AALL ARCHIVES EXHIBIT, 1990

HELEN CATHERINE NEWMAN:
A LIFETIME OF PROFESSIONAL DEDICATION AND EXCELLENCE

In her address at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Judy Genesen, AALL Executive Director, praised members for taking an active role in Association matters: "Our percentage of members willing to undertake the work of leadership and project participation is extraordinary." Extraordinary compared to other library associations, but commonplace when compared to past AALL experience. AALL members have always taken a keen interest in the workings of their Association and maintained a dedicated sense of voluntarism when Association matters called. These hallmarks of the Association's members are best exemplified in the life and career of Helen Newman (1904-65). This exhibit highlights her career as a law librarian and AALL member. Accompanying the documents are observations about Newman made by her close friend Bernita J. Davies, former Law Librarian at the University of Illinois, in 1946 and 1966 from Law Library Journal articles.

This photograph of Newman in the late 1940s or early 1950s by Chase Studios is from the Kayser Collection at the Special Collections Department of the George Washington University Library. (Item 1)

A summary of Newman's career shows that she was a law librarian for more than four decades, first at George Washington University and later, the United States Supreme Court. Her association with AALL lasted almost as long. Her career provides a model of professional dedication and excellence. (Item 2)

Despite her full duties as law librarian, Newman was an indefatigable worker for AALL. She usually reserved her weekends for Association business. In the 1935-36 year as Executive Secretary-Treasurer, she wrote some 850 letters regarding AALL. By 1940-41, the amount had doubled. Her dedication was recognized by others in AALL as seen in this October 8, 1937 letter from Margaret Hall, Law Librarian at Columbia University. (Item 3) A. Mercer Daniel, Law Librarian at Howard University, photographed Margaret Hall in a restful moment at the 1938 Annual Meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota. (Item 4)

As Executive Secretary-Treasurer of AALL, Newman always attended the Annual Meetings, going from session to session, making new friends, greeting old ones, and supporting the work of the President. Those who saw her at Annual Meetings noted how she was the first to rise and the last to retire and how she tried to make all feel welcome both at the meetings and in AALL in general. She is shown here in a reception line greeting members at the 1950 (?) Annual Meeting. (Item 5)

YEARS AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Helen Newman demonstrated her abilities and desire to surpass her colleagues early in life, as seen in this extensive list of student activities from the 1925 George Washington University yearbook, The Cherry Tree. Her experience in debating societies would help her greatly as AALL Executive Secretary-Treasurer, especially in the years of the implementation of the Roalfe Plan. (Item 6)

While still a law student, Newman became assistant law librarian at George Washington University. She became law librarian there in 1927, holding that position for fifteen years. Although the law library budget was limited during the Depression and World War II, she maintained a first-rate collection. S. Chesterfield Oppenheim, a law professor during Newman's tenure, recalled in 1966 how she made the University's law review collection the most complete in Washington D.C. He added that she filled gaps in the collection of treatises and built "an excellent working collection in the Law Library for faculty and students." Others recognized her abilities as a law librarian and saw her as a model cataloger as indicated in this October 6, 1939 letter from Rebekah Dean. Newman's scribbled notes answered Dean's query about textbooks on cataloging and classification. (Item 7)
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

Rosamund Parma (AALL President 1930-32) persuaded Newman to join AALL in 1931, as Newman recalled in this July 13, 1936 letter to William Roalfe. (Item 8) She immediately became active in the Association and published several scholarly articles in the Law Library Journal on problems of small law school libraries, William Cranch, District of Columbia memorials and notes, and the Roalfe Plan.

Helen Newman came to particular attention in the debate surrounding the Roalfe Plan for the expansion of the Association. At the 1931 Annual Meeting, she participated in a Round Table to discuss the plan’s merits. A committee took the plan under consideration and in 1932 recommended the establishment of a permanent headquarters, the appointment of a full-time paid executive secretary, the incorporation of the Association, the expansion of the Law Library Journal, and the separation of the Index to Legal Periodicals from the Law Library Journal.

