Although it was not until 1996 that the AALL adopted its first Education Policy statement—ninety years after the organization’s founding—the Association has shown a strong interest in education, and particularly continuing education for practicing librarians throughout its history. This exhibit of photographs, memoranda, correspondence, and publications drawn from the AALL Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign highlights developments in the history of AALL's educational programming and the documented importance of continuing education to its members. Of particular note are the papers from the past three decades, indicating a reevaluation of continuing education options with respect to meeting the needs of a growing membership and rapid changes in technology.

**General Background**

In the early days of the Association, educational programming consisted primarily of AALL publications and presentations and roundtables at the annual meetings. The annual sessions covered a wide array of topics for new and experienced librarians, as seen in the program from the 1908 meeting. (Items 1 and 2)

The first substantial mention of education as a formal topic among law librarians came in an address by John Boynton Kaiser on “Library school training for law library employees” at the 1912 AALL annual meeting in Ottawa, Canada. He took the viewpoint that library school classes could address the need for training law library employees, but suggested that such efforts would be handled best not by all library schools but by a select few schools best suited to this area.

The first phase of educational programming and planning for the Association occurred in the late 1920s and ’30s as committees were formed to look into educational requirements for law librarianship, particularly in reference to the growing perception of librarianship as a profession. In 1926, Professor Frederick C. Hicks of Yale Law School addressed the need for course work for law librarianship. Hick’s outline and suggestions were later revisited by Arthur S. Beardsley when he updated them for a 1936 ALA Bulletin article. (Item 3)

Following the 1929 annual meeting, the Association’s first Education Committee was created, delivering its first recorded report at the 1932 annual meeting in New Orleans. It reported the results of a questionnaire on law librarian education, investigating the general question of whether there should be minimum qualifications for law librarians, and if so, what they should be. The report concluded that education was important and that if the committee were continued, it should work on developing recommendations for law librarian educational background and potentially list institutions offering appropriate training or coursework. (Item 4)

In 1936, Arthur Beardsley chaired the AALL’s Committee on Education for Law Librarianship. The report his committee presented at the annual meeting stated specific proposals for dealing with the need for librarian education. (Item 5) The committee recommended several actions, first and foremost being an institute of some kind to take place during the next annual meeting. Secondly, the Committee on Education for Law Librarianship should be continued to study further the issue of courses in law librarianship at library schools; and thirdly, the Executive Committee should make provisions for funding for the institute planned for the 1937 annual meeting, but also establish funding for future educational programming.

During the discussion by the Executive Committee that followed the reading of the report, John T. Vance, Law Librarian of Congress, suggested that, “It seems to me that if we are going to establish
qualifications of law librarians we could very well do so and require such courses and examination in the necessary subjects, but to go ahead and say that we cannot take care of our own courses, and to go to a general librarian and ask that courses be established in library schools seems to me utterly ridiculous...” Practicing law librarians were in doubt as to whether having a law degree or a library degree really provided people with the skills necessary to perform their jobs, and many, based on a survey from 1935, were practicing at that time without graduate degrees in either one or both fields.

Beardsley suggested during the discussion of the Committee’s report that Columbia University’s Library school was willing to consider adding a law library economy class if the AALL endorsed or at least publicly recommended such a program. He went on to say that Miles O. Price, though not present, was expecting to be asked to submit “a syllabus of a course of library economy for law library service.” Price did teach such a course at Columbia for several years before the Association revisited the idea of annual institutes.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS: INSTITUTES AND WORKSHOPS**

Following the suggestions of Beardsley’s report, the first institute was held by the AALL in 1937; later ones followed through 1940. These were organized to take place during the regular AALL meetings, in spite of suggestions that such activities would be best entertained separately. These nascent institutes consisted primarily of the reading of papers and discussions afterwards, not substantively different from the content of the usual annual meeting activities themselves. After 1940, no further institutes were held until the 1950s.

In response to the popularity of workshops and roundtable programs of regional groups and chapters, the AALL revisited the subject of institutes on a national level in the early 1950s. As can be seen from the program announcement from 1953, the schedule of the AALL’s first biennial institute emphasized basic library operations such as acquisitions, circulation, bibliography, and selection. The institute was promoted by president Forrest Drummond and organized by Miles O. Price. *(Items 6, 7)* Even those who could not attend these early institutes saw the need for familiarity with the topics covered and many requested copies of the course syllabi. *(Item 8)* The biennial institutes were replaced after 1963 by annual programs beginning in 1964 with the first of the rotating institutes in basic law librarianship.

**Rotating Basic Institutes**

Beginning in 1964 and continuing through 1975, a rotating series of four institutes provided, to primarily newer librarians or those with only a legal or a library degree, “training in basic library techniques.” As stated in the flyer for the first in the series, “These institutes can be taken singly or as a complete program... The complete program of four institutes will comprise a core curriculum in law librarianship, designed for new librarians, semi-professionals, and other people working in law libraries who have not had previous formal training or intensive experience.” It stated further that, “A final examination will be given and certificates awarded to those who have successfully completed the course.” Aside from the first in the series, on legal bibliography, the other three covered acquisitions, cataloging, and administration. *(Items 9, 10, 11)*

The rotating institutes came to an end after three cycles. As indicated by a panel discussion at the 1973 annual meeting, some members needed more advanced options than were offered by the rotating institutes. A new series, the Special Institutes on Continuing Law Library Education (SICLLE) was created in 1972 to address this issue, but was cancelled due to lack of member response. *(Item 12)* Following the rotating institute on administration in 1975, the Education Committee decided to discontinue institute programs until a better solution to member needs was found.

