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Southeastern Law Librarian

Summer 2016

www.aallnet.org/chapter/seaall

Volume 41, Issue 3



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Presidential Ponderings

...from Michelle Cosby

As librarians, we have demanding day-to-day jobs. Our positions might require working varied hours, learning about an unfamiliar area of law, or determining which catalog records would be best for our patrons. However, we still feel the call to serve the profession and give our time back, even though we know it will add to our already-hectic days.

A call to serve is one of the most valuable traits librarians possess. We give our time in many ways. Some of us feel the call to write. Writing improves our profession because it allows for the sharing and documenting of information. Some write on topics relevant to helping serve our patrons better and others write on topics that inform librarians of the best new digital tools. Either way, taking the time to author a shorter piece for a newsletter or a longer journal piece starts with the feeling of wanting to share our experience and help other librarians in their jobs.

Others serve by giving their time and expertise to a committee. Many of us that are called to action in this particular way can't stop with just one! We are on committees at our workplaces, other regional associations, and AALL. We might run for office or volunteer to be a chair. Committee service is where my heart lies. It is a great opportunity to further the goals of the organization you are helping, get new ideas, and meet new people.

Presenting information to colleagues at in-person meetings or virtually, through webinars, is another way that librarians share information with each other. The call to present requires creating an engaging program proposal, wrangling speakers, dealing with travel requests, and dealing with time restraints for your content. Seeing that the audience is engaged and responding to their questions can make this particular call to service feel very rewarding.

Whatever method you chose to express your call to serve, it takes dedication and determination. It might at times feel like you will not get everything done, but it somehow all comes together, and you have a finished product to show for it and a sense of achievement. Soon you will receive a call for proposals from our program committee. Our theme for the Raleigh, NC, meeting is *Invent, Innovate, Inspire*. I am excited to see what new projects and ideas SEAALL members are inspired to talk about at our next meeting.



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Recent Acquisitions

Dictionaries and thesauri are amazing research resources that often don't really get a lot of our attention. Recently, while I was preparing a lesson for my advanced legal research class on Boolean searching, an opportunity presented itself to remind my students about just how useful they can be.

In my experience, I have found that parentheses can be a challenging topic for students to master. To that end, I usually show the class the peanut butter and jelly video (available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfvDPpnV0Pg>). It might be somewhat silly to refer to parentheses as "powerful bananas" but it seems to make an abstract concept more manageable.

When we discuss parentheses in the classroom I like to explain to my students that they are useful for grouping together synonyms such as (car or automobile or vehicle) in order to change the order in which the search operates. We then discuss how useful legal dictionaries and thesauri can be in finding synonyms for legal terms of art.



I recently came across a useful free dictionary/thesaurus app on the App Store. (I use an iPhone, but the app is also available for Android users.) Legal Dictionary, by Farlex, Inc., is a great free resource that you can share with your students, faculty, or anyone who would find a legal dictionary/thesaurus useful. A quick search for "legal cause" gives you a definition of that term of art and also provides the synonymous term of "proximate cause." This free app allows you to search over 58,000 legal terms.

Library Profiles

Alyne Queener Massey Law Library at Vanderbilt University



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The Alyne Queener Massey Law Library is situated on the picturesque campus of Vanderbilt University, which has been, since its founding, a national arboretum. From our west facing windows, we watch the changing seasons reflected in the foliage in the quad. During the course of the past several years, our library has likewise experienced seasons of change. New faces have been added to our staff and our library space has been freshened and updated to meet the changing needs of our community.

New Faces

Since the Massey Law Library was last profiled in spring 2011, several new professionals have joined our team. Larry Reeves came to Vanderbilt in 2012 as the director of the law library. Along with Mary Miles Prince and Bill Walker, he has welcomed five new librarians, some of whom you might recognize: Jason Sowards, Catherine Deane, Carolyn Floyd (Hamilton), Andrea Alexander, and Deborah Schander. This group brings to the table varying degrees of professional librarian experience and vastly different backgrounds, which have added layers of knowledge and diversity to our group. We can now boast about our robust foreign and international law expertise, passion for perfection in instructional design, and stellar patron and student outreach abilities.

