The Government Relations Committee Officers in 2012-2013 were Melanie Knapp, Chair, and Susan Nevelow Mart, Vice-Chair. The Committee’s Board Liaison was Jean Wenger.

The Committee continued its long-term project of drafting one page, substantive issue briefs on a wide variety of topics. These are typically drafted at the request of the Government Relations Office (GRO), addressing pressing policy issues as they arise. They are available on AALLNET, and they can be used by AALL members or others to understand AALL policy positions and advocate for those positions. One-pagers can also be provided to policy makers, who then have a clear and convenient guide to AALL’s position.

This year, AALL continued working toward the states’ adoption of the Uniform Law Commission Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA). When enacted by a state, UELMA mandates permanent public access to official state legal documents published online. Widespread adoption of UELMA will require advocacy at the state level, which the GRO and the GRC have been supporting through relevant programming, such as the State-Based Advocacy Program at AALL in Seattle, and the pre-AALL 2013 Advocacy Training. To date, UELMA has been enacted in eight states.

This year, the GRC took on the project of reviewing and documenting our chapter liaison program. In this program, GRC members are assigned a few chapters to reach out to receive and share relevant news and policy information. The goal of the program is to keep chapters engaged in policy work and develop strong peer-to-peer relationships between Chapter Government Relations Chairs and members of the AALL GRC. This year, the GRO put in place new means of communicating directly with Chapters. Given these new communication tools, it was a good time to review how the GRC liaisons could be most helpful and not duplicate efforts of the GRO. The Liaison Subcommittee consisted of GRC members Melanie Knapp, David McFadden, Emilie Benoit, Deborah Darin, and Leslie Street. Emily Feltren, Elizabeth Holland, and Jean Wenger served as Ex Officio members of the subcommittee. A final document entitled, “Liaison Program Document,” was created as a guide for incoming and continuing members of the GRC.

At the annual meeting, the GRC offered or assisted with policy programs, including the pre-Conference Advocacy workshop. At the Annual Public Policy Update program, the GRC awarded the Oakley Award to Timothy L. Coggins for his longstanding advocacy efforts, including establishing a major role for AALL and its members as information experts on government use of technology for authentic and accessible public information. Aaron Swartz posthumously received the Public Access to Government Information Award for his efforts to open access to publicly-funded information locked behind pay walls.

Submitted by Susan Nevelow Mart, Chair, 2013-2014
August 22, 2013