The Economic Status of Law Librarians Committee kicked off the year by brainstorming on a possible program for the 2009 Annual Meeting. Based on feedback from participants at the 2008 CONELL marketplace, we decided on a program focusing on developing negotiation techniques for better salaries and compensation in the workplace, “Getting to Yes: Developing Effective Salary and Compensation Negotiation Skills.” We were all delighted that the program was accepted, continuing the tradition of the committee sponsoring programs at the Annual Meeting.

This was just the beginning of a very busy and productive year due to the fact that revisions and enhancements were being sought for the upcoming biennial salary survey. One of the first points of business carried over from the previous year was the feasibility of developing a comparative worth study. The committee consulted with Pete Ronza, an HR specialist in Minnesota who has worked with the committee and presented programs at the last two Annual Meetings. At the end of the day, the committee decided to revisit this project due to dissatisfaction with the groups identified by the consultant and lingering questions as to the methodology to be employed.

The committee initiated a discussion forum in September 2008 seeking input from membership for suggestions and ideas to improve the Biennial Salary Survey. The following open-ended questions about the AALL salary survey were initially posted to the forum:

1. How are library directors/managers able to use the current salary survey to most effectively help in their efforts to get fair salaries for library staff, retain their library staff, and plan for future library positions?

2. Has anyone found that their HR departments, or management, would not accept the AALL Biennial Survey as a basis for salary comparisons, and if so, what were the reasons given?

3. What improvements and supplementation of data would be helpful?

The Economic Status of Law Librarian's Committee is reviewing the need for a comparable jobs/worth report.

1. How useful would this be to you in negotiating better compensation?

2. Also which jobs or job groups would you consider comparable to that of a law librarian?

By the close of the discussion forum on October 31, 2008, 195 AALL members had signed up, and approximately 21 AALL members provided responses. Several participants stated that benefits information should be included in the AALL survey as comparable data.
The credibility issue was also raised by a number of participants who stated that their HR departments or administrators did not find the AALL salary survey credible, or that preference had been given to other surveys as a basis for salary comparisons (e.g., Altman-Weil, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Citibank salary surveys).

A couple of participants raised concerns with the biennial nature of the survey and the lack of currency of the data by the time the report is released. Earlier release date of the report was recommended, e.g., early spring while law schools are finalizing their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year.

In late 2008, the Board in response to a request from private law libraries to contract out the publication of the survey to a private entity like Pricewaterhouse Coopers, commissioned the committee to investigate this possibility. The committee examined select salary surveys namely: Association of Legal Administrators Compensation and benefits Survey, Altman Weil Survey of Law Firm Economics and the SLA Salary Survey and Workplace Study. In conclusion the committee found the AALL Survey to be more particularly suited and relevant to law librarians. The committee also found that the survey would definitely benefit from a couple of enhancements and it needed more aggressive promotion to overcome the obstacles of lack of credibility and name recognition among private law library administrators. A final report detailing the findings of the committee was submitted to the Board in March 2009.

Lastly in June 2009 the committee reviewed the current job descriptions in the Biennial Survey to check for obsolescence, outdated references etc. The task of reviewing academic law library job descriptions was completed by the academic librarians on the committee as the academic SIS declined to do this for a variety of reasons. The state, county and court librarians reviewed but had no changes. The PLL SIS worked with private law librarians on the committee to come up with their revisions.

This has been a very fruitful and productive year, thanks to the hard work and efforts of members of the committee Chad Brown (who also served as our webmaster), Denise Gibson, Loretta Orndoff, Debby Norwood, Linda-Jean Schneider, our AALL staff liaisons Julia O’Donnell, Hillary Baker and board liaison Janice Henderson.

Femi Cadmus
Committee Chair, 2008-2009