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January 2001

# Too Many Jobs, Too Few Job Seekers? A Study of Law Librarianship Job Data Samples 1989-1999

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# Too Many Jobs, Too Few Job Seekers? A Study of Law Librarianship Job Data Samples, 1989–1999*

Beatrice A. Tice**

*Ms. Tice describes the results of her study of law librarianship job data samples, concluding that contrary to popular belief, there has not been an increased number of jobs in an era of a declining pool of qualified applicants.*

. . . industrious, alert, charming, attentive to detail, refined, imaginative, unafraid of briefing for a judge or getting filthy shifting books, dependable, receptive to taking and following orders, able to direct underlings to inspired heights, incorruptible, sincerely interested, attractive . . . amusing, cheerful, imperturbable, diplomatic, and Summa Cum Laude."[1]—*Marian Gould Gallagher*

**¶1** When Marian Gould Gallagher, late law librarian and professor of law at the University of Washington and one of the law library profession's greatest contributors, compiled this inventory in 1953 of the characteristics she thought to be "necessary" in those pursuing law librarianship, her intent may have been humor. Yet the statement is also a serious reflection of the high standards to which the law librarianship profession has traditionally aspired. Are we falling short of these standards today? It is a common perception among law librarians that, while the number of law library job postings is continually increasing, the pool of applicants for those jobs is decreasing, both in quality and number. An article in a recent American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) "Members' Briefing on Education for Law Librarianship" lamented that, at the 1999 AALL Annual Meeting, law libraries with positions to fill were hard-pressed to find even one candidate for each of their openings.[2] Anecdotal evidence suggests that good law

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* © Beatrice A. Tice, 2001. This is a revised version of a winning entry in the student division of the 2000 AALL/LEXIS Law Publishing Call for Papers competition.

** Foreign and Comparative Law Librarian, University of Michigan Law School Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. I would like to thank most sincerely Professor Penny A. Hazelton and Mary Whisner, both of the Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library at the University of Washington; Simon Canick of the Arthur W. Diamond Law Library at Columbia University; and my wonderful family for their suggestions, support, and encouragement regarding this paper.

1. Marian G. Gallagher, *The Law Librarianship Course at the University of Washington*, 5 J. LEGAL EDUC. 537, 539 (1953).
2. Penny A. Hazelton, *Help Wanted: Ensuring the Survival of Law Librarianship*, AALL SPECTRUM, Oct. 1999, at 17. *See also* Evan St. Lifer, *The Boomer Brain Drain: Last of a Generation?* LIBR. J., May 1, 2000, at 38 (lack of interested, qualified entry-level librarians threatens the profession in general).

library jobs have gone begging, even for a period of a year or more, for lack of qualified candidates. Why?

**¶2** With that question in mind I designed a study of job announcements posted nationally throughout four sample twelve-month periods from 1989 through 1999 and of resumes submitted by job seekers at the AALL Annual Meetings during those periods.[3] I expected to discover that the data supported the assertions of the "Members' Briefing" regarding the increasing availability of jobs and the declining pool of qualified applicants. The results of the study, however, tell a different story. Rather than increasing disproportionately, the total number of jobs posted in the 1999 period appears to be virtually identical to the total number posted during the same period in 1990. Other standard variables, including geographic region, type of library, and type of job, also remained stable across the sample periods of study. Although the applicant pool, as reflected by resumes submitted at relevant AALL Annual Meetings, has indeed declined in number, the individual applicants do not appear obviously unqualified for the positions posted at those meetings.

**¶3** What, then, has changed? Consider this: In order to meet the published minimum requirements of a typical mid-level public services job in 1990, a candidate needed to demonstrate law librarianship experience, some experience with computer-assisted legal research and other online databases, and some communications and interpersonal skills. In order to meet the minimum requirements of that same job in 1999, a candidate was additionally required to demonstrate experience with automated library systems, microcomputer applications in libraries, and legal research using traditional print sources. The candidate needed to have some supervisory and administrative experience, and had to offer evidence of being a team player. The candidate was certainly required to demonstrate excellent communications, organizational, and interpersonal skills, as well as a strong public service orientation . . . and some teaching experience would have been a plus.

**¶4** In short, there has been a dramatic increase from 1989 to 1999 in the types of experience and skills that are now published requirements of law librarian job candidates. Requirements of experience in print and computer-assisted legal research, database search skills, and use of automated library systems and microcomputers have all increased significantly. Personal skills requirements, such as those focusing on communication, interpersonal relationships, and teamwork have likewise expanded.

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3. There is very little, if any, job data information concerning law librarianship in the library and science literature. There are several early studies of educational and employment backgrounds of law librarians, most notably a paper by Connie Edward Bolden, *The Educational and Employment Background of Law School Librarians*, 57 LAW LIBR. J. 58 (1964). In addition, the AALL Biennial Salary Surveys publish various types of similar data. *See infra* notes 47–48 and accompanying text. However, I am aware of no previous study of law librarianship job data of the type presented in this paper.

**¶5** Does this single change in an otherwise stable job environment represent a substantial increase in hiring standards, driven by requirements of the profession that are significantly more demanding than ever before? On the contrary, this study suggests that, during the course of the past decade, the law librarianship profession has stabilized in terms of jobs and job requirements. Job seekers appear to be of consistently appropriate quality, and the data indicate that on a national basis the number of job seekers is not, at least for the present, in significant decline. The challenge, then, is to work actively to maintain these trends, so that the profession may grow into the twenty-first century.

## Method

**¶6** The data used in this study were collected over an approximately ten-year period, from mid-1989 through mid-1999.[4] Job advertisements were gathered from announcements posted on AALLNET, the AALL Web site, on the "law-lib" electronic discussion list, and in the *Law Librarians' Bulletin Board*.[5] In addition, announcements of all jobs posted at the AALL Annual Meetings held during the sample period were collected, as were copies of all resumes submitted by job seekers at those meetings.[6]

**¶7** In the study, I included job announcements for full-time (thirty-five hours or more per week) professional law librarian positions in the United States. Temporary positions were included only if the appointments were to last one year or longer.