This group has also implemented an active faculty liaison program which has been very well received by our colleagues in the law school. We are called on to assist with various and sundry things, which is an indication of how unique and, perhaps, indispensable, we are to the functioning of our institution. Just to give a few examples of our efforts, liaisons have been embedded and have guest lectured in law-school courses, conducted long-term data collection surveys, assisted with copyright clearance for book publication, and provided support for the many changes that have occurred in our subscription databases. We have been instrumental in building the Vanderbilt University's Institutional Repository by working closely with faculty and publishers to gather pieces that are now made freely available online to anyone in the world. Additionally, the library hosts a Prepare to Practice program which has been increasingly popular for three years running. Students attend lunchtime sessions in which practitioners, scholars, vendors, and other players in the legal field instruct and discuss relevant topics in law that students might encounter in practice, but that are not covered in this law school's curriculum.

Our librarians are also active on campus committees, in SEAALL, and with AALL. Most of us try to attend one, if not both, conferences each year, and several of us

serve on regional and national committees. We also make our presence known at other conferences, such as CALI and IFLA. We bring back to Vanderbilt tons of knowledge and skills learned from our colleagues near and far and apply it here to teaching, collection development, and library enhancements.



New Spaces

In 2014, we took an informal inventory of the ways our collection and space were being used and we agreed that the library needed a little facelift. We rearranged our shelving and public workstations in the main reading room to create a more-open floor plan with more study space. The reference desk was removed and we converted to a single-point service desk where patrons can request reference help from whichever librarian happens to be on call at the time. In addition, we built three new sound-proof study rooms in the library. To make space for these, our printed state codes were retired and the shelves removed. It was a bittersweet parting, as our love of books and desire to maximize the usefulness of our space were at odds, but the need for rooms prevailed and we have been rewarded with the gratitude of our students.

While we had a mind to purge books, we decided to undertake a few shifting projects that included reducing the number of print journals from the past ten years to the past five, updating and reorganizing our reference collection, and deaccessioning in subject areas to make room for new acquisitions. Over the past two summers, time has been devoted to major shifts in the collection as we discarded materials or sent them to our annex. The library hired student workers for the summer to help with these projects.

As the new school year begins, we are happy to look around and see the fruits of so much labor. Much of the work is ongoing, but so much the better to keep our group engaged and focused on the development of our library and service to our Vanderbilt and Nashville communities. We'll check back in a few years from now to catch y'all up on what progress has been made.





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Meet & Three

Meet . . .

Hi, all! I'm Jonathan Beeker, access services librarian at the North Carolina Central University School of Law Library, in Durham, NC. I was born and raised in beautiful, beachy, Wilmington, NC. Since then I've lived, worked, and learned in Chapel Hill, Asheville, Greensboro, and Manassas, VA. I'm happy to be back in the Triangle, roughly equidistant from the Atlantic Ocean and the Blue Ridge Mountains, and with enough good food and varied culture in the immediate vicinity to satisfy my tastes.

I joined the law library world after working for three years as a solo librarian. Managing multiple aspects of library service was a wonderful learning experience for a young library professional, but I was excited (and continue to be) by the chance to work in a diverse, historically unique, institution like the NCCU Law School. While I don't have a legal background myself, I'm proud of the small part I play supporting the development of our "Legal Eagles."

Since taking up my duties in 2010, the nature of my job has shifted significantly. Instead of working through mountains of loose-leaf updates, pocket parts, and microfiche, our leaner and more digitally oriented collection objectives have freed me and my department to focus more on automating, marketing, and assessing the services we provide. We've pared down the physical collection and created more space in the library for students to meet, collaborate, and study. Change is good. And it keeps me busy planning and learning.

And Three . . .

Because this is the summer issue, I thought I'd end with three things I discovered I liked this summer.



1. *Steven Universe*: Absolutely one of the silliest, but adorably subversive and occasionally profound shows I've ever seen. I HAVE DEFINITELY NEVER CRIED WHILE WATCHING.

