Frequently Asked Questions About AALL's First Hundred Years

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AALL Centennial Feature*

Frequently Asked Questions about AALL’s First Hundred Years**

Frank G. Houdek***

To kick off the yearlong celebration of the centennial of the American Association of Law Libraries in 2006, Professor Houdek answers some basic questions about the history of AALL.

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* Editor’s Note: The American Association of Law Libraries was founded on July 2, 1906, by a handful of law librarians who met during the Annual Conference of the American Library Association at Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island. To commemorate the AALL Centennial that will be celebrated with a yearlong series of events and activities in 2005–06, culminating at the 2006 Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Law Library Journal is including an “AALL Centennial Feature” article in each issue published through 2006. While the focus common to each article is the history of law libraries, law librarian- ship, and AALL, the specific topics vary according to the interests of authors and readers. Individuals interested in contributing a “Centennial Feature” article should contact Frank G. Houdek, Editor, Law Library Journal, Southern Illinois University School of Law, Lesar Law Bldg., Mail Code 6803, Carbondale, IL 62901-6803, (618) 453-8788, houdek@siu.edu.

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AALL was formed on July 2, 1906, at Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, during the annual conference of the American Library Association. This is considered AALL’s first Annual Meeting. AALL has met annually in each of the ninety-nine years since 1906, with one exception—a two-year hiatus during World War II (1943 and 1944). Thus, the St. Louis gathering in 2006 where the AALL centennial will be celebrated will be the 99th Annual Meeting rather than the 101st.

While no formal proceedings were ever published, the first Annual Meeting of the Association took place “during the conference of the American Library Association, June 29th to July 6th, 1906,” at the Hotel Mathewson in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island. A handful of law librarians from around the country had come together in response to an invitation circulated earlier in the spring by A.J. Small, law librarian of the Iowa State Library. The informal gathering culminated in the formation of AALL, “an association designed to bring together for acquaintance, consultation, and exchange of opinions, those interested in law libraries throughout the United States and Canada,” on July 2, 1906. On this day a constitution and
bylaws, drafted by a committee appointed during a preliminary meeting on June 29, were unanimously adopted; officers and executive committee for 1906–07 elected; and several special committees appointed.8 “A third meeting was held on July 5th, and a round-table talk took place upon the organization and work of the various libraries represented.”9

¶3 That its founders considered the events of 1906 to be AALL’s first annual meeting is clear from the publication in Law Library Journal of the proceedings of the 1907 meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, since it was there designated as the “Second Annual Meeting.”10

Who Was A. J. Small and Why Is He Important in AALL History?

¶4 Arthur James Small (1869–1937), law and legislative reference librarian, Iowa State Library, was AALL’s first president, serving two consecutive terms, 1906–1908. This was appropriate since it was Small who, in spring 1906, issued a call to other state librarians and law librarians, suggesting that they get together at the upcoming meeting of the American Library Association “to consider the advisability of a separate organization of law librarians.”11 Twenty-four libraries12 responded positively to his letter and, a few months later, on July 2, 1906, AALL was formed during the annual ALA conference held at Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island.13 Although Small “never attended college and never graduated from any high school,” he had “remarkable success” as a law librarian, serving in that capacity for more than forty years at the Iowa State Library.14 He remained an active AALL member until his death, “participating in every annual meeting for thirty-one years with the exception of two years” and characterized “in later years . . . as the distinguished elder statesman of the American Association of Law Libraries. . . .”15

8. Id. The officers elected were A.J. Small, President; Andrew H. Mettee, Vice President; and Franklin O. Poole, Secretary-Treasurer. The Executive Committee consisted of the officers and Frank B. Gilbert, G.E. Wire, and Frederick W. Schenk. Id. at [3].
9. Id.
11. Quoted in Glasier, supra note 4, at 83.
12. As listed in Letter of Franklin O. Poole, supra note 4, at [1], the libraries were the Iowa State Law Library, Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Worcester County (Mass.) Law Library, New York State Law Library, Indiana Law Library, Law Library of the University of Chicago, Library Company of the Baltimore Bar, Minnesota State Library, Wisconsin State Library, Cleveland Bar Association, Mutual Life Law Library (New York City), Chicago Law Institute, Missouri State Library, McGill University Library (Montreal), Maine State Library, University of Maine, Law Association of Philadelphia, Osgoode Hall Library (Toronto), Harvard Law Library, University of Pennsylvania Biddle Law Library, Rhode Island State Law Library, Northwestern University Law School Library, St. Paul Building Library (New York City), and Yale University Law Library.
13. See supra ¶ 2.
When and How Was Law Library Journal Created?