Nevertheless, institutes did not completely disappear. In 1976 a bicentennial program was organized and beginning in 1977, new non-rotating institutes were offered, though the issue of providing institutes on basic topics on a rotating basis has been raised since then. A 1980 letter from J.S. Ellenberger to
Sarah Wiant, chair of the Education Committee, indicates that there were members who still considered the rotating institutes as instructive and an important component of AALL’s commitment to continuing librarian education, providing training not easily obtained elsewhere. (Item 13)

In addition to institutes, workshops following the annual meeting have also been mainstays of continuing education. While the future of the rotating institutes was being discussed in the early 1970s, the Education Committee was also considering other methods to respond to member needs. Responses to a member survey indicated interest in short intensive-study programs. One answer was one-day workshops held after annual meetings for more experienced or advanced librarians. The first of these one-day intensive programs on Budgeting, Fair Employment Practices, and Canadian Documents, were offered the day following the 1977 annual meeting.

Programming opportunities continued to expand in the 1980s, especially as initial development responsibilities passed to the chapters and SISs. One of the most notable alterations came in the form of a gradual increase in the number of institutes and workshops held before and after annual meetings. Also, beginning in 1985, winter institutes were offered to counter difficulties faced by some members in attending the usual summer institutes. (Items 14, 15)

CERTIFICATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education has long been associated with the idea of certification, both by AALL and other organizations. Although certificates of attendance were given to those who attended institutes in the 1960s and early ’70s, this was separate from the larger conception of professional certification. Completion of certain institutes could be counted towards partial completion of certification requirements.

While the need for continuing education in one format or another remained constant, the goals and necessity of certification were never clear. The relationship between continuing education programs and certification was ambiguous and needed clarification. (Item 16) A meeting was held in January 1979 to consider the Education Committee’s future role within the Association, particularly with regard to educational programming and certification. (Item 17) Eventually the certification program was dropped in 1984 due to the complications involved with tracking those seeking certification as well as the inability to gain a consensus as to what constituted certification.

With the creation of the Professional Development Committee in 1996 the issue of providing certification or continuing education credit was raised again. A survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Certification was commissioned and the final report, “Desirability of Credentialing for Members of the American Association of Law Libraries” completed in February 1998. The results can be compared with those of the survey presented by Beardsley in 1936 in which only 16% of respondents held a library degree and 14% a law degree, 5% possessing both. By contrast, 86% of respondents to the 1997 survey held library degrees and 32% a JD/LLB degree; only 11% had neither. Many respondents to the 1997 survey were in favor of credentialing. The continued interest in certification or credentialing was later addressed by a suggestion that the Executive Board apply to the International Association on Continuing Education to become an authorized sponsor of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) (Item 18).
**Professional Development in the Late 1980s and ‘90s**

The Association has taken major steps in the past fifteen years to review and bolster its educational goals. In 1988 the Association hired a Professional Development Officer, Martha Brown, to oversee development and implementation of continuing education programs. Almost from the moment she arrived, she received correspondence regarding the quality and variety of programming provided by AALL. *(Items 19, 20)*

Shortly after Brown’s arrival her title shifted to Director of Programs, indicating a shift in responsibilities and focus on educational activities. In 1990 the Long Range Educational Planning Committee reported the results of its Education Needs Survey. Videotaping annual meetings and workshops, developing videoconferencing and “self-study” programs were among the suggestions for expanding continuing education opportunities. Also in 1990 the Education Committee took on the responsibility of program planning for the Annual Meeting.

Following the Strategic Challenge for 1994-98, a Task Force was established to investigate ways to provide more educational opportunities to AALL members. Following a mandate of the Strategic Challenge, the Association adopted its first official education policy in July of 1996. *(Item 21)* This corresponded with the creation of a new Professional Development Committee (PDC), which replaced the Education Committee, in order to serve better the continuing education needs of a growing membership. The committee was charged with developing long range educational goals, overseeing educational programs and activities, and assessing member needs. A separate committee, the Annual Meetings Program Selection Committee (AMPC), was established to handle programming for annual meeting activities, which was not covered by the Professional Development Committee.

A member survey completed in 1996 shows the general educational interests and needs of the sampled AALL membership. Ironically, in spite of changes in goals, policy, and technology, the overall programming wishes indicated by the survey suggest that librarians in the last decade were interested in similar programming topics to those who responded to Beardsley’s 1936 survey. Both questionnaires indicate an interest in administrative instruction, though the more recent survey also shows an interest and perceived need for technology programs. *(Item 22)*

In 2001 the Professional Development Committee took another step forward with the completion and approval of a list of Competencies of Law Librarianship. These competency areas help the Committee develop programs and evaluate the educational activities presented as well as assist individuals in identifying their own continuing education goals. With these competencies and new program options and formats in place, the Professional Development Committee and the AALL continue to address the continuing educational needs of the Association in the 21st century. *(Items 23, 24)*

This exhibit was prepared by Morag Stewart under the direction of William Maher at the University of Illinois Archives at Urbana-Champaign. The documents and photographs are from the AALL Archives administered by the University of Illinois Archives. The Archives welcomes additional AALL records and information concerning the papers of law librarians. Send materials and inquiries to:

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