



# NOCALL *News*

Northern California Association of Law Libraries  
A Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries

May - June 2007

Volume 27, Issue 5

## President's Message

Since this will be my last column as President, I would like to take a moment to thank everyone who has worked so hard on behalf of NOCALL this past year. Each person on the Executive Board has provided such excellent leadership and direction, and each of you have advised me so well throughout the year. To all the committee chairs, I am so grateful you were willing to say yes to my request, and take on the responsibility of running your committee over this past year. I know how hard you work, and this association would not exist without you. To all the members who contacted me with feedback, ideas, and support, I cannot thank you enough for your care, concern, and enthusiasm. Finally, I want to thank the three Past Presidents with whom I work, Mary Hood, Ellen Platt, and Donna Williams. You have served as my wise women and sounding board when I needed to talk things out. I am grateful for your sage counsel.

As I hand over the reins to Coral, I place them in good hands. Coral is an excellent, innovative leader; she will bring new life to this organization. I am looking forward to working under her direction next year. And, as part of the Executive Board, we will have a lot of work to do. For the first time that I can remember, we will not have any

law firm librarians on the Executive Board. There will be two county law librarians, Coral and Kelly, and five academic librarians, Julie, Mary, Susan, Shannon and myself. This gives the Board the additional charge of ensuring that the voice of law firm librarians is included in our dialog and discussion. There are several ways this can be accomplished, and it will be Coral's decision how we should proceed. But I would like to ask firm librarians, particularly past board members, to consider being part of a sounding board over the next year, to allow us to bounce ideas off of you. I also think we need to use the listserv for association business much more than has been done in the past. As you all know, we share a common bond as law librarians, but our needs and perspectives can be very different, depending on the specifics of our job responsibilities and work environment. For the chapter to be strong we need to include everyone.

Finally, I would like to address the newer members of the chapter. If you want to be active, consider this your invitation, call me, email me. There are many opportunities to get involved. Coral is selecting Committee chairs as we speak. No experience required! And if you don't want to chair a committee, each committee will need members. Association work has many benefits.

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In the end you get back more than you give out, because you create and strengthen professional bonds, and develop friendships that go beyond the workplace. This next year will be a year of rebuilding; and each of us is a stakeholder, to borrow a term Kathie Sullivan used at the Spring Institute. This chapter exists for us, for the law librarians of Northern

California. By contributing our ideas, our needs, and our preferences, it will become an association that enhances our ability to do our jobs and inspires us to be dynamic and creative in the process.

It has been an honor for me to serve as your president this past year.

-prano

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### NOCALL News

The NOCALL News is published five times a year by the Northern California Association of Law Libraries, a chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries, and is a benefit of membership.

The Northern California Association of Law Libraries assumes no responsibility for the statements and opinions advanced by the contributors to the association's publications. Editorial views do not necessarily represent the official position of the Northern California Association of Law Libraries.

**Editor:**

Mary Pinard, Sacramento County Law Library  
mpinard@saclaw.org

**Committee Members/Contributing Editors:**

Nora Levine, Reed Smith LLP  
Mark Mackler, California DOJ, San Francisco  
Elisabeth McKechnie, UC Davis Law Library  
Erin Murphy, UC Davis Law Library

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**NOCALL News 2006-2007 Submission deadlines:**

Sept/Oct – Sept. 8  
Nov/Dec – Nov. 3  
Jan/Feb – Jan. 12  
Mar/Apr – Mar. 2  
May/June – May 4



## MUSINGS FROM MARK

Mark Mackler  
California Department of Justice  
San Francisco

**The “Vanishing Trial” and “Cases Keep Flowing In, But the Jury Pool is Idle”**...These are the titles of recent stories in Business Week and the New York Times. Consider this: In 1984, there were 12,000 Federal civil trials. In 2006, there were 3,600. In 1966, there were 66,000 Federal lawsuits filed. In 2006, there were 260,000. In the 21 states for which data is available, the number of civil jury trials fell 40% from 1976 to 2004.