At the 1933 Annual Meeting, she once again contributed to a discussion of the Roalfe Plan. Her training in debate came to the fore in overriding the objections to the plan offered by such venerable AALL members as A. J. Small, founder and past president. President Vance appointed Newman chair of the Committee on the Roalfe Plan. One of her tasks was to present the plan to the Association of American Law Schools. She did this in December, 1933 as Ralph Fuchs, Professor of Law at Washington University, related in this August 9, 1934 letter. (Item 9)

She also chaired the Round Table Discussion of the Roalfe Plan at the 1934 Annual Meeting, where the membership formally adopted the plan by unanimous vote. Newman and Roalfe consulted frequently about aspects of the plan. In this July 30, 1935 letter Roalfe outlined the need for incorporation and the steps to be taken to ensure outside financial backing for the Association. (Item 10)

AALL EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER

One result of Newman’s advocacy of the Roalfe Plan was her election as AALL’s first Executive Secretary-Treasurer on a part-time basis in 1934. In March 1936 she and Roalfe correspondent about the possibility of her becoming the full-time paid executive secretary (at a suggested salary of $ 2,800!) and the placement of AALL’s headquarters at George Washington University. Even though the proposed salary is modest by today’s standards, AALL was unable to generate the necessary money.

One of Newman’s first tasks as Executive Secretary-Treasurer was to arrange for the incorporation of the Association. This was one of the Roalfe Plan’s key recommendations since it would enable the Association to receive foundation grants. Richard DeWolfe, Assistant Register, Copyright Division, Library of Congress, gladly accepted Newman’s request to serve as an incorporator in this September 4, 1935 letter. Newman also served as one of the incorporators, and on September 23, 1935 the Association was incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia. (Item 11)

Newman’s correspondence as Executive Secretary-Treasurer involved placement. Law school deans wrote her seeking qualified applicants and law librarians wrote her seeking prospective employers. As AALL Executive Secretary-Treasurer, she was in a unique position to influence the development of law librarianship in the U. S.

One case exemplifies both the process and Newman’s role. In 1942 Ewing C. Baskette, law librarian at the University of Kentucky, discovered that because of declining enrollments, the University would be eliminating his position for the duration of the war. Just as he had in 1939, he wrote Newman seeking a job and incorporated a résumé in this March 19, 1942 letter. (Item 12) He wrote her again on April 28, 1942, telling her that he had had an interview in Washington D.C. with the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and an offer of a position near Lexington, Kentucky.

A large part of Newman’s work as Executive Secretary-Treasurer involved hotel and travel arrangements for the annual and executive board meetings. In this January 17, 1936 letter the manager of the Commander Hotel, Frank B. Doherty, quoted her room rates for AALL members for the 31st Annual Meeting. (Item 13)
Travel by train was a popular feature of Annual Meetings. Making the arrangements, however, could be complicated. Over a period of four months, Newman and W. F. Crichfield, passenger agent for the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company, corresponded about travel on the Hiawatha from Chicago to St. Paul for the 33rd Annual Meeting. These letters from May 18 and 20, 1938 concern seat assignments and advance registrations. (Item 14) AALL was so appreciative of the railroad's efforts that it unanimously adopted a resolution praising Crichfield and his staff.

The Annual Meetings are important social functions as well as professional gatherings. This July 17, 1941 letter from Newman to Sidney Hill, Law librarian of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, indicates that her duties at the Annual Meetings were much more than official. (Item 15)

One issue that preoccupied Newman as Executive Secretary-Treasurer was how to boost membership. In February 1939 she and Margaret Hall, chair of the Membership Committee, drafted a letter to be sent to over 200 prospective members. (Item 16) Membership grew from 202 in 1931 to 493 in 1941.

After seeing the Association through the difficult years of World War II, Newman resigned as Executive Secretary-Treasurer on November 1, 1945. AALL members reacted to her resignation with shock, disbelief, and sadness, for she had become in their minds an institution within AALL. "I don't know exactly how the Association will get along without you," said Laurie Riggs. "Your services have been outstanding," he added, "and I don't know who will take your place." William Johnston's letter of October 12, 1945 to Newman not only praised her past performance as Executive Secretary-Treasurer but also proved to be prophetic in the direction of her career as a law librarian. (Item 17)

MANAGING EDITOR OF THE LAW LIBRARY JOURNAL

Considering Newman's workload as Executive Secretary-Treasurer, it is remarkable that she also found time to serve as managing editor of the Law Library Journal (1934-1942).

She made many changes in LLJ's format, and under her direction LLJ added new departments, including Exchanges. A listing of exchanges benefited the profession in general and, as this March 2, 1940 letter from Mildred Doe indicates, Newman's own collection at George Washington University in particular. (Item 18)

In 1935, AALL accepted a $5,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation (one of the fruits of incorporation) for the expansion of LLJ. Frederick C. Hicks, chairman of the Committee on the Law Library Journal, set an ambitious goal of publishing eight to ten issues a year. (Item 19) Although this was never realized, Newman made LLJ a bimonthly publication and increased the size of each issue. When she resigned as editor in 1942, she advised against further expansion of LLJ. The financial exigencies of World War II forced a reduction in the size of each issue and turned LLJ back into a quarterly.