**¶8** After eliminating all duplicate announcements, I sorted the job advertisements by date of posting into twelve-month periods running from August 1 of each year until July 31 of the following year.[7] Thus, the four twelve-month samples analyzed in this study run from August 1, 1989, through July 31, 1990 (1989–90); August 1, 1992, through July 31, 1993 (1992–93); August 1, 1995,

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4. The data were collected through the efforts of Penny A. Hazelton, Law Librarian and Professor of Law at the University of Washington. Preliminary analysis on the data was performed at intervals over the ten-year period by former research assistants to Professor Hazelton. In preparing this study, I relied on my own original analysis of the data.
5. These sites of job postings were chosen as sources because they achieve a wide circulation among law librarians and are generally regarded in the profession as the most visible places to post job announcements throughout the year. In the 1989–1992 era, most data were collected through job announcements mailed to law-lib and to Professor Hazelton as a law library director. Accordingly, the data may not include all positions, particularly law firm and civic law library positions, advertised during that period.
6. The AALL Annual Meeting has been considered the definitive national job forum for law librarians. Hazelton, *supra* note 2, at 17.
7. This arrangement was chosen so that the end of each period of study would follow the AALL Annual Meeting, held in July of each year. Since the Annual Meeting represents the culmination of each year's job market, I believed this sorting would afford a truer picture of the law librarianship "job year" than would a sorting by calendar year.

through July 31, 1996 (1995–96); and August 1, 1998, through July 31, 1999 (1998–99).

**¶9** I then classified the content of each job announcement according to various predefined categories. To the extent possible, these categories were based on those utilized in other content analysis studies in the library and information science literature.[8] The job content analysis categories I chose for this study are as follows:

- Total number of posted jobs[9]
- Geographic location by region[10]
- Type of library posting the job[11]
- Type of job posted[12]
- Minimum academic degree(s) required[13]
- Minimum years of library experience required[14]

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8. *See, e.g.,* Michael Towsey, *Nice Work If You Can Get It? A Study of Patterns and Trends in Cataloguing Employment in the USA and the UK in the Mid-1990s,* 24 CATALOGING & CLASSIFICATION Q. 61 (1997); David W. Reser & Anita P. Schuneman, *The Academic Library Job Market: A Content Analysis Comparing Public and Technical Services,* 53 C. & RES. LIBR. 49 (1992).
9. The total number of jobs in each of the four 12-month sample periods was determined by reviewing job announcements, then discarding duplicate postings.
10. The geographic location of jobs was classified according to the region of the posting institution, based on categories used by AALL in its salary surveys, as follows: New England (Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island); Middle Atlantic (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia); South Atlantic (Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida); East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama); West South Central (Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana); East North Central (Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio); West North Central (North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota); Mountain (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico); and Pacific (Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, Hawaii).
11. Four mutually exclusive library types were chosen: academic (library in a college or university setting); law firm or corporation (library in a law firm or corporate setting); state, county, court, or government (library in a civic setting); and independent contractor (information services provided through an independent operation, not necessarily connected to a library).
12. Three mutually exclusive job types were recognized: Public services (jobs that contemplate regular contact with patrons, including reference, circulation, computer services, and administrative positions); technical services (jobs that contemplate little or no regular contact with patrons, including cataloging, acquisitions, serials, and other similar positions); and other (nontraditional and other positions not covered in the previous categories). If a position included some regular contact with patrons (for example, certain technical services positions that include regular reference duty), that job was tallied as a public services position.
13. Four mutually exclusive categories were chosen for this analysis: master of library science (or equivalent) degree (MLS) only required; both MLS and juris doctor (JD) required; JD only required; and "not specified" (no degree requirement appeared in the job announcement). In addition, jobs in the "MLS only" category were further classified by whether the posting institution preferred the JD degree in addition to the required MLS.
14. The years experience category was divided into six mutually exclusive classes: Entry level (job announcement specified that no experience was required); one to two years relevant experience required; three to five years relevant experience required; six to eight years relevant experience required; more than eight years relevant experience specified; and "not specified" (no experience requirement set forth in the job posting). The "not specified" category included all job announce-

- Type of experience required[15]
- Type of personal skills required.[16]

**¶10** Only those features of a job advertisement cited as "required" were classified into categories; I excluded "preferred" or "desirable" features of a job announcement from the study.[17]

**¶11** The resumes of AALL job seekers received similar methodological treatment.[18] I first sorted resumes by the year of the AALL Annual Meeting in which they were submitted. I then reviewed each resume to determine whether the applicant would be available to begin a professional library position within the calendar year in which he or she attended the Annual Meeting. Applicants attending graduate school in library science who would not receive their degree before the end of the applicable calendar year were discarded as unavailable. Finally, I coded the resumes into various predetermined classifications, as follows:

- Total number of job seekers[19]
- Relevant academic degree(s) held[20]
- Number of years of library experience[21]

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ments that did not specify a minimum years experience requirement. Therefore this category included jobs that seemed to be entry level but were not specifically labeled as such, as well as jobs that obviously required a great deal of experience, such as announcements for director positions.