2. *Stranger Things*: I feel like everyone's seen it by now, but if you haven't, and you are even the teensiest bit nostalgic for 80s/early 90s movies, don't wait any longer. #TEAMBARB

3. *E. F. Benson*: I had never heard of Benson, or his six "Lucia" novels before this summer, but I'm truly enjoying them. Think P.G. Wodehouse or Patrick Dennis, but with a cast of characters just a rung or two down the socio-economic ladder (though they'd never admit it).



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Readers' Advisory

Nickie D. Philips and Staci Strobl, *Comic Book Crime: Truth, Justice, and the American Way* (2013)

ISBN: 978-1-5182-0236-0

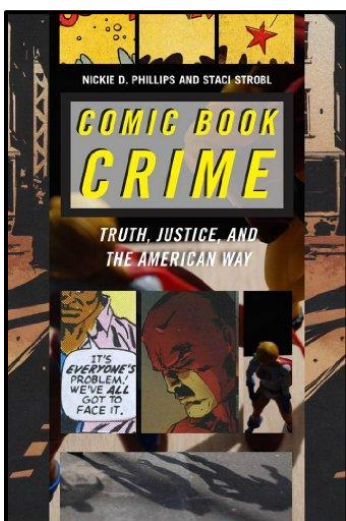
What if I told you about a multi-billionaire captain of industry who goes around at night beating up people with mental illnesses and throwing them in a horrific, underfunded mental institution (from which they always, inevitably, break out), perpetuating the cycles of violence, crime, and suffering? You might think you missed a really important (and somehow, sadly, realistic) news story, but that is one critical reading of the fictional Bruce Wayne, aka Batman, the most popular superhero in the world.

Part of New York University Press' Alternative Criminology Series, *Comic Book Crime* is a fascinating look at how comic books have reflected changing meanings of crime and justice in American culture over the better part of the last century. Philips and Strobl studied comic books from a cultural criminological framework, analyzing contemporary American comics published between 2001 and 2010, mostly from the superhero genre, and mostly published by the two leading companies, DC and Marvel, which, for you non-nerds, are like the LexisNexis and Westlaw of comic-book publishers.

While comic-book sales have plummeted since their early '90s peak, superheroes are more popular than ever before, functioning as intellectual property farms for film, television, video games, and merchandising, that all dwarf their source material in terms of mainstream popularity. Even though most Americans don't read comics, they care about the characters and stories, which means those stories and what they say about modern American life and attitudes toward crime, justice, and violence *matter*.

Individual chapters in the book discuss post-9/11 comics' fascination with terrorism and xenophobia, the fantasy of murderous antiheroes and violent vigilantes taking the law into their own hands when police and courts are shown as incompetent or corrupt, and the role of supervillains representing society's worst fears. Other chapters are devoted to comic books' portrayals of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, which have been admittedly terrible up until the most recent years, with casts of straight white men and impossibly sexualized women, most of whom were created before the 1980s. Representation has improved, but as a genre, superhero comics have a long way to go.

One thing the comics they analyzed shared was the recurring theme of crime and punishment, usually employing violence to achieve retributive justice in the stories and help readers experience an emotional catharsis. The best comic books can do what books, film, and television can't, because they synthesize the best aspects of all those other media. They rise above being puerile power fantasies and stand on their own as modern mythology, deep storytelling, and fine art. But Philips and Strobl even got me thinking about what I'm really enjoying when I read comics, as I have for 35 years, and what their subtle and not-so-subtle messages really are.



I would recommend this book for most law library collections, as it would serve as an intriguing source for students in a variety of law classes: criminal law, popular culture and the law, race and the law, gender and the law, terrorism and the law. And no university library should be without it, in its media and cultural studies section.

