

# AALLSpectrum

The background of the entire cover is a dark blue space filled with numerous wireframe models of virus particles. These models are composed of interconnected lines forming a spherical shape with several protruding spikes, resembling a coronavirus. The particles are rendered in a light blue color with some internal lighting, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. They are scattered across the frame, with some appearing larger and more detailed than others.

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## LESSONS LEARNED FOLLOWING COVID-19

**REFLECTIONS ON WHAT WE HAVE LOST, WHAT WE  
HAVE GAINED & HOW WE CAME OUT STRONGER**

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## LEADER PROFILE

# FOR JAMES E. DUGGAN, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO SERVICE

**James E. Duggan** initially thought about becoming a librarian in high school, but the idea of having to learn the Dewey Decimal System made him second-guess his decision. “I remember going to the public library as a kid, and thinking, I am never going to learn this. I have an undergraduate degree in education because that was my backup plan. I was going to teach social studies,” said Duggan. “I actually went through the program, student taught government and history and social studies, but my goal was always to go to law school.” Fortunately, he was admitted into the University of Mississippi School of Law. Needing a job to help support himself, he applied to the law library and was lucky enough to be hired by Ann Fessenden, the technical services librarian at the time. He worked as a circulation desk clerk and loose-leaf filer throughout law school. When the librarians went to the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Annual Meeting, they put Duggan in charge of the library. “Gradually, I began to realize this wasn’t such a bad career choice after all, and it had the added enticement of having the Library of Congress classification schedule, rather than Dewey,” recalls Duggan. The rest, as they say, is history.



**A**fter earning his law degree, Duggan went straight to library school at Louisiana State University School of Library and Information Science in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, earning his MLIS in 1987.

Duggan's first job after graduating from library school was a temporary position. Rita Millican at LSU Law Library hired him to retrospectively catalog French law serials. "I sat in a basement office for two months armed with a typewriter and a French-to-English dictionary trying to figure out subject headings," recalls Duggan. Eventually, he was hired by Frank Houdek as a reference librarian at Southern Illinois University School of Law Library in Carbondale, Illinois.

Duggan has been a member of AALL since 1985. Since then, he has served in several leadership positions including AALL President (2008-2009), as an Executive Board member (2001-2004 and 2007-2010), chair of the AALL Awards Committee, editor of *Law Library Journal*, and member of the Finance and Budget Committee and the Strategic Directions Committee, to name but a few. He chaired two special interest sections (SIS)—Legal Innovation & Technology and Social Responsibilities—and was president of two AALL chapters: Mid-America Association of Law Libraries (MAALL) and New Orleans Association of Law Librarians (NOALL). Duggan has also attended every Annual Meeting since 1987, including the last two virtual conferences. He was inducted into the AALL Hall of Fame in 2014. He has published articles on legal research and legal issues related to computers, the internet, and technology. He also chaired the Louisiana Library Network Consortium (LOUIS) Executive Board in 2014-2015.

Here, he discusses the lasting effect the pandemic will have on the profession and legal information professionals, and how his various leadership positions within AALL have helped shape his career.

### Since most law schools have returned to in person, what have been the biggest challenges you have faced?

Actually, I never left. We closed from March 2020 to August 2020, but I was in the office every day because someone had to be on-site to receive the mail, process bills for payment, access the collection for patrons, etc. I think the biggest challenge since the law school reopened was enforcing the mask mandate. Most people got it, but

there were always a few that felt that they didn't have to follow the rules that everyone else had to.

For libraries, our stock in trade is service and being available for people to come in and use the resources.

Students need to have a

place to go, Wi-Fi access, and access to databases. If they don't have those things or the ability to print, it really diminishes their library experience.

### What lasting effect do you think the pandemic will have on the legal profession?

I think law firms learned to pivot during the pandemic to concentrate on services that didn't necessarily require in-person meetings and constant travel. Many attorneys discovered that they could easily work from home and didn't need big conference rooms or offices. However, that doesn't mean that they no longer needed support staff or library staff to help guide them to necessary resources; it just created a new support model.

When it comes to law librarianship, I think that the answer really goes back to the Yirka Question, which came out of Carl Yirka's article "Perspective: The YIRKA Question and Yirka's Answer," from the July 2008 issue of *AALL Spectrum*; it brings into focus what law librarians were doing pre-pandemic versus what they are doing now. Especially with the pandemic, many law libraries had to pivot to online training and digital materials, and since returning, do they really need to do the in-person stuff they used to do? The pandemic has changed a lot of librarian's viewpoints on some of the services that they were providing. My view is it's all about service. If you are providing a service electronically, fine; if you are doing it in person, fine. But whatever it is, it must be perceived as meeting your clients' needs—whether that's students, faculty, stakeholders, or the public. I find that if I am not face-to-face with someone, I can't read the visual cues and I can't always interpret what they want. I still feel that sometimes you can do something a lot faster in person; sometimes it's just easier to go grab something and give the student the materials, and *show* them a database online, than it is doing it over an electronic chat or Zoom.