§5 One of the first committees created by President A.J. Small after the formation of AALL in 1906 was a Committee on Indexing Legal Periodicals, comprised of Frederick W. Schenk (who eventually became the first managing editor of Law Library Journal), Frank B. Gilbert, and Gilson G. Glasier. In 1907, at the 2nd Annual Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, the committee recommended, among other things, that

the Association undertake the publication of a quarterly journal, to be published on the first of January, April, July and October, to contain one article of interest to law librarians, reviews and notices of new legal publications, wants and exchange lists, and quarterly index to current legal periodical literature . . . ; the funds for publishing this quarterly to be secured from advertisements and subscriptions, the subscription price to members $3 per year, and to non-members $4 . . . .16

The first issue of the Index to Legal Periodicals and Law Library Journal (published under one cover) was exhibited to the membership during the 3rd Annual Meeting, held on the shores of Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota, June 1908. Although dated January 1908, the first issue was not actually published until December 1908. The Index and Journal continued as a combined publication until January 1936 when the Law Library Journal and the Index to Legal Periodicals were issued separately (as volume 29 for each), following a recommendation of the Roalfe Plan.17

What Was the Roalfe Plan?

§6 Also known as the AALL Expansion Plan, the Roalfe Plan18 began with a long letter written on September 11, 1930, by William R. Roalfe,19 then the librarian of the University of Southern California Law Library, to AALL President Rosamond Parma. The letter, which was later published in the Law Library Journal,20 called for a total reorganization and expansion of the operations and services of the Association. Specific suggestions included establishing full-time staff at a permanent headquarters, enlarging the Law Library Journal, seeking financial assistance from a foundation, and publishing a bulletin with lists of current legal literature.21

17. See infra ¶ 6.
18. “[T]he phrase ‘Roalfe Plan’ was coined by John T. Vance, law librarian of Congress, as he rose [during a roundtable session held at the 1931 Annual Meeting] to endorse with enthusiasm Mr. Roalfe’s suggestions and to move that it be recommended to the Association that a committee be appointed to consider the proposals of the plan.” Helen Newman, History of the American Association of Law Libraries: The Roalfe Plan and the Middle Years, 1930–1942, 49 LAW LIBR. J. 105, 105 (1956) (citing Round Table Session, June 23, 1931, 24 LAW LIBR. J. 151, 160 (1931) (remarks of John Vance)).
19. See infra ¶ 8.
Although the proposals may seem tame by today’s standards, the proposals were revolutionary for the time. Their consideration became the dominant activity of AALL members for the next several years, beginning with a passionate roundtable discussion on the merits and feasibility of the plan at the 1931 Annual Meeting in New Haven, Connecticut. At the conclusion of that discussion, a motion was approved by the membership to appoint a five-member committee (subsequently known variously as the Committee on an Expansion Program or the Committee on the Roalfe Expansion Plan) to examine the proposal in detail and present recommendations to the Association. The committee presented its findings and recommendations, both general and specific, at the 1932 Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Ultimately, on June 29, 1934, the membership unanimously adopted a resolution directing the officers to go forward with the Roalfe Plan and to establish a permanent secretariat in Washington, D.C., taking the first official step toward implementing its proposals. Later that year, several AALL leaders presented the plan to Round Table on Library Problems of the Association of American Law Schools, and on December 29, 1934, upon the recommendation of the Round Table, AALS unanimously adopted a resolution in which it endorsed AALL’s expansion program.

¶7 So what should a twenty-first century law librarian make of the Roalfe Plan? Consider what one commentator has written:

Much of today’s AALL organizational structure is a direct result of this plan. The plan would make [Roalfe] the dominant figure in Association history for the next thirty years. While much of what was proposed in the letter has come to pass, it was a long time in coming. Even today, the letter raises issues central to current discussions on the role of the Association.

Who Was William R. Roalfe and Why Is He Important in AALL History?

¶8 Although best known for authoring and promoting the AALL Expansion Plan—also known as the Roalfe Plan—in 1930, the impact of William R. Roalfe (1896–1979) on law librarianship went much further. After serving as law librarian at his alma mater, the University of Southern California, from 1927 to 1930, he went on to build outstanding collections and staffs as the director of two of the nation’s...
premier law schools, Duke University (1931–46) and Northwestern University (1946–64). While doing so, he also served as AALL president (1935–36); helped found the first regional association of law librarians, the North Carolina Law Librarians, in 1937—three years later it became AALL’s first chapter;28 authored *The Libraries of the Legal Profession*,29 a landmark study of law libraries written under the auspices of the American Bar Association, the fifth and sixth editions of *How to Find the Law*,30 and the first biography of John Henry Wigmore;31 and was one of the founders and the first president (1959–61) of the International Association of Law Libraries.