15. Fourteen categories were chosen for this analysis, representing the most frequently required types of experience appearing in the job announcements: general librarianship experience; law librarianship experience; reference experience; technical services experience, including cataloging experience; legal research experience using print sources; computer-assisted legal research experience; experience searching nonlegal databases, including experience with the Internet; experience with automated, integrated library systems; experience with microcomputer applications in information environments; supervisory experience; administrative experience; teaching or training experience; other (experience requirements not falling into the previously listed categories); and not specified (no experience requirements set forth in the job announcement). With the exception of the "not specified" class, these categories were not treated as mutually exclusive.
16. The nine categories chosen for this analysis, representing the most frequently required types of skills appearing in the job announcements, are: foreign language skills; communication skills (both written and oral); organizational skills; interpersonal skills; service orientation; ability to work as member of a team; professional involvement; other (skills requirements not falling into the previously listed categories); and not specified (no skills requirements set forth in the job announcement). With the exception of the "not specified" class, these categories were not treated as mutually exclusive.
17. The one exception to this rule was made in the category "minimum academic degree(s) required," where the number of jobs requiring an MLS only, but preferring a JD in addition thereto, were counted.
18. This study compares AALL job seekers only to jobs posted at AALL Annual Meetings, not to all jobs posted during a sample period.
19. The total number of job seekers was determined by counting the number of resumes submitted at the AALL Annual Meeting in each study period, then discarding those of candidates who would not receive their MLS degree before December 31 of that calendar year.
20. Four mutually exclusive categories were used for classification: MLS (or equivalent) only; MLS and JD; JD only; and no relevant graduate degree.
21. Candidates were classified in two mutually exclusive categories: Experienced (more than one year of professional experience); and entry level (one year or less of professional experience).

- Type of library in which most recent relevant experience was received.[22]

**¶12** After each job and resume in each period were classified by category, I studied comparable numbers and percentages in each category across the sample study periods. In particular, I compared results within each sample to determine which variable(s) appeared with the greatest frequency in each category. Results from the 1989–90 and 1998–99 periods were also compared to determine meaningful differences from the beginning to the end of the ten-year period of study.

## Findings

### *Content Analysis of Job Announcements*

**¶13** The results of this study suggest that the law librarianship job environment remained fairly stable throughout the 1990s. For example, the total number of jobs posted in the 1989–90 sample was 262; in 1998–99, 263 jobs were posted.

**Table 1**
*Total Number of Posted Jobs*

| 1989–90 | 1992–93 | 1995–96 | 1998–99 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 262 | 173 | 252 | 263 |

**¶14** Even allowing that the earlier period's job data may not have been as complete as the later sample,[23] the totals are sufficiently similar to indicate that the number of law library jobs has not increased disproportionately in recent years. Likewise, as shown in tables 2, 3, and 4, the percentage distribution of geographic job locations, types of libraries posting jobs, and types of jobs being posted did not vary meaningfully across the samples studied.

**Table 2**
*Geographic Distribution of Posted Jobs*[24]

| Region | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| New England | 15 (6) | 15 (9) | 26 (10) | 15 (6) |
| Middle Atlantic | 84 (32) | 39 (23) | 59 (23) | 65 (25) |
| South Atlantic | 19 (7) | 13 (8) | 32 (13) | 32 (12) |

*(cont.)*

22. The categories chosen for this analysis (academic; law firm/corporation; state/county/government/court; independent contractor; other) were the same as those chosen to categorize libraries by type in the job content analysis. *See supra* note 11.
23. *See supra* note 5.
24. Percentages in all tables have been rounded off and in some cases do not equal 100%.

**Table 2** ***(cont.)***
*Geographic Distribution of Posted Jobs*

| Region | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| East South Central | 3 (1) | 5 (3) | 10 (4) | 8 (3) |
| West South Central | 21 (8) | 12 (7) | 15 (6) | 14 (5) |
| East North Central | 33 (13) | 34 (20) | 38 (15) | 36 (14) |
| West North Central | 9 (3) | 12 (7) | 12 (5) | 15 (6) |
| Mountain | 13 (5) | 4 (2) | 7 (3) | 19 (7) |
| Pacific | 63 (24) | 36 (21) | 52 (21) | 59 (22) |
| Other | 2 (1) | 3 (2) | 1 (.3) | 0 |

**Table 3**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Type of Library*

| Type of Library | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic | 143 (55) | 123 (71) | 127 (50) | 139 (53) |
| Law Firm/Corp. | 77 (29) | 38 (22) | 87 (35) | 84 (32) |
| Civic | 31 (12) | 12 (7) | 33 (13) | 36 (14) |
| Independent | 11 (4) | 0 | 5 (2) | 4 (2) |

**Table 4**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Type of Job*

| Type of Job | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public Services | 200 (76) | 125 (72) | 207 (82) | 206 (78) |
| Technical Services | 57 (22) | 44 (25) | 39 (15) | 45 (17) |
| Other | 5 (2) | 4 (2) | 6 (2) | 12 (5) |

**¶15** Further evidence of stability is the fact that, within almost every category, a single variable consistently represented the majority of the jobs posted in every sample period. For example, in the category of geographic job location, the Middle Atlantic region posted the greatest number of jobs in every period, followed by the Pacific and East North Central regions. In the type of library category, more than 50% of the announcements in every sample were posted by academic libraries. Similarly, in the type of job category, at least 70% of the jobs posted in every period were public services positions. Table 5 shows that taking these two categories together, academic public services jobs comprised the majority of the job advertisements in each of the periods studied.

**Table 5**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Type of Library and Type of Job*

| Type of Library/ Type of Job | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic/ Public Services | 100 (38) | 87 (50) | 99 (39) | 105 (40) |
| Academic/Tech. Services | 40 (15) | 34 (20) | 27 (11) | 33 (13) |
| Academic/Other | 3 (1) | 2 (1) | 1 (.3) | 1 (.3) |
| Law Firm, Corp./ Public Services | 70 (27) | 28 (16) | 78 (31) | 72 (26) |
| Law Firm, Corp./ Tech. Services | 6 (2) | 8 (5) | 6 (2) | 6 (2) |
| Law Firm, Corp./Other | 1 (.3) | 2 (1) | 3 (1) | 6 (2) |
| Civic/Public Services | 23 (9) | 10 (6) | 27 (11) | 29 (11) |
| Civic/Tech. Services | 8 (3) | 2 (1) | 6 (2) | 6 (2) |
| Civic/Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 (.3) |
| Independent/ Public Services | 7 (3) | 0 | 2 (1) | 0 |
| Independent/ Tech. Services | 3 (3) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Independent/Other | 1 (.3) | 0 | 3 (1) | 4 (2) |

**¶16** This pattern held true in other categories as well. With respect to minimum academic degree requirements, for example, table 6 shows that the majority of the job announcements posted in every period required only a master of library science (MLS) or equivalent degree. Of those, approximately 13% in each period preferred a juris doctor (JD) degree as well. Both an MLS and a JD were required in approximately 32% of the postings in each sample period.