As editor, Newman accepted submissions, some of which could be unusual, as illustrated by this August 18, 1938 item from Christian Duc, Librarian at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. (Item 20) Newman edited manuscripts, which was a time-consuming task, as seen in this draft by Ralph V. Rogers where he thanked her for the attention she gave his article. The handwritten instructions to the printer are Newman's. (Item 21) She provided offprints as seen in this touching December 10, 1937 letter where Mrs. Small asked for copies of the memorial for her husband. (Item 22)

As editor, Newman was responsible for publishing the Annual Meeting proceedings, and she always postponed her summer vacations to ready them for publication. In this February 21, 1939 letter she tried unsuccessfully to temper Mile O. Price's pointed remarks regarding differential pricing of law books. (Item 23)

LAW LIBRARIANS SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON D.C.

Newman was a charter member of the Law Librarians Society of Washington D.C. formed in 1939. In November 1941 she suggested that the Society become a chapter within AALL. Upon approval of the petition in June 1942, LLSDC became the second AALL chapter. In 1942, Newman became vice-president of the Society, and president in 1943. Here she is with other charter members of the Society. (Item 24)
LAW LIBRARIAN OF THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

In 1942, Chief Justice of the United States Harlan F. Stone appointed Newman Associate Librarian of the Supreme Court. On March 31, 1947 she became Librarian. The position carried with it great responsibility as indicated in this July 25, 1950 newsclipping from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. "In this job you just can't afford to talk," she said. "Suppose there was a 'leak,' and someone found out what the court was going to decide. Can you imagine it?" (Item 25)

AALL PRESIDENT

AALL elected Newman president for 1949-50. This was a wise choice. As Helen Hargraves told her on September 7, 1949: "Certainly no one knows nearly as much about the organization as you do." (Item 26)

The highlight of her term as president was the 43rd Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington. She and the 1950 Convention Committee Chair, Marian Gallagher, Law Librarian at the University of Washington, put together an entertaining and educational program. (Item 27) In this 1950 photograph from the University of Washington Gallagher Law Library, Gallagher is receiving documents from the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. (Item 28) As this October 23, 1950 letter to Newman from Gallagher shows, they must have enjoyed organizing and directing the annual meeting. (Item 29)

POSTSCRIPT

Newman remained active in the Association after her presidency. She chaired or served as a member of the Nominating Committee, the Committee on Cooperation between AALL and AALS, and the Joint Committee for Protection of Cultural and Scientific Resources. Since she had been involved in so much of the history of AALL, she was a natural choice to chair the Committee on the Golden Jubilee Issue of the Law Library Journal. As chair of the Placement Committee in 1954-55 she maintained her interest in furthering the careers of young law librarians. Her position as Supreme Court Librarian put her in contact with the best law school graduates who came to serve as clerks at the Supreme Court, as demonstrated in this November 1954 interchange between her and Vincent Fiordalisi, Law Librarian at Rutgers. Fiordalisi is seen in this picture attending the 1947 Annual Meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico. (Item 30)

A month before Newman's death, she sent the AALL Treasurer her check for the Headquarters Fund. One of her last acts for the Association was to help fulfill the last of the Roafle Plan's recommendations to be realized—a permanent headquarters. (Item 31) Following Newman's death, the flag at the U. S. Supreme Court flew at half staff for three days. Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren wrote a fitting tribute to Helen Newman for LLJ. (Item 32)

AALL paid Helen Newman many tributes. In 1959 they gave her its Citation of Merit for Outstanding Service. After her death, AALL dedicated LLJ 59:2 (1966) to her memory. Friends collected funds for a scholarship to be awarded in her name. This new scholarship sparked a debate within AALL. Many of the contributors wanted the first award to be for attendance at the Annual Meetings or institutes. Others wanted the Helen Newman Scholarship to be "the first real educational scholarship," awarded for library school courses. The Executive Board approved the Helen Newman library degree scholarship, which was first awarded in 1967. In 1970 the Helen Newman Memorial Fund and other scholarship funds were combined into a general fund for AALL's scholarship program. (Item 33)

This exhibit was prepared by Louis Haas under the direction of William Maher at the University of Illinois Archives at Urbana-Champaign. The photographs and documents are from the AALL Archives administered by the University of Illinois Archives, the George Washington University Library Special Collections, and the University of Washington Gallagher Law Library. The Archives welcomes additional AALL records and information concerning the papers of law librarians. Send materials and inquiries to:

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