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Letter to Pam Williams regarding AALL Chapter membership provisions, March 15, 1994

Alva Stone

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March 15, 1994

Pamela D. Williams, President
Southeastern Chapter of American Association of Law Libraries
University of Florida
College of Law Legal Information Center
Gainesville, FL 32611

Dear Pammie,

As chair of the AALL Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, I have recently reviewed bylaws amendments for several AALL chapters. In one case I had to inform the chapter that its amendment was not approved, because the chapter intended to make its membership criteria more restrictive than the criteria for AALL membership. In the introduction to the "model" chapter bylaws, on page 12 of the Handbook for Chapter Presidents, 2d ed. (June 1993), it is written:

"Chapter membership provisions must not be more restrictive than AALL membership provisions."

When I was tackling this question, I reviewed the membership sections in all of the chapters' bylaws (as contained in the aforementioned Handbook), and discovered that several chapters, including the Southeastern Chapter of American Association of Law Libraries, are currently not in compliance with this regulation. As you know, the AALL provision for individual members states that employment in a law library or law section of a library may be current or within the last seven (7) years. Your chapter's bylaw specifies that there be an official connection with a law library or separately maintained section of a general library, but with no mention of any grace period.

The 7-year grace period for individual membership was enacted into the AALL bylaws in summer 1987. In November 1987 the "Model Chapter Bylaws" were revised, and it contained four suggested texts for membership criteria, one which is the same as AALL's, and the
other three less restrictive than AALL's. A few months later (June 1988), the AALL Committee Handbook was issued, and it includes the following statement in the charge given to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee:

"The committee shall advise chapters and SIS's of changes in the AALL Constitution or Bylaws that may require amendment of chapter and SIS documents."

It is possible, of course, that your chapter was so advised about this change in AALL membership criteria, but that, with changing membership in the chapter officers and in the C&B Committee, no follow-up had been done to make sure that this part of your bylaws was amended.

At any rate, I am writing to you now to request that the necessary revision be made. If you do not have time to complete this task in the 1993/94 year, then you should add it to your chapter's agenda for 1994/95. (And remember, you do not have to copy the AALL provision verbatim -- you also have the option of making your chapter's membership criteria less restrictive than those of AALL; consult the Handbook for Chapter Presidents for model language of various acceptable options.)

Please do not hesitate to contact me (tel. 904-644-2881; e-mail: atstone@law.fsu.edu) if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Alva T. Stone, Chair
AALL Constitution & Bylaws Committee

xc: Roger Parent, AALL Exec. Director
Gayle Webb, Liaison to AALL Board
Filippa Anzalone, Council of Chapter Presidents
Margie Axtmann, Liaison to Chapters