**Table 6**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Academic Degree Requirements*

| Minimum Degree Required | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MLS | 155 (59) | 95 (55) | 123 (49) | 123 (47) |
| JD/MLS | 67 (26) | 67 (39) | 70 (28) | 101 (38) |
| JD Preferred in Addition to Required MLS | 35 (13) | 28 (16) | 31 (12) | 34 (13) |
| JD Only | 1 (.3) | 2 (1) | 0 | 4 (2) |
| Not Specified | 39 (15) | 9 (5) | 59 (23) | 35 (13) |

**Table 7**

*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Years of Experience Requirements*

| Minimum Years Library Experience Required | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Specified Entry Level | 13 (5) | 5 (3) | 9 (4) | 15 (6) |
| 1–2 years | 41 (16) | 35 (20) | 44 (17) | 50 (19) |
| 3–5 years | 32 (12) | 24 (14) | 48 (19) | 45 (17) |
| 6–8 years | 4 (2) | 10 (6) | 3 (1) | 11 (4) |
| More Than 8 Years | 0 3 | (2) 1 | (1) 0 | |
| Not Specified | 172 (66) | 96 (55) | 147 (58) | 142 (54) |

**¶17** As illustrated in tables 8 and 9, quite a different pattern appeared when the types of experience and personal skills requirements categories were analyzed. I classified types of experience into fourteen different variables and types of skills into nine different variables, representing the most frequently appearing requirements in the job announcements.[25] Unlike all of the other categories, no single variable in these two categories appeared in a majority of the job announcements in every sample; in fact, the variables were diversely spread in frequency across the study periods. However, in every sample, virtually every variable showed an increase in percentage frequency over the period before.

**¶18** To identify some of the most notable increases, the requirement of experience with nonlegal online databases rose from 16% in 1989–90 to 39% of the postings in 1998–99. The microcomputer applications requirement increased from 8% to 28% of the postings across the same period. The computer-assisted legal research requirement rose from 19% in 1989–90 to 39% of the postings in 1998–99, while the requirement of experience with automated library systems likewise increased from 8% to 24%. Although some of these changes may be explained by the growth of technology in library environments, requirements of experience unrelated to technology increased significantly as well. To cite just one example, the requirement of experience using print sources for legal research increased in the job announcements from 11% in 1989–90 to 24% in 1998–99.

**¶19** Personal skills requirements demonstrated similar increases. Communication skills requirements rose from 23% of the job announcements in 1989–90 to 56% in 1998–99. Interpersonal skills requirements increased from 20% to 43%; service orientation requirements grew from 15% to 37% over the same period. Teamwork skills requirements likewise increased from 3% to 53%. Almost every other experience and skills requirement underwent a measurable increase in the job postings from 1989–90 to 1998–99 as well.[26]

25. *See supra* notes 15–16.
26. Only the variables labeled "experience with general librarianship" and "not specified" (in each category) showed a decrease in job announcement appearances across the sample periods. These decreases are offset by the overall increases in experience and skills requirements.

**Table 8**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Experience Requirements*

| Type of Experience Required | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Law Librarianship | 80 (31) | 61 (35) | 90 (36) | 100 (38) |
| General Librarianship | 15 (6) | 9 (5) | 10 (4) | 13 (5) |
| Reference Services | 20 (8) | 26 (15) | 25 (10) | 32 (12) |
| Technical Services | 39 (15) | 28 (16) | 45 (18) | 50 (19) |
| Legal Research Using Print Sources | 29 (11) | 33 (19) | 53 (21) | 63 (24) |
| Computer-assisted Legal Research | 50 (19) | 59 (34) | 96 (38) | 102 (39) |
| Searching Nonlegal Databases, Including the Internet | 42 (16) | 48 (28) | 93 (37) | 103 (39) |
| Automated Library Systems | 20 (8) | 36 (21) | 55 (22) | 63 (24) |
| Microcomputer Applications in Libraries | 22 (8) | 41 (24) | 66 (26) | 74 (28) |
| Supervisory | 36 (14) | 33 (19) | 55 (22) | 58 (22) |
| Administrative | 29 (11) | 29 (17) | 43 (17) | 47 (18) |
| Teaching/Training | 2 (1) | 12 (7) | 18 (7) | 21 (8) |
| Other | 29 (11) | 22 (13) | 40 (16) | 49 (19) |
| Not Specified | 52 (20) | 21 (12) | 38 (15) | 34 (13) |

**Table 9**
*Distribution of Posted Jobs by Skills Requirements*

| Type of Skills Required | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Foreign Language | 10 (4) | 9 (5) | 13 (5) | 18 (7) |
| Communication | 60 (23) | 61 (35) | 103 (41) | 147 (56) |
| Organizational | 13 (5) | 24 (14) | 37 (15) | 45 (17) |
| Interpersonal | 52 (20) | 69 (40) | 103 (41) | 113 (43) |
| Public Service Orientation | 39 (15) | 46 (27) | 76 (30) | 97 (37) |
| Ability to Work in a Team | 8 (3) | 35 (20) | 106 (42) | 139 (53) |
| Professional Involvement | 2 (1) | 9 (5) | 15 (6) | 21 (8) |
| Other | 16 (6) | 10 (6) | 52 (21) | 18 (7) |
| Not Specified | 131 (50) | 51 (29) | 108 (43) | 74 (28) |

### *Content Analysis of Resumes*

**¶20** The resumes submitted by job seekers at the AALL Annual Meetings during the sample periods suggest that, although the numbers of law librarian applicants at the Annual Meetings may be decreasing, the quality of those applicants is not necessarily in decline.