Readers' Advisory



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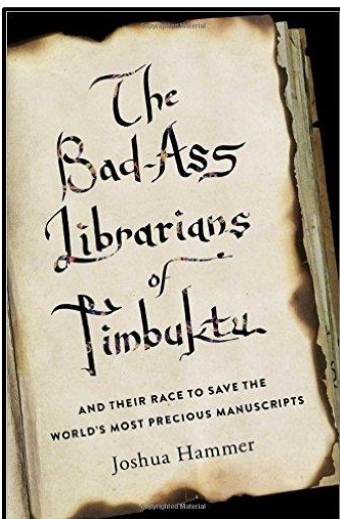
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Joshua Hammer, *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu and their Race to Save the World's Most Precious Manuscripts* (2016)

ISBN: 978-1-4767-7740-5

Wow. That's my first impression of this book. My second impression is that I will never again complain about my commute on I-40 because, on even the worst day, it beats trekking across craggy rocks or rushing waters, carrying chests full of contraband manuscripts. Joshua Hammer's telling of his thrilling experiences with the librarian-smugglers in the Middle East is most likely one of the most gripping books I have read, and certainly the most exciting book about librarians. The setting is in and around Timbuktu, in the recent past. The jihadis have begun targeting mosques, monuments, and historic documents in their efforts to erase history and take over the territory, instituting Sharia law and outlawing all other ways of life. The real need to preserve these items from imminent destruction was obvious to the director of the Ahmed Baba Institute in Mali and he could identify only one man for the job: Abdel Kader Haidara. Haidara, an unassuming man who reluctantly accepted his calling yet developed a passion for saving these papers, drew together an indefatigable team of volunteer smugglers who ran the contraband across the desert to safe houses, paying off guards and police along the way. They dodged bombs, were arrested, and narrowly missed execution, and saved many valuable tomes in the process.

Woven into the story is a history of Islam and the separation between the different sects that sprung out of this religion. Hammer offers an insightful accounting of the insurrections and defensive maneuvers that have shaped life in the Middle East and, in particular, affect Mali today. There is no simple approach to explain the many interlacing and moving pieces, so Hammer whittles it down to give the information as it relates to the key players in the book and to the efforts to save the threatened documents. He focuses on Timbuktu, from its days of being free from violence to the times leading up to and including the jihadi takeover. With this framework in place, readers are treated to a factual account of the harrowing experiences of those who dared to defy the insurrection and save history from being annihilated. The heroic efforts of the stewards of the materials were inspired by their respect for the written word and the innate sense of duty in each of them to preserve the history of their people for future generations.





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Closed Stacks

When I was asked to write the *Closed Stacks* column for this edition of the SEAALL newsletter, I tried to contemplate how in the world I could make my bookshelves interesting. I don't have a massive collection of books filling my shelves. I've always worked in libraries, so I've just never had a reason to build a large collection at home. Most of my disposable income goes toward other necessities instead. (Yes, I categorize books as necessities.)



When I started to consider it, however, I realized that my shelves might not be quite as dull as I tend to think. In fact, my personal shelves are drastically different from those in my office. That's right, my office shelves are quite bare. I'm a cataloger, and I like order. The only things on my office shelves are regularly used reference books, books to support my

current projects, and recent journals and catalogs. Besides, the law library's staff collection is 20 feet from my office. Since I use those materials pretty regularly, I just take what I need when I need it and put it back when I'm done.

At home things are just a little bit different. I'm still a cataloger and I still crave order, but with my personal books, it's more about maintaining a *minimal* amount of order in the chaos. My personal shelves reflect my life, my interests, and my education. These precious materials are well protected by a variety of gargoyles (which I used to collect) and other various items such as PEZ dispensers and small plush Disney toys from my mother. I tend to keep books long after their usefulness has passed, but I will occasionally weed out materials, especially old textbooks and dated nonfiction materials. (Yes, I still have those pesky MLIS books that have not been opened in a decade or more.) I find weeding out the gargoyles and plush toys to be much less likely, and hence these items seem to keep multiplying and requiring ever more space.