**Why Didn’t AALL Meet in 1943 and 1944?**

¶9 The obvious answer is World War II. More specifically, in spring 1943, President Bernita J. Long reported to the members:

> The Executive Committee of the Association met in Chicago on March 20 and 21[, 1943]. The Committee was faced with the problem of how best to continue the business of the Association during the war emergency. As you know, the Director of Defense Transportation has recommended that all meetings of groups whose activities are not closely related to the war effort be deferred. Because of this recommendation and the sense of uncertainty in regard to future developments, it was the opinion of the Committee that it would be inadvisable to plan for an annual meeting of the Association in 1943.32

Two years later, in 1945, when the Association finally resumed its Annual Meetings, President William S. Johnston reported:

> It delights your President to be able to make this report to you in person, in annual session assembled, after an intermission of three years due to war conditions. 

> ... 

> We have obtained permission from the Office of Defense Transportation to hold this meeting in Rochester, New York, limited to 50 members.33

According to the list published in *Law Library Journal*, forty-four individuals attended the 1945 Annual Meeting in Rochester, New York.34

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When and How Were AALL’s Chapters First Developed?

¶10 By the late 1930s, local and regional informal groupings of law librarians had begun to appear. Whether such groups should be allowed or encouraged to affiliate with AALL was debated at the national level, with some concerned that to do so would detract from the centralized focus of the national organization. Eventually, however, the view supporting affiliation prevailed, and in 1939 the constitution was amended to allow for the creation and governance of chapters.35 The Carolinas Chapter (later re-formed as the Southeastern Association of Law Libraries) was approved by the membership as the first AALL chapter in 1940.36 Approval followed for the Law Librarians’ Society of Washington, D.C. (1942),37 the Chicago Association of Law Libraries (1947),38 the Law Librarians of New England (1948),39 the Law Library Association of Greater New York (1949),40 and the Southern California Association of Law Libraries (1953).41 The Association currently has a total of thirty-one chapters.42

When and How Were Special Interest Sections First Developed?

¶11 On June 23, 1976, seventy years after the formation of AALL, bylaws were adopted at the Annual Meeting in Boston that provided for the creation of special interest sections (SISs).43 This was the culmination of discussions begun several years earlier concerning the significant growth in the number of AALL members and the consequent inability of all members to serve on the committees of their choice or, alternatively, to result in committees of such size that operations were unwieldy at best. The latter was a significant problem because, at the time, committees were the primary operational entities of the Association. In response, a Task Force on Reorganization of the AALL, with J. Myron Jacobstein as chair, was appointed by President Erwin Surrency in 1973–74. The task force’s final report, issued in spring 1975, recommended the creation of three divisions (Academic Libraries; County, Bar and Government Libraries; and Private Law Libraries) and

allowed the formation of special interest sections.\textsuperscript{44} SISs were designed to allow members to “pursue their particular interests” and to “perform the function of many of the present committees. They have the advantage that any member can join and participate\textit{ as a matter of right} independent of presidential appointment.”\textsuperscript{45} They were seen as vehicles for fostering exchanges of ideas and information through educational programs, newsletters and other publications, and special projects. The task force recommendations were debated at the 1975 Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, with the membership ultimately rejecting divisional organization but overwhelmingly approving the concept of SISs.\textsuperscript{46}

\section*{¶12} In December 1976, the Executive Board approved the first seven special interest sections: Contemporary Social Problems (now Social Responsibilities); Law Library Service to Institutional Residents (now a part of Social Responsibilities); Government Documents; Private Law Libraries; Automation and Scientific Development (now Computing Services); OCLC Law Libraries (now Online Bibliographic Services); and State, Court and County Law Libraries.\textsuperscript{47} The Association currently has a total of thirteen special interest sections.\textsuperscript{48}

\textbf{What Was AALL’s “Golden Jubilee?”}

\section*{¶13} On June 25–28, 1956, in Philadelphia, AALL celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at an Annual Meeting which President Carroll G. Moreland termed the “Golden Jubilee Meeting.” During the Golden Jubilee Banquet,\textsuperscript{49} held in the Ball Room of the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, a silver tray was presented to guest of honor Gilson Glasier, the Association’s only active charter member, in recognition of the services performed by that founding group which he was there to represent.\textsuperscript{50} The anniversary was also marked by a special Golden Jubilee issue of the\textit{ Law Library

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Id. at 393.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Am. Ass’n of Law Libraries, Minutes of the AALL Executive Board, December 28–29, 1976, at 492 (on file at AALL Headquarters, Chicago).
\item \textsuperscript{48} Am. Ass’n of Law Libraries, AALL Special Interest Sections, http://www.aallnet.org/sis (last visited Nov. 7, 2005).
\item \textsuperscript{49} For those with culinary curiosity, the meal began with Pineapple Surprise, celery, olives, and Philadelphia Snapper soup with sherry; the entree of boneless Cornish hen stuffed with wild rice was accompanied by broccoli mornay and sweet potatoes with marshmallow; dessert was vanilla ice cream bombe with cherries jubilee and petit fours, served with demi tasse. Golden Jubilee Banquet Program (June 27, 1956) (AALL Archives, Annual Meeting Program and Publication File, Record Series 85/1/150, Box 1, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library).
\end{itemize}
Journal, under the editorship of Dillard S. Gardner, which contained many articles describing the history and development of AALL since its founding in 1906.51

Why Is AALL’s Distinguished Service Award Named in Honor of Marian G. Gallagher?

