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Letter to Jean Holcomb reporting on use of SEAALL Scholarship funds, February 21, 1992

Deborah K. Webster

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Ms. Jean Holcomb  
Chair, SEALL Scholarship Committee  
Norfolk Law Library  
1300 Dominion Tower  
999 Waterside Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Jean:

Enclosed is a summary of activities of the AALL 1992 Winter Institute, which I attended in Dallas on February 5-9. My SEALL Scholarship award in the amount of $500 was used to cover hotel expenses and a portion of the airfare to Dallas, in the following amounts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>$384.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airfare (part)</td>
<td>115.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$500.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, please express my gratitude to the members of the SEALL Scholarship Committee for this award. The Institute provided a look at the challenges of technological changes in law libraries, and gave me the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge with other law librarians from across the country.

Sincerely yours,

Deborah K. Webster  
Reference/Computer Services Librarian

DKW:gl  
Enc.
Highlights of the AALL Winter Institute

"Managing Emerging Technologies"

Infomart at Dallas, a spectacular seven-story trade mart housing dozens of computer showrooms, was the site of AALL's 1992 Winter Institute on "Managing Emerging Technologies", held February 5-8. The Institute featured presentations by law librarians, lawyers, information consultants and computer vendors, covering both basic overviews and practical applications. Three technologies were highlighted: local area networks, multi-media, and imaging.

The opening sessions focused on technology's impact on people in libraries. Some academic law libraries are experiencing a flattening of the organizational structure, with the elimination of the traditional division between technical and public services, requiring cross-training of professional librarians. In addition, the higher level of skills required for new technologies is resulting in the elimination of the lowest level clerical positions and an increasing use of para-professionals.

Practical looks at technology in action were presented by two law librarians. Barbara Gontrum of the University of Maryland Law Library described a wide range of electronic information services offered to faculty via a local area network, such as customized current awareness services. Mickie Voges of IIT Chicago-Kent School of Law presented a look at the "electronic library" of the future being created at Chicago-Kent through conversion and storage of documents in digitized form. The imaging process used for conversion provides for preservation of rare or decaying documents, access for multiple users, and the possibility of sharing collections with remote sites.

As a counterpoint to the library world, the vendor presentations provided state-of-the-art product demonstra-
tions. These sessions turned out to be controversial, with some conference participants feeling that the sessions were merely "sales pitches", or that the vendors showed no understanding of the library market. In response, other participants voiced the need for librarians to communicate with vendors of non-traditional technology, to move out of the traditional library environment in order to serve information needs.

The remainder of the program included highlights of several related technologies. Some topics of particular interest to law firms included document assembly, expert systems, and electronically accessible hypertext documents. Laser technology and CD-ROM LANs were also featured.

The Institute programs left participants with one primary message: Technological change is ever-present, and if law libraries do not step into a leadership role in managing this change, someone else will. In order to retain control, librarians must take the initiative in anticipating information needs and adapting both technologies and library organizations to accomplish these goals. Mark Estes, president-elect of AALL, closed the Institute with the following advice: "If it works, change it, because it's not going to work tomorrow."

Deborah Webster
University of North Carolina
Law Library