So, why is the happening? Arbitration, mediation, changes in liability laws, and aggressive summary judgment. Summary judgment is requested in about 17% of cases, and is granted in about 9% of them. Back in 1960, no more than 1.8% of Federal civil cases ended in summary judgment. The jury trial is a distinctively American tradition. Almost all civil jury trials in the world take place here, and 90% of the criminal trials. Professor Paul Butler of George Washington University calls the jury trial “as fundamental a part of our culture as jazz or rock ‘n’ roll.” But that tradition seems to be dying.

**Customer Service Story**...So, a while ago my home telephone service is dead. Well, not quite dead but almost dead. Static on the line. No dial tone. Frequently dropped calls. I call good old AT&T. After all, I think, how hard can it be to isolate and fix a problem on a local telephone line?

The first tech arrives. Eddie. “Well, I don’t know if this fix will work or not. If it doesn’t work, call us back.” It doesn’t work.

I call AT&T again. A second tech arrives. Pedro. “Well, I’m the best tech around. I have been doing this for 18 years. The problem isn’t with us. It’s with your burglar alarm system. Your system is bad, and it’s shorting out our telephone line. Call your alarm company, and have them come and disconnect the alarm from our line. That will prove to you that the alarm system is the problem. And, if I’m wrong I’ll burn my CWA Union card.” So, the burglar alarm company comes and disconnects their system from AT&T. The phone is still dead. Pedro, have you burned your CWA card yet? I contact the alarm company to have the system re-connected. That will be \$80, please.

Now, I’m angry and desperate. I haven’t had a land line for three weeks. People think I’ve died because they cannot get through to me. I reach a supervisor at AT&T. I demand that they fix the problem, or I will stage a sit-in at AT&T and complain to the PUC. She dispatches Reynaldo. Reynaldo diagnoses the problem and fixes it within a few hours. It works!! My telephone works!! I can’t thank him enough. But each time I thank him, he replies: “No

problem.” Twice more I thank him, and twice he responds “No problem.” But it was a problem, a Big Problem. The lesson for all of us: Too often we are thanked for solving the Big Problem, and we minimize our value and work by saying “No Problem.” I’ve done that, and I bet you have, too.

**And Finally, a Day that Will Live in Law Library Infamy**...On May 1, after almost 2 years here, I ended my Probationary status with the State of California and became a Permanent employee. I am the Master of the Universe! What a BMIL (Big Man in the Library) I am. That morning, I’m in our Library reading/lounge area talking with one of the attorneys. A paralegal walks by. She is going to check out a book. I call out to her: You can leave the check-out card on the counter and we’ll take care of it for you. She gives me a quizzical look, and she says, “Are you sure?” So I say, “Yep, just leave the card on the counter and we’ll take care of it.” She says, “How do you know? Do you work here?” And so it goes.

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## WHAT ARE YOU READING?

Nora Levine

**THE ENCHANTED APRIL** by Elizabeth Von Arnim  
**NEVER LET ME GO** by Kazuo Ishiguro

Since I’m just finishing at SLIS, I’ve been doing more reading than usual in a final burst of procrastination. Last week I could not put down “The Enchanted April”. Not having seen the film, I didn’t realize that the book was written in the 1920s. It’s a sweet story and the writing is excellent -- very funny, with lots of punctuation to enjoy. This week I read “Never Let Me Go” by Kazuo Ishiguro. It is set in a slightly alternate reality from ours. I recommend reading it, but maybe not at night -- it’s a little creepy. Next week will be the Lord Peter stories by Dorothy L. Sayers to celebrate completing school!