**¶21** The number of resumes submitted at the sample Annual Meetings rose from 93 in 1989–90 to 137 in 1992–93, then fell to 71 resumes in 1995–96. Only 55 candidates submitted resumes at the Annual Meeting in 1999.[27]

**Table 10**
*Total Number of Resumes Submitted at AALL Annual Meetings*

| 1990 | 1993 | 1996 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 93 | 137 | 67 | 55 |

**¶22** As indicated in table 11, the majority of applicants in each sample period held both an MLS and a JD degree. The percentage of double-degreed applicants increased across the periods studied, while the percentage of applicants holding only an MLS degree decreased.[28]

**Table 11**
*Distribution of Resumes Submitted at AALL Annual Meetings by Relevant Academic Degree(s)*

| Academic Degree(s) Held | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1999 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MLS Only | 36 (39) | 65 (47) | 26 (39) | 16 (29) |
| JD and MLS | 53 (57) | 70 (510 | 41 (61) | 36 (65) |
| JD Only | 1 (1) | 1 (.7) | 0 | 2 (4) |
| No Relevant Graduate Degree | 3 (3) | 1 (.7) | 0 | 1 (2) |
| Total MLS | 90 (97) | 135 (99) | 67 (100) | 52 (95) |
| Total JD | 54 (58) | 71 (52) | 41 (61) | 38 (69) |

**¶23** Table 12 illustrates an interesting shift in the experience level of applicants across the study periods. In the first two samples, the majority of the applicants were experienced;[29] in the last two, however, the majority was entry level.

27. It is very apparent that fewer applicants are seeking jobs at the AALL Annual Meetings. *See infra* notes 45–48 and accompanying text.
28. These findings are noteworthy in view of the fact that the majority of law librarians are not double-degreed. *See infra* note 48 and accompanying text.
29. I defined "experienced" here as "having more than one year of professional library experience."

Of the experienced applicants, most gained their experience through employment in academic law libraries, as shown in table 13.[30]

**Table 12**
*Distribution of Resumes Submitted at AALL Annual Meetings by Level of Experience*

| Level of Experience | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1999 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entry Level | 34 (37) | 60 (44) | 37 (55) | 29 (53) |
| Experienced | 59 (63) | 77 (56) | 30 (45) | 26 (47) |

**Table 13**
*Distribution of Resumes by Type of Experience*

| Type of Experience | 1989–90 no. (%) | 1992–93 no. (%) | 1995–96 no. (%) | 1998–99 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic | 32 (54) | 28 (36) | 15 (50) | 11 (42) |
| Law Firm/Corp. | 15 (25) | 33 (43) | 8 (27) | 8 (27) |
| Civic | 11 (19) | 10 (13) | 3 (10) | 8 (27) |
| Independent | 1 (2) | 0 | 2 (7) | 1 (3) |
| Other | 0 | 6 (8) | 2 (7) | 0 |

### *AALL Annual Meetings: Jobs vs. Job Seekers*

**¶24** In addition to the analysis described in the previous pages, I used the data collected from each of the sample AALL Annual Meetings to compare the positions posted at those meetings with the potential applicants who submitted resumes in search of those jobs.[31] These comparisons provide a "snapshot" of available law librarian jobs and active job seekers at a single point in time.

**¶25** As previously described, the number of applicants rose and then declined over the course of the sample periods. The number of jobs posted at AALL Annual Meetings followed a similar pattern, but in different samples. As shown in table 14, 115 jobs were posted at the 1990 Annual Meeting, and 93 job seekers submitted resumes. In 1993, that ratio reversed itself: only 62 jobs were posted, while 137 applicants submitted resumes. In 1996, 72 jobs were posted and 67 resumes submitted, while at the 1999 Annual Meeting, 99 jobs were posted and 55 resumes submitted.

30. An exception to this was the 1992–93 sample, in which 43% of experienced applicants were previously employed in law firm or corporation libraries, while 36% were employed in academic law libraries.
31. The data concerning jobs posted at AALL Annual Meetings were culled from the total jobs posted in each sample period; all resume data were collected at AALL Annual Meetings.

**Table 14**
*Total Numbers of Posted Jobs and Job Seekers at AALL Annual Meetings*

| | 1990 | 1993 | 1996 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Number of Jobs Posted | 115 | 62 | 72 | 99 |
| Total Number of Job Seekers | 93 | 137 | 67 | 55 |

**¶26** Again, the data do not necessarily support the assertion that law librarian job candidates are increasingly unqualified for the jobs they seek. Every job posted at each sample Annual Meeting studied could have been taken by at least one candidate who, at least in terms of academic degrees and years of library experience, was qualified for the position. For example, in every sample period the percentage of candidates holding MLS degrees exceeded the percentage of positions requiring only an MLS, as did the percentage of double-degreed applicants over the job announcements requiring both a JD and an MLS. Double-degreed candidates even outnumbered or at least equaled the percentage of MLS-only positions that stated a preference for the JD.

**Table 15**
*Distribution of Degrees in Job Postings and Resumes at AALL Annual Meetings*

| Degree(s) Required vs. Degrees Held | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1999 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MLS Required | 69 (60) | 44 (71) | 40 (56) | 53 (54) |
| MLS Held | 90 (97) | 135 (99) | 67 (100) | 52 (95) |
| JD/MLS Required | 43 (37) | 16 (25) | 28 (39) | 38 (38) |
| JD/MLS Preferred | 14 (12) | 17 (27) | 14 (19) | 23 (23) |
| JD/MLS Held | 53 (57) | 70 (51) | 41 (61) | 36 (65) |

**¶27** Table 16 shows that candidates also had sufficient experience to qualify for the jobs posted at the sample Annual Meetings. The percentage of jobs specified as entry level was dwarfed in every period by the percentage of entry-level candidates.[32] Likewise, in each sample the percentage of experienced candidates was greater than the percentage of job announcements that required experience.

