



The Northern Virginia ALA Newsletter

The Northern Virginia ALA Newsletter is published semi-monthly by the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators. Send comments and editorial ideas to:

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President's Message **By: Tempie Tavenner**

I have worked for lawyers for over 30 years. Most of my career has been in the legal accounting arena. I only became a legal administrator in 1995. I immediately contacted the one person I knew in ALA and asked her how I could become a member. She sent me all of the information and invited me to a monthly chapter meeting. I remember that first chapter meeting very well because I knew only one person there, my contact. I remember too that I was very intimidated by all of the powerful leaders present from the top law firms in Northern Virginia.

(Chapter Leadership Institute). This program is held once a year for new leaders and I was on such a high when I returned because I was so impressed by the professionalism of ALA and the quality of their programs. The next year I attended my first annual educational conference which was held in Baltimore and was the ALA anniversary year. I ended up serving on the EC in the position of Treasurer for two years and subsequently served in several other positions on the EC before becoming President. I have learned a lot about ALA and have met many truly great people.

The point of my story is, that if I can do this, trust me, anyone can do it!

I have seen many changes since I joined the chapter back in 1995. Many large DC law firms have opened branch offices in Northern Virginia in the past few years, especially in the Tysons and Reston areas. I feel that our chapter is at a turning point. Currently at approximately 50+ members, we have such growth potential. We can choose to stay where we are or we can choose to grow and offer much more to our membership. I think this is a very exciting time for our chapter. There is so much we want to accomplish. The EC is currently working with the three other chapters in Virginia to hold the first ever Virginia Statewide Retreat early next year. We are also looking into creating the first chapter website. We are working to partner with vendors, to hold a membership drive and to get more involved in community service programs. Finally, we have taken steps toward providing a survey of salaries and benefits for Northern Virginia Law Firms.

If any of the above interests you, please call any member of the Executive Committee and let us know. No amount of time that you can volunteer is too small. Please experience what I have experienced in ALA – meeting and working with a wonderful group of supportive members. Remember, if I can do this, you certainly can too!

The first year I was in ALA I only attended several chapter meetings and did not participate very much at all. The next year I read in the Newsletter that the EC needed a volunteer for the position of Treasurer and I figured that if I was going to become involved that was a wonderful way to get started. I was confident that with my background I could easily handle the challenge and that it would be something I would enjoy doing. So I joined the Executive Committee and filled the position of Treasurer. Again, major intimidation set in. All these people that I did not know were talking about things I knew nothing about and had no idea what they meant – the CCW coming up in October, attending the CLI in the summer, studying for the CLM, the regional conference and the annual conference – I must admit that I was overwhelmed! It took awhile to sort it all out but the more I participated, the more I learned and the more I learned the more I wanted to be more involved. My first exposure to ALA National was when I attended the CLI

Education

Law Firm Profitability

ALA offers focused educational opportunities this summer and fall. The **Law Firm Profitability Enhancement Program** - designed for principal administrators in law firms with fewer than 30 attorneys, and financial managers in all size firms - provides tools to analyze and improve firm profitability. The seminar fee includes a 200-page resource manual and a CD-ROM featuring a self-contained, comprehensive Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program. These tools help create budgets, analyze firm profitability and generate a "cost factor" for every timekeeper.

- **November 8:** The Alexander Resort, Miami, FL

ECLA

The three-day **Essential Competencies for Legal Administrators (ECLA)** course tackles management, finance, human resources, office operations and leadership. It is designed for principal administrators in law firms with fewer than 30 attorneys, functional specialists and legal administrators new to the profession. The course also includes more extensive resource materials:

- **November 4-6: Wyndham City Center, Washington, DC.** Visit www.alanet.org/education for more information

Education on the Line

Take advantage of the upcoming ALA educational teleseminars. All times are from 1 to 3 p.m., Central:

