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Letter to Cherry Thomas regarding deadlines for materials concerning the SEAALL Annual Meeting, April 24, 1990

J. Wesley Cochran

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Southeastern Chapter  
of the American Association  
of Law Libraries, Inc.

April 24, 1990

Ms. Cherry Thomas  
Director & Assistant Professor  
University of Alabama  
Law Library  
P.O. Box 870383  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

Dear Cherry:

My plans for a family vacation through Tuscaloosa in the foreseeable future fell through, so I am sending you these suggestions to assist you in planning the Southeastern Chapter Meeting next year.

First, establish a time line, which should include some very strict deadlines. Begin by setting your registration deadline at least three weeks before the Chapter meeting. That would mean a deadline certainly not later than February 27, 1991, and I would recommend February 22.

Then, back up eight weeks from the deadline to establish your mailing date for registration materials. We allowed only six weeks and received numerous complaints. We ended up having to fax registration forms at the last minute and the like. Using February 22 as the deadline, you would be mailing the registration materials on December 28, 1990.

If you plan to have your registration materials printed, you should talk to your printer about getting the job done well before December 28. If you produce the materials in-house, you may have greater latitude in setting a deadline.

When you establish the deadline for materials to be printed, you should set a deadline for the Program topics. The registration materials must include a final listing of topics. The private librarians use the registration materials as justification for funding, so, the more complete the program is at that point, the better. If you win the election, obviously you will know your own deadline.
Assuming that your printing deadline would be December 14 (and it might have to be earlier), you should require the Program Committee to have all information to you no later than November 30. The same would be true for the Education Committee if it chooses to undertake an Institute held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting.

Second, set a realistic budget. You should work closely with the President and the rest of the Executive Committee in setting a budget for the Annual Meeting and the Institute if there is one.

I think that you can budget safely on $3,000 from vendors, and I will gladly share all of the correspondence with the various vendors that we had this year. If you get more, as we did this year, you can hold that in reserve for contingencies.

You must set a firm budget for speakers' expenses, and make sure that the Program Committee Chair understands Chapter policies concerning reimbursement of expenses. This year, we had several "surprises", and they might end up affecting whether the Annual Meeting breaks even or loses money.

Concerning Chapter policies, the Executive Committee has under consideration a reimbursement policy that should be adopted by the Chapter Meeting in Minneapolis, and that might help explain to potential speakers what the Chapter will and will not do. Even so, the Program Committee Chair may reach a point in negotiation where reliance on Chapter policy will cause a potential speaker to decline our invitation to speak. But, I think that that is a small price to pay for fiscal security.

Third, avoid over-scheduling. At some points in the program, we provided far too little time to move the "herd" of people from one location to another. You will need to work closely with the Program Committee to develop the schedule.

Fourth, early in the year give the Program Committee rock-solid information about the facilities of the hotel and meeting rooms. Again, if you are elected, you will know the limitations of your site. This year, by the time we got information to the Program Committee, it had already planned several concurrent programs, which our hotel was not quite equipped to support.

Fifth, concerning exhibits, the Chapter requests a $125.00 exhibit fee (though this probably could be increased some) for providing a table. If your exhibit space does not include telephone connections, you will need to discuss where these can go with the telephone company and the hotel. Include information
about special requests such as electrical outlets and telephone connections in your first contact with the vendors. Also, make it clear that vendors are responsible for the costs of installing telephone service, if needed, and all telecommunication charges.

Sixth, I recommend that you establish a definite policy regarding vendor support for meals and special events. The policy should explain the number of free admissions to the event, if any, that the vendor will receive for sponsoring the event. Specifically, this year, West Publishing Company co-sponsored the Fish Fry Buffet Dinner and brought in two additional representatives for the event, without paying extra for their meals. Part of this was due to some miscommunication that West received from a member of my staff. But, to prevent it from reoccurring, I recommend that you establish a policy that no vendor receives any free admissions. If the vendor want to attend the event sponsored, he or she should either register for the Chapter Meeting (most do anyway) or pay for the additional meals.

Seventh, if Tuscaloosa does not have taxi service, be prepared for complaints. Oxford does have one operating taxi cab, but service is extremely sporadic. Several Chapter members complained about difficulty in getting around. I had hoped to prevent that complaint by having our Department of Continuing Studies stand by with shuttle van service, and it was successful to a large extent. However, my Technical Services Librarian’s husband had to pick up one group of Chapter members who were stranded at the Oxford Mall on Saturday night.

I should also pass on the information that the Chapter Executive Committee will assemble in the lobby of the Hyatt-Regency Hotel in Minneapolis at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 17. You might want to mark your calendar now in the event that you win the election. Although you would not take office until the Chapter business meeting, this would be an opportunity for you to see how the Executive Committee operates, and you would be most welcome.

Call me if you have any questions about this.

Best regards,

J. Wesley Cochran, President
Southeastern Chapter of AALL