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Build a Career That Aligns With Your Passions

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NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

BUILD A CAREER THAT ALIGNS WITH YOUR PASSIONS



Ashley Ames Ahlbrand

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When I was wrapping up my final semester of law school, I was fretting about what I would do next. The job market for new attorneys had tanked, less than half of my classmates had job offers lined up, I had no connections of my own that I could work, and worse, I still didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up. Expressing my anxiety to our school's Westlaw rep at the time, she asked me to reflect on my favorite parts of law school. That was easy: I loved any class where I could write a research paper instead of taking a final. I relished every opportunity to take an advanced legal research course. I cherished my work as a Notes editor for one of our law journals and shepherding 2L staff members through the research and writing process with their Student Notes. I found I had a particular strength at advocating for and counseling clients in one of our clinics. And despite the stress that every semester brought, I was genuinely going to miss law school, because it felt like there were so many courses I never had the chance to take, and above all, I loved learning the law. "It sounds like you should be a law librarian," she sagely advised, to which I naturally replied, "What's a law librarian?" She smiled, suggested I make an appointment with one of the librarians in the, ahem, *law library*, to learn about their career, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Boy, was she right: I love my job. From teaching and engaging with students, to collaborating with my co-workers, to sinking my teeth into juicy, seemingly impossible, mammoth research tasks for the law faculty, to working with members of the local bench and bar and providing outreach to the broader community, to getting to conduct my own research and writing and be constantly learning, this career hits every one of my professional interests. On my very worst day at work, I am still 100 percent confident that this career is my calling, and I am still flabbergasted, as I was that day in my 3L year, that a career could exist that aligns with all my passions. (I have recently learned that our Westlaw rep at the time has since moved into a position in Career Services—a wonderfully wise move, since she clearly has a knack for it!)

Because I have such enthusiasm for this career, the Leadership & Career Development issue of *AALL Spectrum* is one of my favorites each year, and this issue is no exception. In this issue, you will find articles addressing all stages of one's career, from the value of offering and participating in law library fellowships, to perspectives on being an entry-level law firm librarian, to cultivating strong mentor-mentee relationships, to best practices for documentation and succession planning. As you know, Pipeline to the Profession is one of the five pillars of AALL's current [strategic plan](#), and for good reason. In addition to the wave of retirements we have all seen in recent years, we are also in the midst of the Great Resignation. According to an [article](#) in the May/June 2022 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, the year 2021 saw a record one-quarter of U.S. workers quit their jobs. Further, job openings in our profession abound, with an ever-waning applicant pool to fill them. How, then, do we attract and retain members in our profession? The article's author was clear: focus on love. Or more specifically, design work and career advancement plans based on your employees' unique strengths and interests. When you engage in an activity that you love, your brain produces the same chemical cocktail as when you are in love with another person, significantly enhancing your performance and engagement with work, or as the author puts it, "You're on fire without the burnout." In a time of increasing retirements and resignations, a decreasing applicant pool, and heightened work-related anxiety, stress, and fatigue, I think we all find ourselves looking for ways to reinvigorate our own passions, boost morale at our institutions, and attract the next generation of law librarians and legal information professionals. I hope you will find inspiration in the pages of this issue, and I hope we will continue the conversation on how to spark passion for the profession in future issues of *AALL Spectrum*. Trust me, it's catching. ■