**Table 16**
*Distribution of Experience Level in Job Postings and Resumes at AALL Annual Meetings*

| Minimum Years Library Experience Required vs. Actual Experience | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1998 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Specified Entry-level Job | 6 (5) | 3 (5) | 4 (6) | 4 (4) |
| No Experience Requirement Specified | 71 (62) | 36 (58) | 36 (50) | 56 (57) |
| Entry-level Job Seekers | 34 (37) | 60 (44) | 37 (55) | 29 (53) |
| Jobs with Experience Required | 38 (33) | 23 (37) | 30 (42) | 39 (39) |
| Experienced Job Seekers | 59 (63) | 77 (56) | 30 (45) | 26 (47) |

**¶28** Only when comparing the type of library posting jobs to the type of library in which experienced candidates received their most recent experience does a significant disproportion appear, and then only in one area: Academic jobs accounted for approximately 75% of the postings at the sample AALL Annual Meetings, while experienced job seekers with academic law library experience accounted for only approximately 45% of the candidates in each period. Of course, not all of the academic postings required previous academic experience, nor does relevant experience necessarily have to be gained in the same type of library as the posting institution.[33] However, from the perspective of academic libraries that post jobs at AALL Annual Meetings, there may be a trend toward fewer (academically) experienced candidates.

**Table 17**
*Distribution of Type of Experience in Job Postings and Resumes at AALL Annual Meetings*

| Type of Posting Library vs. Type of Job Seeker Experience | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1999 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Job | 81 (70) | 51 (82) | 53 (73) | 76 (77) |
| Academic Library Experience | 32 (54) | 28 (36) | 15 (50) | 11 (42) |
| Law Firm/Corp. Job | 13 (11) | 7 (11) | 11 (15) | 10 (10) |

*(cont.)*

32. This result may be somewhat skewed by the fact that I found few positions specifically labeled "entry level." Most of the positions that appeared to be entry level simply did not include a "years experience" requirement and so were tallied as "not specified." *See supra* note 14.
33. Indeed, some academic law libraries may actually consider experience in a nonacademic law library to be an advantage in a candidate for an academic position.

**Table 17** ***(cont.)***
*Distribution of Type of Experience in Job Postings and Resumes at AALL Annual Meetings*

| Type of Posting Library vs. Type of Job Seeker Experience | 1990 no. (%) | 1993 no. (%) | 1996 no. (%) | 1999 no. (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Law Firm/Corp. Experience | 15 (25) | 33 (43) | 8 (27) | 7 (27) |
| Civic Job | 13 (11) | 4 (7) | 6 (8) | 13 (13) |
| Civic Experience | 11 (19) | 10 (13) | 3 (10) | 7 (27) |
| Independent Job | 9 (8) | 0 | 3 (4) | 0 |
| Independent Experience | 1 (2) | 0 | 2 (7) | 1 (3) |

## Discussion

**¶29** The data from the study samples suggest that important fundamental characteristics of law librarianship jobs, including the overall number of positions, geographic location, type of posting institution, and type of position, have not changed significantly during the past decade. However, the personal skills and experience required of the librarians who are sought to serve in those positions appear to have altered dramatically. Indeed, if Marian Gallagher were to compile her list of law librarian characteristics today, based on the job advertisements in the sample studies, she might be compelled to add "highly proficient in all technological aspects of the modern library environment, strong public service orientation, works well independently and as a member of a team, experienced teacher, capable supervisor, competent administrator, serves the profession through involvement, typically in a leadership role, in professional groups and activities," at least!

### *Same Job, More Requirements?*

**¶30** Does the tremendous growth in experience and skills requirements in job advertisements indicate that the day-to-day work of law librarians has changed significantly over the past decade, such that only candidates with greatly increased abilities are capable of performing competently? This seems unlikely, especially in light of the overall stability of the job data in other respects. Of course, the rapidly increasing growth of technology in library environments has necessitated that all librarians develop additional skills, as both internal and external sources of information and methods of retrieving that information have moved to an electronic format. Naturally, such skills may appear as additional requirements in job postings by a technology-oriented library.[34] Nevertheless, the tech-

34. *See, e.g.*, Alvin M. Podboy, *A Law Librarian's Wish List for 2000*, N.Y.L.J., July 12, 1999, at 78; Elizabeth Henry Klampert, *Technology and the Law Librarian*, N.Y.L.J., Jan. 26, 1998, at S8; Kathy Carrick, *Toward a Renaissance in Law Librarianship*, 27 AALL NEWSL. 306 (1996).

nology phenomenon is only the latest such challenge to face information professionals. Librarians are known for their resilient adaptability to changes in information environments, and they have weathered other great transformations, from the dissemination of preprinted Library of Congress unit cards in the early 1900s to the development of microform in the 1920s, without necessarily increasing drastically the experience and skills requirements of professionals.[35]

**¶31** A more compelling hypothesis is that these seemingly new experience and skills requirements have always existed to some extent, but have simply never before been published with such frequency in the job announcements. There are a number of reasons why such publication is occurring today. To begin with, libraries seem to be focusing more attention on the process involved in the recruitment of employees.[36] Perhaps in response to the 1990s' general tightening of budgets after the freewheeling 1980s,[37] many law libraries have adopted a business model with respect to standard business-oriented aspects of law library administration, including employment.[38] As a result, law library administrators today who are responsible for posting positions seem to have more experience in human resources than similar administrators did ten years ago. In bringing a management perspective to the business of hiring librarians, these individuals have become better able to articulate, in writing, which qualities they require in a potential employee.