*Amy Hofer  
Curiale, Dellaverson, Hirschfeld & Kraemer*

**BETWEEN, GEORGIA** by Joshilyn Jackson

I know the woman who wrote this book and was prepared to just be kind about it, but it was quite a page turner, from which I had a hard time tearing myself away. The novel concerns families and the issues they face, with a splash of varying personalities thrown in for spice. Nonny is the adopted daughter of a deaf and blind artist who lives with her twin and next door to her older sister in a small town in Georgia. Their well ordered life faces constant disruption as members of the family

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show up. Bernice (pronounced BER-nee-z) is the matriarch of the family and powerful in the town as well. She wields her power in a kind way until one event makes her mean and short tempered. Nonny is trying to do right by everyone and in the process makes no one happy.

**GENTLEMAN AND PLAYERS** by Joanne Harris.

There is some aspect to Harris' books that make them painful to read. This one is especially so, because the book is darker even than the previous "Five Quarters of the Orange." The perpetrator is so cunning that none of the characters have a clue as to what is happening. Throughout the book I wanted to scream at them to look out or pay attention. This is one book that I think should be read rather than heard, because there are a lot of passages which deserve re-reading, not so easy to do on audio. However, I did enjoy the different voices used on the audio version.

**THE HISTORY OF LOVE** by Nicole Knaus

Knaus has a masterful way of catching the essence of people and their day to day lives. I was particularly enamored with the fact that Knaus' main characters vary wildly in age. Leo is a senior citizen who discusses feeling invisible and how he makes himself seem visible. However, I couldn't figure out the point of the story. This book is confusing to start and I found the conclusion to be a complete disappointment. I also wasn't sure if the main issue was resolved. I didn't dislike this book as intensely as some others, but think it might have been the kind of book to read in English 1A or 1B and then discuss with others to unravel.

**INNOCENT BLOOD** by PD James

Philippa takes advantage of her right to find her birth parents the minute she turns 18. The story she has been told her whole life about her mother being a maid in a great manor house and her father being a gentleman is found to be completely untrue. The horrifying truth sets her on a collision course with human nature and sets her up to learn more about life in one summer than she has learned in 18 years. PD James' descriptions are so masterful that I can see and hear and feel the settings of her books, which is one of the things I like about her writing.

**THE LIGHTHOUSE** by PD James

Adam Dagiiesh is called out to a private island that caters to famous, powerful or wealthy people who crave privacy to investigate the murder of a famous writer. The suspect pool is small and everyone has motive and opportunity. The case

is complicated by a second murder and characters suddenly taking ill. As even Dagiiesh falls ill, his Detective Inspector, Kate Mishkin, is tapped to take over the investigation. This book had a very different feel that the others I have read in the series, though I have been reading the series out of order and think that I have missed a lot of the character development.

**JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH** by Roald Dahl

I received a beautiful edition of this book as a gift when I was about eight. Somehow it disappeared, but after listening to Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, my son wanted more Dahl books. This is fantastical story that I think is inspiration for the Unfortunate Series of Events books by Lemony Snicket. After the tragic death of his parents, James goes to live with his two horrible aunts who treat him as a virtual slave, including starving him. His life takes a sudden turn for the better when he meets a mysterious man who gives him some magic. Interesting and amusing touches in the text.

One key question that was never answered was why the aunts didn't get in trouble for keeping James out of school.

**THE WONDERFUL STORY OF HENRY SUGAR** by Roald Dahl

"James and Giant Peach" was not enough and my son wanted more Dahl. I had never read any others by him so I picked this one at random. "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar" tells the story of a rich selfish young man and his arrogant quest for all the money in the world. His quest, however changes him in ways that he could never imagine. This is a short book and very interesting in ways that made one think a person could do anything if they try hard enough.