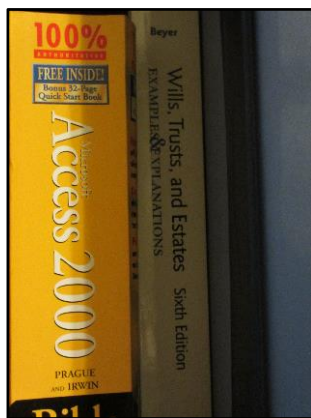
Generally speaking, my efforts to instill basic order revolve around keeping *similar* things together in very broad topical groupings, roughly in order by size. (Did I hear a collective **gasp**? They don't fall over quite as often this way!) Cookbooks, exercise and health books, math and education books (from a mistaken attempt to venture into middle school teaching), various textbooks, and lots of fiction haunt these shelves. My collection is fairly small in total size, but there is quite a variety.



When I'm looking for something to read, my lack of real organization forces me to browse through my shelves to find the right book. I never know what will pique my interest in a given moment, but I have a lot of leisure reading choices available – from adult fantasy to *Harry Potter*, erotic historical fiction (don't ask)



to young adult realistic fiction. Or maybe some old *Calvin and Hobbes*, *Bloom County*, or *Garfield* comics will do the trick. Since I spent the majority of my career in public libraries, much of my fiction collection is from advanced reader copies or weeded materials (hence the genre and spine labels).



Every couple of years, life tends to encroach on my semi-tamed bookcases, and chaos eventually rears its head once more. When I became a law librarian, I decided to begin working on a Juris Master degree here at Emory. (I'm a cataloger, not a lawyer!) As a result, I now have law-school textbooks, study aids, and outline binders filling any available space. This can lead to interesting discoveries in need of probable weeding when searching for space in which to shove yet another law book I'll probably never open again. (Access 2000? Really?) Once I can no

longer stand it, I'll spend some time rearranging the books into new categories. I'll weed out those old textbooks (MLIS is next), and, if necessary, add more shelves. Things will be happy and calm once again in pseudo-categorized home library land, at least until chaos starts the slow, relentless build once more . . .



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Reinvention and Recreation at AALL 2016

Arriving in Chicago on Friday evening, abandoning a humidity-heavy week in the south for the cool breezes off the water and the chance to wear a jacket in a highly air-conditioned conference facility, I felt almost like a new version of me. Absolutely appropriate for a conference with the theme of reinventing yourself, huh?

As a technical services librarian who has worn more hats in her tenure at a single institution than some job hopping librarians have worn in their lifetime, the theme of reinvention resonates strongly in the very depths of my bones. Every year, the world I live in during my working hours takes on an entirely new look. Where once my desk was covered with books stacked to the ceiling, my blazer featured a sprinkle of off-site storage dust, historical journal name changes haunted my dreams, and I broke a sweat with heavy lifting at least once a day, now my days are filled with moving columns of data around, graphic design, interdepartmental support with marketing/communications and information technology, record loads and access troubleshooting. Even my job titles have changed a few times, when my actual duties outweighed my title duties by so much that a new moniker was inevitable.

But what better way to whet your “lifetime learning” whistle than to devote yourself to regular reinvention? What a chance to challenge yourself, indeed! Am I too idealistic? Some part of me thinks that all librarians have this same bug inside them, and that I’m not alone – and that part of me found many kindred spirits at this year’s AALL conference.

The 109th annual conference had over 2,500 people involved and as I said earlier, featured the theme of “Recreating Ourselves” – rather appropriate in the city of Chicago, which recreated itself after a raging fire destroyed a significant portion of the city and left hundreds of thousands of residents homeless in the late 1800s. The idea of “recreating ourselves” resonates strongly with many law librarians in today’s current environment, which is marked with rapid change and repeated disruption. And sometimes we’re left wondering, “How can we respond effectively?”

The keynote speaker, Will Evans, kicked off the formal conference by addressing that very issue, offering us new models of purpose-driven innovation and practices we can engage in to face uncertainty. In short, Evans provided us with a way to envision something better and close the gap between the current state of affairs and this better world. The lean methods Evans offered are a brilliant way to focus your objectives on the magic librarian word of “learning” and deliver extraordinary value to your patrons despite your continual reinvention.

