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from the editor

By Catherine A. Lemmer

Why I . . .

I keep a tattered and yellowing photocopy of "Why I Read?" by Randall Silvis (**randallsilvis.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/why-i-read.pdf**) pinned to my home office wall board. I came across this elegant essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in April 2011. I have since shared it many times, including last week when I presented a copy to a bibliophile colleague at the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) as a birthday gift. My favorite line from the essay reads:

> "I do not tell them that being a human is a lonely, lonely business and that only a couple of things can assuage that loneliness. Loving someone is the best remedy, I do not tell them. Making music is good medicine too. And so is reading, another form of love—an act of faith and trust and desire, an act of reaching out and of coming together."

Keeping faith with that sentiment, I recently jettisoned clothing and shoes in favor of literature. On my return trip to South Africa for the last three months of my LRC fellowship, I instead lined the bottom of my luggage with the likes of Tim O'Brien, Jenna Blum, Melissa Fay Greene, Kathryn Stockett, Marcus Zusak, President Obama, and some favorite children's books for my LRC colleagues.

At JFK, my checked luggage weighed in at 59 pounds. Although quite willing to pay the $100 overweight fee, I casually mentioned that I was "taking books to South Africa because they are expensive there." At that, the baggage checker tagged my luggage "heavy" but did not charge the overweight fee. Similarly, when sneaking an extra carry-on into the plane, I simply mentioned books for South Africa and the ticket agent waved me through. Perhaps they too are familiar with "Why I Read?"

Even more fun than the hugs and exclamations I received when delivering the books to their new owners in South Africa in book bags from NYC's *The Strand* (**www.strandbooks.com**) is the daily conversations in which I engage about the books. I continually prompt conversations to learn my colleagues' impressions about the titles I lugged across the Atlantic Ocean. I'm vested, you see, because I brought some of my favorite reads.

Conversations enhance not only our understanding of our place in the world, but also our understanding of our work and our careers. Sharing experiences and knowledge online and in person is what we do as information professionals.

I was an official "law librarian" for less than two weeks when I attended my first AALL Annual Meeting and Conference in Denver in 2010. At that meeting, I was warmly welcomed and given advice on a wide variety of law librarianship issues. I shared contact information with new colleagues and was encouraged to stay in touch. The friends and colleagues I met during those four whirlwind days at CONELL and the conference have remained valued sources of support, information, and sharing to this day.

I look forward to the sharing of knowledge and experiences that is such an important part of the AALL Annual Meeting and Conference. At every meeting I learn something that further develops my career as a law librarian and change leader. These are the reasons ***why I*** plan to attend the 2014 Annual Meeting in San Antonio. I hope that you too plan to attend, and I look forward to sharing with you the experiences, information, and opportunities that draw us together as law librarians.

I also hope that you too will jettison some nonessentials in favor of literature. As librarians, professors, researchers, and those who live in the world of words, we know the power of literacy. It is ***why I*** and many of you donate to the annual AALL Children's Book Drive. The 2014 conference marks the 16th anniversary of this wonderful program. So please plan to leave a little space in your bag for a few children's books or an Amazon gift card.

See you in San Antonio! ■

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www.aallnet.org/Blogs/spectrum-blog