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.

Continued on page 2
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
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.

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

Continued on page 4
show up. Bernice (pronounced BER-neez) 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 Dagliesh 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 Dagliesh 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 a 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
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, Lansen 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...
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

PROFESSIONAL READING IN REVIEW
By Elisabeth McKechnie and Susan Llano
U.C. Davis Law Library

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.

“Seeking More Traffic, Google Widens Format,” by
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,
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
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.

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:

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NOCALL Membership Chair
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227A Boalt Hall # 7210
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Phone: (510) 643-2947
Fax: (510) 642-9122
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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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Continued on page 8
Continuing Members

**Changes are noted in bold.**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

For more details, see http://www.nocall.org/calendar.html