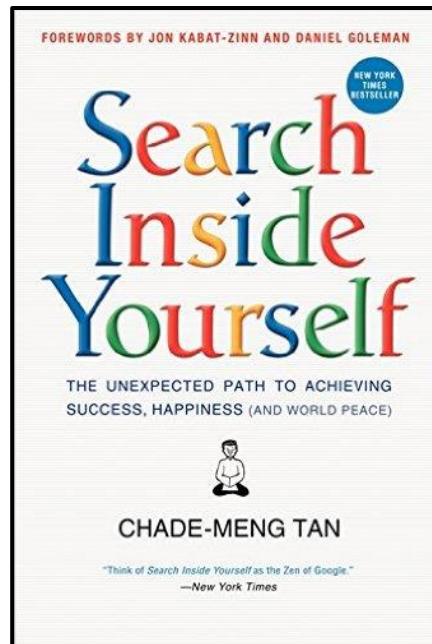
After the keynote session, it was time to present. As a panelist at “Crowdsourcing the Skill Set to Manage the Legal Information of the Future,” I heard many of the same themes that had already emerged in the keynote session. I myself offered the skill of emotional intelligence as a change-management tool, arming you with the ability to see change not as an overwhelming thing to be avoided and fought against, but instead as an opportunity to recognize and reprioritize. Other speakers echoed surprisingly similar thoughts, encouraging us to stand tall in somewhat trying and almost always uncertain times, giving advice on maintaining your passion throughout your career, focusing on mindful metadata mastery, and giving a strong elevator pitch to communicate your value.

Immediately after finishing my presentation, I headed on to a much-anticipated session to learn more from the masters about “Promoting the Value of Technical Services at Budget Time.” As a technical services librarian, it’s oftentimes challenging to define your own work’s value in a measurable, visible way. Plus, the better the job your technical services staff does, the more invisible they are.

Jean Pajerek offered up the most illustrative analogy of technical services work I’ve heard yet in my own career. Imagine that you checked in at a hotel, and everything from the moment you walked in was perfect and everyone you encountered throughout the hotel was kind, helpful, and courteous. Once you finally made it to your room to turn in for the night, having nothing but the most positive of experiences under your belt, you prepare to climb in to bed and pull back the covers to realize your sheets are dirty. Despite never seeing the people that clean the sheets, nor ever having anything but the most positive of interactions with all public-facing staff, your overall satisfaction with the hotel as a whole has now been tainted and marred. The invisible services provided by technical services staff are vitally important to both the shared mission of the organization and the overall satisfaction of users themselves, and should be valued as such.

Other programs I pulled significant takeaways from during educational sessions included dives into infographics, data visualizations, and using dashboards to create more effective communication lines with those you serve. With the new approaches by the annual meeting program committee in terms of sourcing and curating programming for the meeting, I found this to be one of the best conferences I’ve attended, offering an increasingly diverse set of educational opportunities that could be streamlined to match whatever specific and unique tasks each of us is responsible for in our professional careers.