*Jaye Lapachet  
Coblentz, Patch, Duffy & Bass LLP*

**THE DISMISSAL OF MISS RUTH BROWN: CIVIL RIGHTS, CENSORSHIP AND THE AMERICAN LIBRARY** by Louise S. Robbins

I first heard about this interesting book on the great web comic strip, "Unshelved," (<http://www.overduemedia.com>) which follows the goings on in the Mallville Public Library. Ruth Brown's story, however, is completely unlike the humorous fictional librarians at the MPL. Brown had been a respected librarian for over thirty years at the public library in a small Oklahoma city. In 1950, however, she was dismissed for supplying "subversive" (read Communist) materials in the library. While this might have looked like a typical McCarthy era witch hunt and censorship battle, in fact Miss Brown's support

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of civil rights for African-Americans was what really caused the American Legion and other community leaders to turn against her. (Among her "behavior unbecoming the head of a public library," she had permitted non-whites to use her facilities and most boldly, with two African-American friends, sat at the counter of a drugstore and asked that they all be served.)

The author describes the background of American society in the early 1950s in sharp perspective, giving us details about women's role, McCarthyism and the red scare, the civil rights movement, the role of the American Library Association, etc. It becomes understandable, although regrettable, as to how these factors all came together to create the perfect storm, allowing a valued community professional to be fired.

(Another interesting aspect to Ruth Brown's story -- and covered in the book -- is that the dismissal received national attention and it became the basis for a little known Bette Davis film, "Storm Center.")

#### **THE INTERSECTION OF LAW AND DESIRE** by J.M. Redmann.

I just love the title. It's not only a theme of the novel, but the actual street intersection in New Orleans. In preparation for AALL, I'm rereading the Micky Knight mysteries. Knight is a New Orleans lesbian private detective, with a lot of her own issues about abuse. In this book, Micky has to deal with a child pornography ring, as well as confronting her own past. Redmann's books are a wonderful amalgam of good mystery plots, wonderful character development, juicy descriptions of New Orleans and just plain good writing. This is the third of her four mysteries. A new one is expected soon, although it seems to have been delayed in the aftermath of Katrina.

*Paula Lichtenberg, Librarian  
Keker & Van Nest*

#### **AN ICE-CREAM WAR** by William Boyd

"An Ice-Cream War" is the story of American, German, and British lives in Eastern Africa turned upside down by World War I. European and American settlers in Eastern Africa, once friendly neighbors, reluctantly turned to enemies. The background of the novel is the amazing success of German lieutenant colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck (not much portrayed in the story), who commanded Germany's tiny, undersupplied African force (mostly African soldiers). He inflicted embarrassing losses on British forces at Tanga, and tied down Allied forces that outnumbered his own by at least 10 to 1 for the duration of the war. Against this fascinating and little-known history, "An Ice-Cream War" is an engaging novel of war, love, and revenge.

*Liza MacMorris  
Wilson Sonsini*

#### **THE CATALOGUE OF DEATH** by Jo Dereske

Just recently someone recommended a mystery writer I've never heard of -- Jo Dereske, a former librarian. The titles were intriguing, plus the "accidental" detective is a public librarian. I took a peek into her newest book on Amazon, "The Catalogue of Death" and got hooked. I've read 4 of the 8 or 10 Miss Zukas mysteries to date, and have loved them all. Her writing style is very good, subtly humorous as she makes fun of the stereotype of our profession, with good plots and description of everyday life in a public library. The heroine, Miss Zukas, single, though wooed by the chief of police, is in her late thirties and lives in a small Washington town. She is forever getting mixed up in local murders, of course. The other regular characters are interesting, too - her flamboyant and wild friend Ruth, her library colleagues, etc. To sum it up: really fun escapist reads. Unfortunately, many of her books are no longer available, and you really have to look for them. When I tried to order couple of them from a Washington bookstore, they didn't have them and called the author, who lives nearby, to see if she had any left. She found a copy of each in her garage for me! Talking about 'service oriented'....

