

# AALL Spectrum®

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### AALL Spectrum Submissions

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# from the editor

By Catherine A. Lemmer



## I'd Like to Hear From You

As the new *AALL Spectrum* editorial director, I have spent the past few months as an apprentice to former editorial director Mark Estes. Working with Mark has been, and continues to be, a great honor and pleasure. He is the consummate mentor—encouraging questions, soliciting suggestions, providing guidance, answering the endless “why” questions, and, most importantly, making it fun. His experience in law librarianship and his knowledge of and passion for AALL and its role in our profession are inspiring.

In his early days as editorial director, Mark used his “From the Editor” column to summarize each issue's articles and their key points. On the advice of the previous editor, Paul Healey, however, and due to his interest in the power of storytelling, Mark moved to the more holistic, “start with story/encourage an action” structure that we have all enjoyed over the years. Never one to argue with success, I thought I would continue this latter editorial tradition in my first column.

In addition to my work on *AALL Spectrum* and as head of public services at the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law, I have spent a fair amount of time these past few months visiting college and university campuses with my husband and our only child. We visited both coasts and made a few stops in between before she decided to attend New York University this fall. Ever the tourist, along the way I read online restaurant, hotel, and tourist site reviews to maximize our time when visiting these new places.

One review in particular caught my attention and caused me to wonder about the writer's motivations. This was a half-page negative review written by a traveler about a restaurant. The writer complained in great detail that she had received only half of her hot dog bun when her lunch was served. Beyond seeming unique in the issue raised, I found it interesting that the woman chose to complain in a lengthy online review rather than simply flagging down the wait staff and asking for a whole hot dog bun.

What were her motivations in taking this path, I wondered? Although I agree that constant complaining can lead to unhappiness, I am not a member of the organization, A Complaint Free World ([www.acomplaintfreeworld.org](http://www.acomplaintfreeworld.org)). I support constructive complaining that does not simply validate the emotions caused by the problem. In other words, I am a strong advocate of complaining that works to modify the situation or move the problem toward resolution. I also tend to view complaints as important alternative points of view. For those individuals who do not have an ulterior motive to obtain a free lunch or complimentary hotel room, a complaint is usually a reminder that someone cares enough about what is going on to suggest that something isn't quite right.

In February 2013, Andrew Mason, founder and former CEO of Groupon, posted online his goodbye letter to the company employees. In the letter he imparted this piece of wisdom: “Have the courage to start with the customer.” As editorial director of *AALL Spectrum*, I plan to do just that. At AALL Seattle I reconnected with professional acquaintances and met many new individuals. At every opportunity, I sought to emphasize that *AALL Spectrum* is the voice of your profession. As the editorial director, I will work to ensure that *AALL Spectrum* resonates with you and responds to your professional needs. I want to hear from you—everything from ideas on articles, columns, community building, and publication format to suggestions that read, “Hey Catherine, you really missed the mark, and here is an idea for you to use to do better next time.” My efforts to ensure that *AALL Spectrum* reflects the needs and voices of its many constituencies will only be successful if I hear from you that the editorial team is on the right path or that we need to adjust direction. My contact information is 317/278-6165 and [calemmer@iupui.edu](mailto:calemmer@iupui.edu); please don't hesitate to use it. I look forward to hearing from you. ■

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