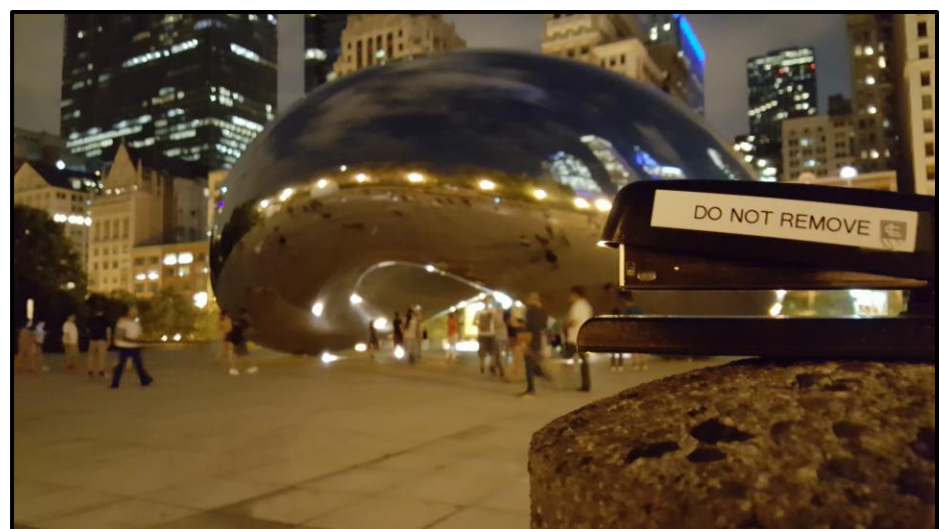
While my brain devoured the content in these educational sessions, my heart, spirit, and soul were fed at both the Mindfulness in Law Libraries Caucus Meeting and the “Mindfulness Meditation: Reduce Stress and Improve Your Work, Workplace, and World” presentation. Much as I recommended emotional intelligence, made up of both intra- and interpersonal skills such as empathy and self-awareness, as a must-have to my colleagues during my program, I cannot



stress how valuable I've found mindfulness practices in helping me stay solid and upright in this ever-changing world. Mindfulness offers us a way to keep things in the right perspective, and supports our success as individuals and empowers us to build more successful teams, lead more effectively, and pretty much make the world a better place. For more information, take a look at *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)*, by Tan, Goleman, and Kabat-Zinn, one of the resources I recommended to attendees of my program, as well as at the Mindfulness Caucus.

Mindfulness certainly served me well while trying to keep myself centered on Saturday night, when the “alphabet soup” reception I helped organize had a few hiccups in implementation, including a mistake from HQ on the room assignment for the function and a mixup with the equipment and support provided from the AV team. By focusing on my breaths and what I could and couldn't control, the event turned out splendidly, despite my continued cravings to curl up and hide, teary-eyed, under a chair, after each hiccup.

Collaboration is a key component of effective librarianship, in today's current environment, as well as historically, and Evans stressed repeatedly during his keynote session that the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts. Theories melded perfectly with real life, as the Technical Services Special Interest Section business and awards meeting centered on collaboration, featuring a keynote talk by Rachel Fewell. Even more exciting than the collaboration and ideas careening through the room, though, was the fact that the TS-SIS had used



their sponsorship funds for the meeting to provide live streaming for members who couldn't attend the annual meeting, a groundbreaking new approach that I hope expands in future years, as collaboration surrounding the initiatives and ideas at the annual meeting no longer has to be restricted to on-site, in-person communications.

I can only hope that next year's programming takes the momentum gained this year and shoots on through to even bigger and better things. As a member of the marketing/communications team of the 2017 annual meeting program committee, and the TS-SIS liaison, I was able to attend the annual meeting program committee training and brainstorming session and staff their poster display in the exhibit hall, and I'm enthusiastic about the chance to work with such a dynamic team, curating quality educational programming in the area of my latest reinvention -- marketing and communications. I was also grateful to be able to participate at the TS-SIS professional development and education committee meeting on Tuesday morning, tossing around collaborative ideas and programming outside the annual meeting in addition to more traditional technical-service educational programming proposals for AALL 2017.



All in all, there wasn't a lot of free time on my agenda in Chicago, and the limited opportunities I did have were eaten up quickly by networking and spending time with colleagues, both old and new. While I never did find available bandwidth to travel through the exhibit hall for the sole purposes of visiting exhibitors and collecting information and coveted pieces of quality swag, I somehow managed to carve out a dinner slot to catch up with my roommate from high school, who works up the street as a big law attorney, and to take the Rogue Stapler on a tour of Millennium Park and beyond to catch up the Charlotte Law Library's Instagram with some new sites. I also found some time late Tuesday night before packing up for home to head over to Adler Planetarium to touch a meteorite. Come on – any ad campaign that says “Our meteorite traveled millions of miles to get here. The least you can do is come touch it” is going to win me over. I'm a marketing girl these days, after all. Until my next reinvention, that is . . . ☺



Attention!

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