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Letter to Rita Parham, September 16, 1986

Carol Billings

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September 16, 1986

Ms. Rita M. Parham
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Dear Rita:

I had such good intentions to be much more prompt in writing to you about the new SEAALL Publicity and Public Relations Committee. It's terrific that you have agreed to chair this committee because I think it has a very important job to undertake, and anything new requires a particularly strong and enthusiastic leader.

Because SEAALL has never had a committee of this nature, you will be breaking ground; so you're free to try out anything that you like. The AALL Public Relations Committee (which I happen to be a member of) is making a particular effort this year to facilitate the exchange of information about public relations activities in the chapters. A sub-committee headed by Roberta Shaffer will be placing articles about these activities in the AALL Newsletter and will probably send you additional material from time to time. I'm enclosing a questionnaire that was sent by Roberta to each chapter president and which I just returned to her. Roberta will also be asking you and the other chapter P.R. chairmen to submit ideas to her for circulation among other chapters.

Of course you will want to communicate soon with the members of your committee to solicit their ideas about your projects and procedures for the year. But here are a few suggestions for some of the more obvious things that I would like to see the committee undertake:

1. Submitting news items about SEAALL activities to the AALL Newsletter (such things as our officers and committee chairs, committee projects, plans for our annual meeting in Charleston, etc.) Frank Houdek (Southern Illinois U.) edits the chapter news column; so articles are to be submitted to him about two weeks before the official newsletter deadline so that he can prepare his column and then send it to Chicago.
2. Submitting news items about SEAALL and its members to bar journals and other legal and library media within our region—and to local newspapers as well. Since the members of your committee are pretty well distributed around the region, I would suggest that you might assign each of them one large or two small states to cover. They could be responsible for compiling a list of the appropriate publications in their state(s) that should receive material about SEAALL. In some cases it would be appropriate for the committee to prepare a single news release that could be sent to any of the selected media. (General stories about the purpose and activities of SEAALL, featuring such things as our educational programs, our placement service, and our scholarship program and recipients could be sent to all bar and library association publications in the region.) Other stories would be of a local nature. For instance, I think we should send items about each of our officers and committee chairs to their state and local bar and library association journals and/or newsletters and to their hometown newspapers. Your committee members would of course need to enlist the aid of the officers and chairmen involved in pinpointing the appropriate publications that should receive the articles. We might also be able to get pictures of the officers printed.

3. Making members in the various states aware of the availability of the AALL Public Relations Booth, which can be borrowed for exhibits at bar conventions, legal administrators' conventions, etc. For instance, a committee of SEAALL members in a given state might cooperate in manning the booth at the meeting of their state bar in order to publicize the importance of trained law librarians, our placement service, our educational programs, etc.

4. Generally heightening awareness of our profession and its work in the legal and library communities. In this regard it might be good for your committee to cooperate with both the Membership and Placement committees on the state and local levels to make prospective employers of law librarians more aware of who we are and what we can offer. I wrote to our new membership chair, Hilary Burg, recently and suggested that her committee might compile a list of law firms in our region large enough to employ a librarian, a list of academic and large public libraries, and a list of library schools. Perhaps your committee and Placement might also help in compiling such lists.
Then each firm, library or school could be mailed a packet of information including our new membership brochure, a letter explaining our placement service, and information about the educational programs of SEAALL and AALL. In each locality if members of the three committees coordinated their efforts, that way we might save some time and work.

5. Publicizing our scholarship winners in their state's and town's legal and library publications and newspaper.

I do apologize for being so terribly long-winded. Despite all of these suggestions, I really do want you and your committee to make your own plans and choose your own methods of operation. So please regard my list as no more than a set of guidelines. You and Hilary Burg and Mary Cross may want to get in touch soon to sort out who's going to do what.

Let me know if you have any questions, and I'll be pleased to know how things are progressing. (Since one of your committee members, Janice Shull, works with me, I can stay abreast of the news.) Of course I hope I'll get to see you soon at NOALL gatherings and such.

Again, Rita, I'm very grateful that you have so graciously agreed to do this. I feel good knowing that your committee is off to a fine start with such an able chairman.

Take care, and I'll see you soon.

Best wishes!

[Signature]