*Yaroslava Odvardko  
Littler, Mendelson*

#### **THE GIRLS** by Lori Lansens

I just finished "The Girls", a novel by Lori Lansens, author of "Rush Home Road." It is the story of Ruby and Rose Darlen, twins conjoined at the head, and the story of their life in rural Ontario. The story begins when the girls are 29 years old. Rose, who is more interested in writing, begins the story and then the chapters alternate between Rose and Ruby. It is a reflection of a life that could have been filled with hideous suffering and sensationalism, but is instead a life filled with warmth and deep love between sisters and the remarkable characters that surround them. Lansens characterizations are what make this book truly memorable. From the ever-encouraging Aunt Lovey and Uncle Stash who took the girls in when they were abandoned to the young Larry Merkel who held a fascination for the girls that transcended life, Lansens draws vivid portraits against a bleak landscape that will be hard to forget.

*Cynthia Palmer  
Greenberg Traurig*

#### **UNCIVIL SEASONS** by Michael Malone **TIME'S WITNESS** by Michael Malone

I just read two mysteries from Michael Malone, "Uncivil Seasons" and "Time's Witness." I usually lean more towards historical fiction, but the reviews for these two novels grabbed my attention. The NYT Book Review described the first as a "rattling good mystery" with "vivid imagination," "a compelling plot," and "prose

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of often poetically haunting beauty.” Who could resist that description? Both books are set in Hilliston, North Carolina, a small college town that is mostly run by families with tobacco and cotton money. The two main characters, blue-blood Detective Justin Savile V, and his working-class partner with white-trash roots, Cuddy Mangum, are complex characters with some interesting skeletons in their closets. In “Uncivil Seasons”, Detective Savile is charged with solving the murder of his Aunt Cloris, the wife of State Senator Rowell Dollard. The town’s power brokers want Justin to pin the murder on some local petty thieves, but Justin finds clues that suggest that there was a far more personal motive for his aunt’s death. When his investigation starts uncovering some of the sordid secrets of Hilliston’s leading families, Justin’s own life is in danger.

In “Time’s Witness”, Cooper Hall, the brother of a death-row inmate, is murdered the day after the governor grants his brother a stay of execution. Cuddy Mangum, now Chief of the Hilliston Police, quickly concludes that the motive for the murder wasn’t just racial animus, and he diligently pursues a number of twists and turns in the case to uncover dirty tricks in the upcoming election for state governor and corruption within his own police department. Time’s Witness has enough plot surprises to keep you turning the pages and some fun, melodramatic courtroom scenes as well!

Amy Wright  
USF Law Library

“**Seeking More Traffic, Google Widens Format**,” by Robert Weisman, Boston Globe, May 17, 2007, Business pg.A1. [http://www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2007/05/17/seeking\\_more\\_traffic\\_google\\_widens\\_format/](http://www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2007/05/17/seeking_more_traffic_google_widens_format/)

Google unveiled a new “universal search” application on May 16, 2007. The search pages will look the same, but will allow you to search video (think YouTube, which Google purchased in November 2006), images, news, books, maps and local search results on the same page. In addition, new contextual navigation links at the top of the search screen allows users to filter results into distinct categories like blogs and patents.

“**America Gone Wrong: A Slashed Safety Net Turns Libraries into Homeless Shelters**,” by Chip Ward, Tomdispatch.com, posted at Alternet April 2, 2007. <http://alternet.org/story/50023>

“A dirty little secret about America is that public libraries have become de facto daytime shelters for the nation’s street people while librarians are increasingly our unofficial social workers for the homeless and mentally disturbed.” This article discusses graphically the ongoing problem of mentally ill patrons who use the library as an informal day-shelter as well as the difficulties of serving them equally with rest of the library’s clientele. This issue is one which faces public law libraries and some academic law libraries as well as the public library.

**Law Library Lights: Researching Special Areas** by The Law Librarians’ Society of Washington D.C.: A Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries, volume 50, #3, Spring 2007. [http://www.lisdc.org/lights/pdf/50\\_3.pdf](http://www.lisdc.org/lights/pdf/50_3.pdf)

This well organized special-edition newsletter from this chapter of AALL contains features on patent searching the USPTO web site, introductions to topics such as researching election law, federal communications law sources, national criminal background checks, federal government contracts and others.