**¶32** Another explanation for the increase in published experience and skills requirements may seem trivial, but is real nonetheless: Law library administrators "borrow" liberally from each other's job advertisements. While such petit larceny may always have been a feature of the librarianship employment scene, the advent of modern technology has made the operation easier than ever before. Electronic postings and listservs, among other technological innovations, have made job announcements immediately available on a universal basis. Small wonder that a certain expression of a job requirement can spread across the law librarian job market in a short period of time, even becoming something of a fad. For example, the now commonplace requirement that candidates be able to "work independently and as a member of a team" did not appear as such in a single job posting studied in the 1989–90 sample period. By 1995–96 it had become quite common, and in the 1998–99 postings the phrase, or a variation thereof, was almost de rigueur.[39] Law libraries in the earlier periods surely valued teamwork and inde-

35. *See generally* MICHAEL H. HARRIS, HISTORY OF LIBRARIES IN THE WESTERN WORLD (4th ed. 1995).
36. *See, e.g.,* Christine Watkins, *Across the Spectrum: First Spectrum Recruiting Workshop Prior to the 1999 ALA Conference,* AM. LIBR., Sept. 1999, at 10; Stacey Kimmel & Scott R. DiMarco, *Planning an Interview: What Do Candidates Want?* 58 C. & RES. LIBR. NEWS 249 (1997).
37. *See* Anne V. Ellis, *Managing the Management: The Firm and Private Law*, LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q., Summer 1999, at 27, 27–28.
38. *See* Susan P. Siebers, *Law Librarians—Positioning for Our Future Impact on the Legal Community,* AALL SPECTRUM, May 1997, at 8–9; John A. Lehner, *Reconsidering the Personnel Selection Practices of Academic Libraries,* 23 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 199, 201 (1997).
39. *See supra* table 9.

pendence, even though these skills were not specifically published as job requirements; indeed, the fact that the requirement has become widespread is an indication of its importance. All that was necessary to start this or any "ad fad" was perhaps one innovative posting, borrowed by some and eventually assumed by all.[40]

**¶33** Other reasons may be suggested for the increase in published experience and skills requirements, but the conclusion remains the same: This phenomenon reflects the evolving process of drafting appropriate and articulate job announcements, rather than some fundamental change in the working activities of law librarians. The job is essentially the same; the requirements now are simply stated in a more defined and explicit manner.

### *Same Candidate, Less Qualified?*

**¶34** If the law librarian job is essentially the same, why are the candidates for those jobs currently perceived as being in decline? Have law libraries' standards increased to the extent that a candidate who would have been deemed acceptably qualified for a certain position eight or ten years ago is not similarly qualified today?

**¶35** Once again, this seems hardly likely. I have already argued that it is the publication of job requirements, not the actual requirements themselves, that has increased; therefore, job applicants are being judged today by hiring criteria that are not significantly different from before. As previously described, candidates do not appear less qualified in terms of academic degree and years of experience in later sample periods than they were in the earlier samples.[41] Although the determination of whether a candidate possesses the more subjective job requirements, such as interpersonal skills, cannot be made by a resume review, the data offer no evidence that these skills should be any less prevalent among job seekers today than in the earlier periods. The happy conclusion, then, must be that the overall quality of law librarian job applicants is not suffering a steep decline.

**¶36** The profession's apparent misperception of the applicant pool may have arisen in several different ways. For one thing, the anecdotes of law libraries spending over a year in search of qualified candidates may simply be war stories that have reached mythic proportion. Also, certain libraries may indeed be searching for just the right combination of skills and abilities in a candidate and may be willing to continue the search rather than hire someone who is not a perfect match; these libraries should not be taken as a barometer of the entire profession.

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40. For a discussion of the "ad fad" phenomenon from a British perspective, see David Stoker, *Wanted—An Innovative and Visionary Evidence Based/Knowledge Management Librarian*, 31 J. LIBRARIANSHIP & INFO. SCI. 67 (1999).
41. *See supra* tables 11–12 and ¶¶ 22–23.

**¶37** Further, in the analysis of AALL Annual Meetings data, I noted that the only significant disparity between candidates and jobs occurred in the academic sector, as academic job postings consistently outnumbered candidates with academic law library experience.[42] Academic libraries, which consistently posted the majority of jobs at the sample Annual Meetings,[43] may thus be feeling a trend toward fewer experienced candidates. Since the AALL Annual Meeting position postings are so heavily academic, it may be that the profession's membership has more reason to be aware of a downward trend from the academic perspective than of any countervailing trends from other perspectives.

### *Same Number of Candidates, Fewer Resumes?*

**¶38** The law librarian job applicant pool is perhaps most widely mourned for its decline in numbers. Publications such as the recent "AALL Members' Briefing" warn that the decreasing quantity of both job applicants and law librarianship students may threaten the survival of the profession as we know it.[44]

**¶39** These are indeed serious issues, worthy of further study and decisive action by the profession's membership. However, the data in this study suggest that, at least for the present, the decrease in the number of law library job applicants may not be as serious as has been assumed. Although the number of applicants submitting resumes at AALL Annual Meetings has indeed seen a steep decline, this may be at least partially explained by the fact that many applicants today may not be seeking jobs through the career services offered at the meetings. I previously mentioned the impact of technology on candidate searches, which has greatly increased the availability and currency of job postings.[45] The law librarianship job-hunting season may be turning its focus away from the AALL Annual Meeting, as libraries rely more on electronic postings and communications with candidates via e-mail. Candidates cannot wait until the Annual Meeting to submit resumes in response to job announcements electronically posted in February, and libraries may not be willing to wait until July to interview likely candidates.[46] This is even more likely to be the case if hiring libraries perceive that the applicant pool is lower in quality and number, so that the purportedly few "good candidates" must be sought and snapped up well in advance of the Annual Meeting. Another indication that law librarian job candidates are finding positions outside of the Annual Meeting placement process relates to the academic credentials of AALL job seekers. At the 1999 Annual Meeting, for example, 69% of can-

42. *See supra* ¶ 28.
43. *See supra* table 17 and ¶ 28.
44. Hazelton, *supra* note 2, at 17.
45. *See supra* ¶ 32.
46. In February 2000, I myself had applied for positions at three libraries that had posted job announcements on law-lib. These libraries had no intention of waiting to interview candidates until the July 2000 Annual Meeting.

didates held both the JD and MLS degrees;[47] however, the AALL Biennial Salary Survey for 1999 reported that only 19% of respondents held both degrees.[48] Because the majority of candidates at AALL Annual Meetings are among the minority of law librarians overall in terms of academic degrees, it may well be that a large number of applicants are finding jobs in ways unrelated to the meetings. Therefore, even though AALL data is admittedly the only source of large numbers of law librarian resumes, relying on it as an indicator of applicant numbers may give rise to misleadingly low results.

