American Association of Law Libraries (AALL)
Report to the Council
ABA Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
November 2017

Following are updates on some recent activities of the Association:

Passage of the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA) is an AALL priority, and we have coordinated closely with the ABA Standing Committee on the Law Library of Congress and Uniform Law Commission to work for its passage. Currently the Act, which would ensure permanent public access to authentic electronic legal information, is now law in Washington, DC and sixteen states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and West Virginia.

In early September, AALL filed an amici curiae brief with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, calling on the judicial body to ensure that the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) makes electronic federal court records freely available “to the greatest extent possible.” Filed in response to National Veterans Legal Services Program et al v. United States of America, AALL supports the plaintiff’s recent motion for summary judgement. In its brief, AALL and its co-sighatories argue that Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) fees prevent libraries and scholars from protecting and promoting essential public access benefits. AALL notes academic law libraries are unable to provide patrons with no-fee access to court documents through PACER, harming law libraries’ abilities to provide permanent public access to legal information, to teach effective legal research, and to preserve legal materials. AALL is also working with members of Congress to advocate for increased access to PACER.

We recently appointed a member advisory group to conduct a State of the Profession benchmarking survey that will document the current landscape of law libraries, specific to each library type, and will provide benchmarking in the following areas: technology, collections and library resources, constituent services, institutional outcomes, research competencies, training, staffing, and leadership. The purpose of the State of the Profession Survey is to provide members and their organizations with the information and insights they need to effectively assess, advocate, and strategically prepare for the future.

Another special committee recently drafted a Body of Knowledge (BOK) document for AALL. The BOK serves as a blueprint of essential learning and skills for the legal information and law library community. The BOK provides clear standards for benchmarking and tracking best practices, and will guide AALL in education program development, publications, programs and initiatives. This will allow AALL to clearly define and communicate the areas of expertise, competency and knowledge our members provide.
The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is the only national association dedicated to the legal information profession and its professionals. Founded in 1906, AALL fosters the profession by offering its members knowledge, leadership, and community that make the whole legal system stronger. Of its nearly 4,500 members, more than 1,600 are law librarians at academic institutions. AALL is a member-driven nonprofit educational organization; an elected Executive Board and actively participating membership determine its policies and positions. For more information, visit www.aallnet.org.