## PROFESSIONAL READING IN REVIEW

By Elisabeth McKechnie and Susan Llano  
U.C. Davis Law Library

“**The State of America’s Libraries Report, April 2007**,”

ALA website, April 16, 2007, <http://www.ala.org/ala/pressreleases2007/march2007/stateoflibraries.htm>

According to this report, the number of visits to public libraries in the United States increased 61% between 1994 and 2004. It turns out that the internet, rather than hurting libraries as some doomsayers predicted, actually helped spur people’s use of local libraries. Ninety-nine percent of the libraries in the U.S. provide free public access to the internet (whereas another study shows that only 69% of U.S. households have internet access). In other good news, the mean salary of public and academic librarians rose 4.6% from 2005.

## MEMBER NEWS

**Cossette Sun**, director of the Bernard E. Witkin Alameda County Law Library, has been selected to receive the 2007 Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award.

**Susan Nevelow Mart’s** article, “Let the People Know the Facts: Can Government Information Removed From the Internet Be Reclaimed?”, 98 L. Libr. J. 1 (2006) won the Law Library Journal article of the year award.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The names of members who have joined NOCALL since publication of the brand, spanning new 2006-2007/2007-2008 NOCALL Directory and since the last newsletter are listed below as well as changes and corrections for continuing members. Any corrections changes or additions to the Directory should be sent to:

**Ramona Martinez**  
 NOCALL Membership Chair  
 UC Berkeley School of Law Library  
 227A Boalt Hall # 7210  
 Berkeley CA 94720-7210  
 Phone: (510) 643-2947  
 Fax: (510) 642-9122  
 Email: [rmartinez@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:rmartinez@law.berkeley.edu)

Update: Membership renewal forms will be going out very soon.  
 Please look for the form in the mail, and get it back to me ASAP. Thanks!

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### New Members

Bill Combest  
 National Sales Director  
 Jones McClure Publishing, Inc.  
 1113 Vine Street, Suite 240  
 Houston, TX 77002  
 Phone: (800) 626-6667  
 Fax: (713) 335-8201  
 Email: [bcombest@jonesmcclure.com](mailto:bcombest@jonesmcclure.com)  
 NOCALL Status: Associate      AALL Member?: Yes

Jessica Corcoran  
 Library Assistant  
 Schiff Hardin LLP  
 One Market Street  
 Spear Street Tower, 32nd Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94105  
 Phone: (415) 901-8700  
 Fax: (415) 901-8701  
 Email: [jecorcoran@schiffhardin.com](mailto:jecorcoran@schiffhardin.com)  
 NOCALL Status: Student      AALL Member?: Yes

Joanne Dumapay  
 Library Assistant  
 Gordon & Rees LLP  
 275 Battery Street, Ste. 2000  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 986-5900  
 Fax: (415) 986-8054  
 Email: [jdumapay@gordonrees.com](mailto:jdumapay@gordonrees.com)  
 NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: No

Alexander Kern  
 Librarian  
 Stanislaus County Law Library  
 1101 13th Street  
 Modesto, CA 95354-0907  
 Phone: (209) 558-7759  
 Fax: (209) 558-8284  
 Email: [kern@arrival.net](mailto:kern@arrival.net)  
 NOCALL Status: Student      AALL Member?: No

Anne Linvill  
 Law Library Intern  
 Greenberg Traurig LLP  
 San Jose, CA 95124  
 Phone: (408) 761-6564  
 Email: [aclinvill@yahoo.com](mailto:aclinvill@yahoo.com)  
 NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: No

Nicolette Lodico  
 Information Manager/Librarian  
 Habeas Corpus Resource Center  
 50 Fremont Street, Ste. 1800  
 San Francisco, CA 94105  
 Phone: (415) 348-3854  
 Fax: (415) 348-3873  
 Email: [nlodico@hcrc.ca.gov](mailto:nlodico@hcrc.ca.gov)  
 NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: No