- **October 16:** "Seventh Annual Law Office Technology Update" by Robert Sobelman, Compass Computer Services
- **November 14:** "Legal Trends for 2003" by Blane Prescott of Hildebrandt International

Business Skills

Lawyers need to think as businesspeople. Achieving a business mindset in your firm will make your job easier and the organization more successful. ALA offers A

Business Skills Curriculum for Law Firm Associates, a resource guide and curriculum-planning tool that provides learning objectives and key resources to launch and conduct a successful associate training program. **ALA members receive a \$100 discount.** Visit www.alanet.org/bsc or call (847) 247-5577 to order. Please promote this product in your chapter newsletters. Watch for a camera-ready ad in a future edition of "Just the Facts."

ALA Management EncyclopediaSM

The latest edition of the **ALA Management EncyclopediaSM** is available through the ALA Products Department (847/247-5577). It contains a number of comprehensive articles covering pressing issues in the areas of general/strategic planning, facilities management, human resources and financial management. **This CD-ROM is a must for every legal organization.** For more information, visit www.alanet.org/alame. Please promote this title in your chapter newsletter.

Certified Legal Manager (CLM)SM Certification

ALA announces 21 new Certified Legal Managers following the May 2002 CLM exam administered in San Antonio. Watch for an announcement in the August/September issue of *ALA News*.

The next exam date is October 21, 2002, at the following locations. The application deadline is September 20:

- Milwaukee, WI (in conjunction with the Region 3 Conference)
- Boston, MA (in conjunction with the Region 1 Conference)
- Atlanta, GA and
- Portland, OR

The spring 2003 exam (April 6) in San Diego will coincide with the ALA Educational Conference and Exposition.

To begin preparing for the exam, consider forming a study group. Many ALA chapters have designed effective group structures to meet the size and needs of

those interested. For more information, contact Jan Marshall (847) 247-5562 or jmarshall@alanet.org.

Regional Conferences

Don't forget to save the following dates for the 2002 slate of ALA Regional Conferences:

- **Region 2:** September 27 and 28 in Ponte Vedra Beach, Jacksonville, FL

For additional information on Regional Conferences, visit www.alanet.org/education/conf.html.

Do You Utilize Management Solutions?

Nearly 300 requests came to ALA's research service ALA Management Solutions during June 2002. Gary Weitzel, Administrator of Information and Membership Resources, attributes the 170 percent increase in requests over the same period in June 2001 to the directory of studies now found at the enhanced ALA Reference Desk:

www.alanet.org/members/solution/refdesk.html. Weitzel encourages members to review the sample studies on this page. Remind your chapter members of this service - but please limit requests for studies to no more than three per day per member.

Legal Vendors

Looking for a new vendor? Use the online resource at your fingertips - check the Legal Vendor section of www.alanet.org for companies that cater to law firms.

Pardon Our Anti-Trust

by Jan Waugh, Director of Member Services
Association of Legal Administrators

Most ALA members belong to a local chapter for the networking and exchange of information and ideas. Face-to-face meetings provide great opportunities for this but perhaps of equal importance are "just in time" communications - the ability to obtain information at the moment it's needed. Not surprisingly, then, many ALA chapters have formed e-mail groups or list serves to facilitate that need. A great idea? Indeed it is, as long as everyone understands and follows important ground

rules to prevent on-line discussions from straying into dangerous territory.

First, a little background: The single most significant law affecting professional associations and their chapters is the Sherman Antitrust Act, which makes unlawful "every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce...". A professional association, by the very fact that it is comprised of competitors, is a "combination" - thus satisfying one of the elements in proving an antitrust violation. Other federal antitrust laws as well as state laws apply here as well.

There is no organization too small or too localized to escape the possibility of a civil or criminal antitrust suit. Moreover, the penalties for antitrust violations are so severe (including enormous fines to the individuals, their employers, the chapter and the association - not to mention incarceration) that all members owe it to themselves and their fellow members to know the boundaries, especially since it can be easy to stray beyond them without realizing it.

