing education in librarianship, according to Stone, "should be perceived as not an end in itself, but as a means to an end—i.e., quality service to the public."<sup>14</sup> Within our association, it is clear that whatever the final overall impact of the Special Committee report, attention must be paid to the points it raises regarding continuing education in law librarianship. In an era of change,

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11. *Id.* at 595.

12. *Commentary, supra* note 2, at 527 (remarks of Claire Engel).

13. Stone, *supra* note 3, at 508-09.

14. *Id.* at 509.

the Association must play a leading role in ensuring that its members have the skills and knowledge necessary to continue providing quality service to the users of legal information.

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