Kristie Pearmund  
 Library Specialist  
 Baker & McKenzie LLP  
 Two Embarcadero Center, Suite 1100  
 San Francisco, CA 94111-3802  
 Phone: (415) 984-3876  
 Fax: (415) 576-3099  
 Email: [kristie.a.pearmund@bakernet.com](mailto:kristie.a.pearmund@bakernet.com)  
 NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: No

*Continued on page 8*

**Continuing Members**

**\*\*Changes are noted in bold.**

Kate K. Alderman Ruby  
**Retired** Reference Librarian  
**Lafayette, CA 94549**  
**Phone: (925) 283-4699**  
**Email: kateruby@comcast.net**  
**NOCALL Status: Retired      AALL Member?: No**

Sandra Campbell  
 Library Director  
 Baker & McKenzie LLP  
 Two Embarcadero Center, Suite **1100**  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 576-3066  
 Fax: (415) 576-3099  
 Email: sandra.campbell@bakernet.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Anne Dana  
**Law Librarian**  
 Fenwick & West LLP  
 Silicon Valley Square  
 801 California Street  
 Mountain View, CA 94041-2008  
 Phone: (650) 335-7968  
 Fax: (650) 938-5200  
 Email: adana@fenwick.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Tina Dumas  
 Reference Librarian  
 Nixon Peabody LLP  
**One Embarcadero Center, 16th Floor**  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 984-8378  
 Fax: (415) 984-8300  
 Email: tdumas@nixonpeabody.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Lille Foster  
 Librarian  
 Sideman and Bancroft LLP  
 One Embarcadero Center, 8th Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 733-3927  
 Fax: (415) 392-0827  
 Email: lfoster@sideman.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Sharon McNally Lahey  
**Library Manager**  
 Fenwick & West LLP  
 Silicon Valley Center  
 801 California Street  
 Mountain View, CA 94041  
 Phone: (650) 335-7249  
 Fax: (650) 938-5200  
 Email: slahey@fenwick.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Nora Levine  
**Oakland, CA 94602**  
**Phone: (510) 482-0661**  
**Email: nlevine@value.net**  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Hua Li  
 Reference Librarian  
 Baker & McKenzie LLP  
 Two Embarcadero Center, Suite 1100  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 984-3846  
 Fax: (415) 576-3099  
 Email: hua.li@bakernet.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: No**

Linda Spath  
 Librarian  
 Nixon Peabody LLP  
**One Embarcadero Center, 16th Floor**  
 San Francisco, CA 94111  
 Phone: (415) 984-8379  
 Fax: (415) 984-8300  
 Email: lspath@nixonpeabody.com  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**

Kendra Stoll  
**Librarian**  
**Tobacco Control Section-CA Dept. of Health Svcs.**  
**P.O. Box 997413**  
**MS 7206**  
**Sacramento, CA 95899-7413**  
**Phone: (916) 449-5483**  
**Fax: (916) 449-5517**  
**Email: kstoll@dhs.ca.gov**  
**NOCALL Status: Active      AALL Member?: Yes**



## NOCALL OFFICERS 2006-2007

President • Prano Amjadi, Santa Clara University • 408/554-5320 • pamjadi@scu.edu  
Vice-President/President Elect • Coral Henning, Sacramento County Law Library • 916/874-6013 • CHenning@saclaw.lib.ca.us  
Secretary • Holly Riccio, O'Melveny & Myers • 415/984-8761 • hriccio@omm.com  
Treasurer • Julie Horst, UC Hastings College of the Law • 415/565-4792 • horstj@uchastings.edu  
Past President • Pam Rino • 650/364-7172 • prino@evarino.com  
Member at Large • Peg LaFrance, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe • 415/773-5928 • mlafrance@orrick.com  
Member at Large • Greg Fite, Alameda County Law Library • 510/272-6494 • greg.fite@acgov.org

## NOCALL COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS

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