In an association setting, there are four main areas of antitrust concern: price fixing, membership, standardization and certification, and industry self-regulation. The area where members are most likely to violate the law - and the area where the government appears most concerned - is price fixing. ALA's Antitrust Guide, written by legal counsel John Jeffries, states that "members should refrain from any discussion which may provide the basis for an inference that the members agreed to take action relating to prices, production, allocation of markets, or any other matter having a market effect." While not specifically stated in that phrase, wages - both current and future - are included in the list of topics to avoid. Discussions about fees, disbursement charges, billing rates, interest charges and credit terms should also be avoided.

Having a group discussion (whether in person or on-line) about any of the above topics is not price fixing, in and of itself, but it can raise the presumption that the discussion was held for that purpose. Worse yet, if two or more members conclude to pay a specific salary or salary range for a position based on discussions that took place among the group, a claim of price fixing could easily follow. Such a claim would have to be proven, of course, but the trouble and expense of defending yourself - not to mention the severe penalties if found guilty - underscore the wisdom of avoiding

these discussions in the first place. Similarly, discussing the results of a salary survey with "competitors" (i.e., other members) should be avoided since it could create a perception of collusion on fees, wages, and/or billing rates.

The closing paragraph of the Antitrust Guide says it best: "The government's attitude toward professional associations [like ALA] require professional association members, as well as professional associations themselves, to at all times conduct their business openly and avoid any semblance of activity which might lead to the belief that the association members had agreed, even informally, to something that could have an effect on prices, fees or competition. Therefore, chapter officers and every member of ALA must be vigilant in their role of "antitrust watchdog".

For further information about this or related matters, refer to ALA's Antitrust Guide or contact ALA's Executive Director, John Michalik.

ALA's Mission Statement

Improve the quality of management in legal services organizations;

Promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of legal administrators and all members of the management team;

and

Represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.

Executive Committee Meetings		
Date	Time	Place
9/10/02	12:00 noon	Mintz Levin
10/1/02	12:00 noon	Reed, Smith, Hazel & Thomas, LLP
11/5/02	12:00 noon	Wickwire Gavin, P.C.
12/3/02	12:00 noon	Hunton & Williams
2/7/03	12:00 noon	Reed, Smith, Hazel & Thomas, LLP
2/4/03	12:00 noon	Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, LLP
3/4/03	12:00 noon	Katz & Stone L.L.P.
4/1/03	12:00 noon	Wickwire Gavin, P.C.

Membership Meetings			
Date	Time	Place	Topic
9/19/02	12:00 noon	Maggiano's	Diane Dongarra, Region 2 Education Officer, speaks about ALA: Recent developments, benefits of membership and participation
10/17/02	6:00 pm	Odin, Feldman & Pittleman, P.C.	Berman & Bebe Competing for Legal Talent
11/21/02	8:00 am	Hunton & Williams	
12/12/02	12:00 noon	Maggiano's	Holiday Event
1/16/03	6:00 pm		
2/20/03	8:00 am	Wickwire Gavin, P.C.	
3/20/03	6:00 pm	Reed, Smith, Hazel & Thomas LLP	Vote on New Slate of Officers
4/17/03	12:00 noon	Maggiano's	Change of Gavel/Installation of Officers

Current Executive Committee	
President - Tempie Tavenner	ttavenner@katzandstone.com
Secretary - Michele Coratola	mcoratola@morganlewis.com
Past President/Newsletter - Pam Walker	pwalker@hunton.com
Treasurer - Aurora Quasebarth	aquasebarth@wickwire.com
Education - Pam Walker	pwalker@hunton.com
Membership - Kevin O'Hare	kohare@reedsmith.com
Regional Rep. - Kelly Blouin	kblouin@mintz.com
Hospitality - Donna Mellette	dmellette@beankinney.com