On the other hand, students do like the convenience of being in casual attire and not having to get up and come to the law school. But students do still like our reading room. They like the quiet, and we still have faculty who like to hold printed books in their hands rather than electronic books. So, it's a tradeoff in a lot of ways.

### You served as the *Law Library Journal* editor from 2013-2018. How did legal scholarship change/grow during your five years at its helm? What makes *LLJ* a significant publication for the profession?

During my years as *LLJ* editor, I tried to keep the emphasis on legal scholarship articles that not only highlighted the growth of technology within the profession but were also interesting to read. Frank Houdek, Dick Danner, and Janet Sinder did an excellent job with *LLJ*, and my goal was always to continue to make the articles interesting and readable but keep them scholarly. And I think I did that. We also saw a significant growth in articles from

#### JAMES E. DUGGAN

- DIRECTOR OF THE LAW LIBRARY
- ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW
- TULANE UNIVERSITY LAW LIBRARY
- NEW ORLEANS, LA

# Q&A QUICK HITS WITH JAMES E. DUGGAN

## Words to live by?

As a graduate of Virginia Tech, I have adopted the university's motto, "Ut Prosim," as my own—it translates as "That I May Serve."

## Best book you recently read?

Sarah M. Broom's *The Yellow House: A Memoir*. A truly moving portrait of a local New Orleans East family that moved into a yellow shotgun house 60 years ago, and how they survived the injustices of class, race, inequality, and politics in one of the most vibrant and yet downtrodden cities in the country. It won the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 2019.

## Favorite way to unwind after a long day?

Probably rereading a mystery from one of the great classic mystery writers: Christie, Allingham, Sayers, Marsh, Tey, etc.

## Favorite movie?

*The Lady Vanishes*, the 1938 Hitchcock thriller with Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave. It has everything:

drama, comedy, mystery, and a snippet of a folk tune that contains an encoded message that the main characters must remember to deliver to the British Foreign Office.

## Favorite travel destination?

I had the good fortune as AALL President to attend the 2008 British and Irish Association of Law Librarians Annual Study Conference in Dublin, Ireland. It's a wonderful city, and I would love to go back and see more of the country of my ancestors.

## Song or musician that always lifts your spirits?

I am a big fan of classical orchestrations that include brass and organ, for example Respighi's 1924 tone poem "Pines of Rome." The last movement, "The Pines of the Appian Way," builds to a huge crescendo as the trumpets sound, representing Roman centurions triumphantly marching to Capitoline Hill. It always exhilarates me. If I had to choose a more contemporary artist, I would say Josh Groban.

will we need to develop to get to those places? Obviously, some of the things that we need to get there haven't been invented yet. Part of it depends on technology that perhaps isn't in the pipeline yet, or processes that are dependent on equipment we don't own or personnel we haven't yet hired. To get to that point, however, you have to make sure that there will be a future to think about, hence keeping the staff available, the lights on, the databases accessible, and the books on the shelves are always going to be the priority. In the back of my mind, I am always thinking: What are our ultimate goals as a library? You can't just live for today and hope tomorrow will take care of itself.

## You served as AALL President from 2008-2009. How did that experience as well as your other leadership roles impact your career?

Serving as AALL President was one of the most exciting years of my professional life. As you know, Ann Fessenden, who hired me for my first job, was president of AALL from 2007-2008, and I was elected president from 2008-2009. So, she handed over the reins of the Association to me that summer at the Annual Meeting. But it was also one of the hardest years, as I had just started as a new director at Tulane. Every

one of the leadership roles I have held has helped me in my career by teaching me some important skills: how to run a meeting; how to reach consensus; how to move on when consensus isn't possible; how to effectively deal with various constituents, and when to say "yes" (and when and how to say "no").

Holding such leadership opportunities—no matter what you do in whatever leadership position you hold—helps you to realize that you need to include input from stakeholders when making decisions. I think that has really served me well throughout my career.

## You have served on a number of AALL committees. What have been the top three most rewarding volunteer opportunities for you?