¶14 The first-ever AALL Distinguished Service Award52 was presented at the Closing Banquet of the 1984 Annual Meeting in San Diego to Marian Gould Gallagher, past president of AALL (1954–55) and Professor of Law and Law Librarian Emeritus, University of Washington (1944–81). This was fitting. Gallagher was an accomplished law library leader and innovator—she initiated both the Current Index to Legal Periodicals and the AALL Newsletter.53 She was a legendary law library educator—the law librarianship program at the University of Washington which she directed for thirty-seven years had a remarkable impact on the profession, producing numerous law library and AALL leaders. She frequently represented law librarians to those outside the profession—she was an active member of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar and served on the President’s National Advisory Committee on Libraries in 1967–68, as well as other presidential committees and commissions under three presidents.54 Lastly, she was witty, charming, and charismatic—so full of fun and humor that Penny Hazelton, her successor at the University of Washington, wrote of her:

[Listing her professional accomplishments provides] a very incomplete picture of the real Marian Gallagher. You miss what I think she regarded as the most important part: her natural inclination to find the humor in most everything. Marian was fun at work or play. She enjoyed life and made the best out of it. Marian was a rabid Husky football fan, loved to play golf, drink, and play poker.55

53. The first issue of the President’s Newsletter of the American Association of Law Libraries was written by then president Gallagher and distributed to members in November 1954. She began by writing: “Our Associate Member Dorothea Blender is responsible for this experimental newsletter, having suggested, in September, that our members should have more frequent reports on Committee and Board activities than they can gather from the quarterly Journal and the annual meeting.” PRESIDENT’S NEWSL. (AALL), Nov. 1954, at 1. The publication continued under that title through the October 1969 issue, although by then it was no longer completely written by the president. It was replaced in 1970 by the AALL Newsletter, which itself was replaced by AALL Spectrum in 1996.
¶15 To further honor the contributions and character of Marian Gallagher, on March 10, 1990, the AALL Executive Board redesignated the Association’s highest award with the name of its first recipient; henceforth it would be known as the Marian G. Gallagher Award for Distinguished Service.56

Why Is AALL’s Bibliographical Award Named in Honor of Joseph L. Andrews?

¶16 AALL’s Bibliographical Award57 was established in 1967 to honor Joseph L. Andrews, a man whom his former director at the Library of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York called “easily the finest reference librarian I have ever known.”58 Andrews was reference librarian for the Association of the Bar for thirty-five years (1930–65). Designed to recognize “a scholar, librarian or bibliographer whose contribution, either in a single work or as the product of a career, is particularly noteworthy and of value to law librarians and to the legal profession,” the bibliographical award was appropriately named for a man who was a “self-taught scholar and in love with bibliography all his life.”59 Indeed, Anthony Grech, first recipient of the award, noted that Andrews believed that compiling bibliographies “was an art, not a technique. He believed that bibliographies should be compiled at their source, not through questionnaires or letters.”60 Among Andrews’s works were The Law in the United States of America: A Selective Bibliographical Guide61 and Bibliography on the Law and Uses of International Rivers.62

When Did CONELL Become a Part of AALL’s Annual Meeting?

¶17 The Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL) was established by the Education Committee in 1970 as a way of welcoming newer members into the Association, introducing them to AALL’s leaders, and facilitating their acculturation into the group. In reporting on the first Conference, held at American

57. For a description and list of the recipients of the award, see Am. Ass’n of Law Libraries, Joseph L. Andrews Bibliographical Award, http://www.aallnet.org/about/award_jla.asp (last visited Nov. 8, 2005).
University in Washington, D.C., founding CONELL director Peyton R. Neal noted that the more than one hundred attendees “went away with a much greater knowledge of their association and [its] activities and programs.” As originally conceived, CONELL was open to anyone with less than six years experience as a law librarian. In 1975, logistical constraints caused eligibility to be limited to those attending either their first or second Annual Meeting. Responsibility for planning CONELL rested with a separate committee from 1970–71 to 1993–94; in 1994–95, this responsibility was transferred by the Executive Board to a newly created standing committee on mentoring and retention (now known as the Mentoring Committee), the result of a recommendation from the Task Force on Recruitment, Mentoring and Placement.