**¶40** However, even the incomplete AALL data indicate that more entry-level candidates are entering the profession in later sample periods than in the earlier periods. In both the 1995–96 and 1998–99 samples, more than 50% of the applicants submitting resumes had one year or less of professional library experience, as opposed to approximately 40% in the earlier samples.[49] This suggests that more individuals today are coming to law librarianship at the entry level, which is surely the sign of a robust profession.

## Conclusions: What of the Future?

**¶41** The job data sampled in this study indicate that, as the law librarianship profession moves into the twenty-first century, the professional job environment is a fairly stable one. The number of law library jobs has remained quite steady, while the essential characteristics of those jobs, despite the profusion of published experience and skills requirements, seem well established. Applicants for law library jobs appear to be similarly well established: The fundamental quality of applicants does not seem to be in decline, and the apparent decrease in the number of applicants, as determined by data gathered at the AALL Annual Meetings, may be overstated.

**¶42** The profession thus seems, at the moment, to be in good health. How do we maintain or even improve upon this health in the century to come?

**¶43** For one thing, the profession should take seriously the warnings contained in the *Members' Briefing*, especially with respect to the small number of library schools that offer serious study in law librarianship and the apparent decline in the number of students pursuing that study.[50] If this decline proves to be both real and lasting, the increasing numbers of entry-level candidates entering the profession suggested by this study may well decrease or disappear altogether.

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47. *See supra* table 15.
48. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY 1999, at iix (1999).
49. *See supra* table 16.
50. *See* Hazelton, *supra* note 2, at 20. Of the forty-nine accredited library schools in the United States, only three (Catholic University of America, Pratt Institute, and the University of Washington) offer three or more courses in law librarianship. Those three schools, combined, graduated fewer than 35 law librarianship students in 1999. *Id.* at 17. The University of Washington alone graduated only 29 students in the five-year period from 1994 to 1999, as compared to 42 students in the five-year period from 1989 to 1993. Unpublished data on file with the author.

**¶44** More research must be done to determine the true extent of this purported decline and how it likely will affect the profession in the coming years. In addition, studies are needed to ascertain how best to encourage library schools to teach legal research courses and, perhaps more important, to suggest law librarianship as a career to library students who do not hold a JD.[51] Law schools likewise should be made more aware of law librarianship as a career for lawyers and should be encouraged to recommend the profession as an alternative to traditional law practice.[52] The AALL Task Force to Enhance Law Librarianship Education must continue its important work in these areas at the national level.[53] Local organizations, especially those in the vicinity of library schools, also should realize that they can make a great difference by reaching out to library students and marketing the profession.[54] Law librarians should consider how they as individuals can also help attract qualified persons to the law librarianship profession.[55]

**¶45** In addition, law librarians who perceive that there is a decline in the overall quality of law library job applicants must understand that they have both the ability and the responsibility to work toward a change in this situation. Law libraries should consider the option of training candidates in desired skills, rather than waiting in vain for trained candidates to come to them. Experienced candidates should be encouraged and supported in professional development endeavors. Law libraries should not rely on posting jobs electronically or at the AALL Annual Meetings, but should become actively involved with library schools in an effort to recruit top candidates. At the same time, law libraries should work with library schools to clarify the types of knowledge and skills required for competent performance in the profession and to ensure that these are being adequately taught.

**¶46** Such efforts seem little enough to sustain the survival and growth of the profession.[56] If we work together on these very important issues, we can assure

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51. It is a commonly held misconception, even among lawyers, that a JD is required in order to pursue a career in law librarianship.
52. "Just as practicing attorneys need to work with law schools to ensure that the new graduates have the required skills upon entering the practice of law, we must work much more directly with those institutions educating new librarians to be sure that new graduates get the skills to succeed in the changing [library] environment." Siebers, *supra* note 38, at 10.
53. *See* AALL Task Force to Enhance Law Librarianship Educ., *Education for a Career in Law Librarianship, at* http://www.aallnet.org/committee/tfedu (last visited Sept. 10, 2000).
54. For example, in 1999 members of the Law Librarians of Puget Sound (LLOPS), an AALL chapter located in Seattle, Washington, participated in a colloquium at the University of Washington School of Library and Information Science entitled "JD Not Required: Careers in Law Librarianship." LLOPS also sponsored a tour for library students of several law firm libraries and a civic law library in Seattle. *See LLOPS University of Washington Library School Liaison Committee, at* http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/llops/Committees/uw_law_school/uw_library_school_liaison.htm (last visited Sept. 10, 2000).
55. *See How You Can Encourage Law Librarianship Careers,* AALL SPECTRUM, Oct. 1999, at 19.
56. Indeed, such efforts would seem to be required by the Ethical Principles of the American Association of Law Libraries, which call for librarians to "strive for excellence in the profession . . . by encour-

that there will be a steady supply of appropriately qualified law librarians to staff law libraries, and that those law librarians will aspire to the profession's time-honored high standards, striving to be "industrious, alert, charming . . . ,"[57] and more besides. And, somewhere, Mrs. Gallagher will smile.

aging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession." AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, ETHICAL PRINCIPLES (1999), *available at* http://www.aallnet.org/about/policy_ethics.asp.

57. Gallagher, *supra* note 1, at 539.