First, serving on the AALL Awards Committee twice (it is a lot of fun getting to inform AALL members that they have been selected to receive an AALL honor). Second, acting as AALL's representative to the first China-United States Conference on Legal Information and Law Libraries in Beijing, China, in May 2009 (it began my involvement with the Chinese and American Forum on Legal Information and Law Libraries). AALL has been a sponsor of many of their meetings since then, and I was co-chair of CAFLL

non-directors, who were publishing as members of the academic community. I continued the use of regular columns, including Diversity Dialogues, Keeping Up with New Legal Titles, and the always popular Practicing Reference (by Mary Whisner). No matter what type of law librarian you are, *LLJ* is the professional scholarly journal for articles that detail our roles, responsibilities, contributions, and aspirations. I also saw many more people who had gotten positions that perhaps required them to write as part of getting tenure, or for keeping a continuing appointment, which I think is all for the good, because you need to write. You need to continue to explore your horizons as a librarian, and I think it's good to keep engaged within the profession. As a dedicated profession, we need to continue to examine what makes us professionals. We need the *Journal*, and we need journals like it to continue to examine our responsibilities to the profession—what is it that we do, and how do we practice as law librarians?

## As a leader, how do you balance tending to immediate needs with strategic planning?

Obviously, it's a balancing act. I am always thinking about long-term needs and where we might be in a year, two years, or five years down the road. What sort of processes

a couple of years ago. It served as a building block for me becoming a part of that organization. Third is my term as *LLJ* editor. Sure, it was a lot of hard work, but I got to meet so many people through their scholarship, and work with the awesome Janet Sinder.

### **Since your time in the profession, who has been your mentor and given you the best advice?**

The director at my first professional position, Frank Houdek. I worked for him for 20 years at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. He not only was a role model and friend, but for over 20 years, he was someone I could always turn to for career advice, teaching advice, writing advice, editing advice, and pretty much anything else I needed. He would always help. During my AALL presidential year, I tapped Frank to chair one of my presidential initiatives, adding additional ways to honor and award AALL members. He is the reason AALL now has a Hall of Fame and so many other opportunities to recognize the contributions of our members. I basically followed in his footsteps as AALL president and as *LLJ* editor. Because of him I got to meet a lot of luminaries in the profession, including Marian Gallagher. So, I would not be the person I am today without Frank as my mentor. He has been instrumental in my career.

### **Within the legal information profession, who do you admire most?**

There are so many in the profession that I admire and have admired that it's almost impossible to name just a few. Certainly the giants of law librarianship, such as Marian Gallagher, Jack Ellenberger, Albert Brecht, and Alan Holoch, who served as role models for many of us. Besides Frank Houdek, for currently working law librarian heroes, I will mention Barbara Bintliff, Joan Howland, and Mary Whisner. All three are greatly respected legal scholars who have been active in various law librarianship spheres (AALL, Association of American Law Schools, American Bar Association, *LLJ*, etc.). Each is truly someone to emulate. Plus, Mary was my library school classmate and is probably the smartest reference librarian I have ever known. She cares about the profession, and I don't think there is any topic that you can ask her about that she doesn't at least know something about. She knows everything!

### **How do you stay engaged and passionate about your work?**

I learn something every day, which really helps me stay engaged. By constantly learning new things, it keeps work interesting. For example, I recently learned how to process internal and external interlibrary loan and article requests (after a staff member left). Not only did I learn about our library's traditional procedures, but I also grasped much more of our collection's strengths and

weaknesses, which in turn helps me to contribute to the overall collection development policy. I also learned that, when preparing books for shipment, I am *not* a whiz with the packing tape dispenser.

### **What advice would you give to newer law librarians just entering the profession?**

I think sometimes new people tend to pigeonhole themselves. I would recommend being open to all aspects of the profession, and not think that you are only going to work in one type of library or be one type of librarian (i.e., public services vs. technical services, etc.). While you want to become proficient at what you do, it never hurts to know what opportunities other librarians in other departments have, or how a job in a different type of law library might add new skills to your resume. Even if your ultimate goal is not to become a manager or director, it is still helpful to know how each department contributes to the overall operation of the law library.

### **What can law librarians do to showcase their contributions and accomplishments?**

One of the easiest ways that librarians can showcase their contributions and talents is by speaking about their expertise at a local or regional chapter meeting. Propose an educational program that highlights your experience developing a new procedure or transforming an old one, or teaching something innovative. This will help get your name out there as a law librarian, and that will then showcase your skills and, ultimately, your achievements. Successful educational programs get picked up at the national level or are even transformed into online offerings. Another way to showcase a law librarian's achievements is to write about them. This can be done via an article in *AALL Spectrum*, *Law Library Journal*, or other publications where your contributions are reflected in the subject of the article. The more you speak or write on a subject, the more you will become known as someone who is an expert in those areas.

### **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

Every day is different, and I get to do a myriad of things. Professionally, working with my law library colleagues at Tulane is one of the best parts of the job. Personally, the most satisfying aspect of the job is helping a colleague, student, or patron find the information or resource they requested, whether it's through a successful reference request, catalog search, acquisitions order, or simply by clearing the paper jam in the printer. It all comes down to service. I derive a lot of happiness by answering reference questions, or finding that book or resource for someone, or making sure that someone's online question is answered. That's what keeps me going. ■