The Hon. Solomon Oliver, Jr., Council Chairperson,
Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
321 N. Clark Street, 21st Floor
Chicago, IL 60654-7958

via email to JR Clark, jr.clark@americanbar.org

December 5, 2013

Dear Chief Judge Oliver and Members of the Council:

On behalf of the membership of the Society of Academic Law Library Directors (“SALLD”), we write to express our opinions on the proposed changes to Standard 603 of the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools (“the Standards”). SALLD, founded in 2008, is an organization of approximately 160 law library directors, drawn from more than 65% of the 203 accredited law schools in the United States. SALLD exists to communicate and advocate for the shared interests of its members. Thus, SALLD bylaws require that a minimum of 60% of SALLD members approve a statement before it can be issued on behalf of SALLD. This statement has been approved by 67% of the SALLD membership. It is worth noting that 100% of SALLD members who returned a ballot voted to approve this statement.

As law school library directors, SALLD members have long understood and appreciated the importance of authoritatively established guidelines, including the Standards under review. The bedrock of our principles and values is the provision of the highest levels of service to the law students and faculty members who are our primary patrons. We provide the informational resources which form the foundations of teaching and research. We are educators and scholars on the pedagogy of legal research instruction, legal information bibliography, and numerous substantive legal topics. We are leaders in the selection and implementation of educational technologies within law schools. In all of these endeavors, SALLD members strive to follow best practices and provide the highest standards of service.

SALLD has previously shared its opinions on the proposed changes to Standard 603(c) with the Standards Review Committee. We write here to support the changes proposed by the Committee in October 2013 to Standards 603(a), 603(b), 603(c), and Interpretation 603-1. SALLD concurs with the Standard 603(a) language that law schools shall have a full-time library director whose principal responsibilities are to manage the law library and provide information resources to faculty and students. A full-time library director with principal responsibilities to manage the library and provide information resources is vital to the educational mission of the law school. SALLD also concurs with the Committee that Standard 603(b) shall place the power with each law school to select and retain its law library director. This appropriately gives the law school the power to select and retain one of its mission-critical educational officers, its law library director.
SALLD also supports the October 2013 redrafted language of Standard 603(c). The academic qualifications of a law library director are so important and vital to the successful functioning of the law library and its law school that they shall require appropriate academic qualifications. A law library’s director’s position is unique within law schools and simply quite different from that of other faculty. A law library director must have appropriate academic qualifications and knowledge of and experience in library administration sufficient to support the program of legal education and to enable their law school to comply with the Standards. Almost all academic law library directors, unlike librarians in other subject-specific libraries, have the credential – the J.D. degree – that is earned by the students we help educate, in addition to the terminal degree of our field – the M.L.S. (or equivalent). This combination of educational qualifications enables the academic law library director to develop collections, services, and educational programs that precisely meet the needs of students and faculty. It benefits the law schools by ensuring that librarians with diverse talents and qualifications are sought after and become an integral part of the success of legal education.

It is the position of SALLD that the wording of Standard 603(a), (b), and (c), and Interpretation 603-1 as recommended by the Standards Review Committee supports the high level of service that SALLD members seek to provide. Thus, SALLD supports the October 2013 changes proposed by the Standards Review Committee to Standards 603(a), (b), and (c), and Interpretation 603-1. It is in the best interests of legal education and law schools to implement these proposed changes.

On behalf of SALLD, we respectfully urge the Council to send these proposed changes out for notice and comment with the wording of the Standards Review Committee.

Sincerely yours,

Beth Adelman
Beth Adelman, Chair
Society of Academic Law Library Directors