

IT'S A NEW ERA

BY Donna Oseen

We're electronic – you won't be able to misplace us, like you could when we were hard copy.

Looking back, it all began in April of 1985 – The Editorial was from Mr. (Terry) Roger's Neighbourhood and continued from his neighbourhood until the Spring of 1988. In January of 1986 he wrote:

“The sharing of everything from moral support to equipment to technical advice gives this association a heart and soul and that speaks very highly in and of itself in words and more importantly deeds.”

The Past President, Bill Enefer wrote about the purpose of “The New Kid on the Block” (the VALA Newsletter). Articles included topics such as *The Microcomputer Jungle* and *A Day in the Life of an Administrator*. The day started at 6:45 a.m. and ended at 7 p.m.

The ads were cut and pasted into columns, after the articles were typed in the “Russell & DuMoulin” word processing department. The ads included, Xerox Electronic Typewriters, NBI, and Wang. Do you remember those? We had a classified section in case a law firm wanted to buy or sell some of its worldly possessions.

At least we had a sense of humour. The cartoon was Dagwood asking, “Boss, a lot of offices don't allow smoking”. The boss says, “Well, if it bothers you go to the non-smoking section”. “Where 's that?”, says Dagwood and the boss responds, “Down at the unemployment office”.

The HR Sub-Section had “been active for more than two years”. Tina Giallonardo was its leader. They were busy defining and redefining job descriptions for the VALA Salary Survey.

Peter Asselstine was the President that year.

I remember the newsletter by colors. We started with white photocopy paper, then we went to gray (we must have thought it was elegant!). Next came blue and green in the Spring of '88 and we became TOPICS. Joan Keir was outgoing President and Glen Copeland of Edwards Kenny was the Profile. Ken Werker joined the Editorial Board. We wrote about *Trends Affecting Law Firm Performance in the 1990s—Fitness, Legal Incorporation*. There was an annual retreat—“Shedding their business attire, thirty administrators journeyed to the Inn at Semiahmoo in Blaine.” An administrator wrote about her trip to Thailand. Why doesn't Joan write about her trip to Africa??

Then we became red and “light” gray. The lead article was *To Share or Not to Share* (secretaries) by Laura Reid and the Profile was Raf Sansalone. Roy Williams wrote about *Old Patterns, New Trends—What to Expect in '92*.

In 1997 we became quite radical—remember that blue, white and—was it copper? The Editorial Board consisted of Gordon Holley, Laura Reid, Marnie Seifert and Bob Waterman. There was a contest looking for a new name. The winner would get a \$100 gift certificate to the restaurant of their choice. I guess no one won because the name didn't change. We wrote about *The Legal Administration Profession: Where's It Going?*

In that issue Gordon Holley wrote about *On-Line Resources for Legal Administrators*.

Like I said at the beginning, it's a new era and we hope TOPICS will be an on-line resource for you as it continues to be an important part of the VALA organization.

VALA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY Wayne Scott

Well another summer is behind us and now it's time to get down to work again. I can't believe that I'm almost half way through my term as VALA President with many things still to accomplish. If only we had 48 hours in a day.

We have a few exciting things to report to our membership. The first is the welcoming back of TOPICS. With the return of TOPICS we will endeavour to update our members on what's happening in our various sub-sections and programs. Communicating to our membership is very important to the success of our association. TOPICS will give us this opportunity again. I would like to thank everyone involved in bringing TOPICS back to life.

Second is our new web site (Please visit the web site and take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the information available. Also get to know your VALA Executive and Sub-section Heads through the web site. If you have any suggestions regarding the web site please let us know. Many thanks to Elaine and Sophie for their work on the site.

The third event this fall is the ALA Region 5 Conference which takes place October 23-25 at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. This is a great opportunity for all our members to interact with one another on a business and networking basis. Please show your support and attend this conference.

On the social front, we had another very successful Annual Summer Golf Tournament at the Stanley Park Pitch & Putt and dinner afterwards at the Fish House. The weather was perfect and we had a great turnout. In May we introduced our new Executive Committee and Sub-section Heads at the launch of our Preferred Supplier Program at the Vancouver Art Gallery. This event, sponsored by our first Preferred Supplier Dye & Durham, was a huge success. The VALA Christmas social is scheduled for Thursday, December 4 at the Spotted Prawn Bistro. Make sure that you mark your calendars and we hope to see you out at this event.

Many of the sub-section meetings are now underway for the fall. The events calendar will be updated as soon as we have their dates and topics available. The VALA Annual General Meeting will be set for early in the new year.

I will be meeting with each sub-section, and Interior members, over the next few months to discuss what their members want and expect from VALA. I encourage anyone who would like to assist our organization to speak to any member of the Executive. The more people involved the easier it is to have projects completed.

In closing I would like to say that I have enjoyed my time so far being involved with VALA and the ALA. I have made many new friends and the networking has been very valuable. They are both great organizations and it's nice to know you're not alone out there.

PROFILE – WAYNE SCOTT

BY Stephanie Cornell

Wayne Scott has always flown by the seat of his pants – literally. With a career history as diverse as his current position, Wayne is no stranger to making decisions on the fly.

As Administrator at Edwards, Kenny & Bray, Wayne enjoys the daily variety the position offers. From accounting to human resources to marketing to planning social events, no day is the same.

“The most challenging aspect of my position is personnel. The ability to build a team that can work together is very important to any firm’s success. I have worked hard at this and feel that I have been successful. Having a good mix of junior and senior staff has also been a challenge. Encouraging senior lawyers to work with junior secretaries has been one of my bigger challenges. We now have three of our senior partners working successfully with junior secretaries.”

But Wayne is no stranger to challenges. He has faced many while shaping his career.

Wayne moved to Vancouver from Moncton, NB with his parents in 1972. After graduating from high school, Wayne set his sights on becoming a commercial pilot. He obtained his Private Pilots License while he supported himself working as a bus boy at Cara Operations. Pilot cutbacks in the late 70’s forced Wayne to re-evaluate and so he looked towards the Purchasing Agent’s position. Such an opportunity presented itself at an airport in Edmonton. “It was a great job and wonderful learning experience.”

But the West Coast had a hold on Wayne. He headed back to Vancouver in search of greater challenges. He found just that in the hotel industry. As Wayne had done at Cara, he landed himself an entry-level position then immediately began to seek out a more affluent position in the organization. He climbed the ranks at the Hyatt. He then moved on to accounting for Delta Hotels, followed by acting as Night Manager/Chief Auditor for the Mandarin Hotel. “It was a great hotel and I had many friends there.”

After a year or so, Wayne was promoted to Assistant Controller, and to make sure he excelled in this position, Wayne enrolled at BCIT, ultimately studying in the CGA program.

With rumours abound that Delta may take over the Mandarin operations, Wayne was forced to make another important career decision. Enter Spencer Hartigan from Swinton & Company. Spencer hired Wayne for the newly created Assistant Accountant position. “Spencer and I had a great working relationship. He taught me everything I needed to know about legal administration.”

True to form, Wayne started looking upwards and decided on an Administrator’s position. “Spencer and Tina Giallonardo were very supportive and knew that the timing was right... Tina was very instrumental in my development as a Legal Administrator.”

So, after five years at Swinton & Company, Wayne moved to Stephens & Holman. “It was another great job for me. Vic Stephens and Simon Holman were great to work for and were very good to me.” Wayne had been there five years when he was approached by EKB. “It was the right move and it’s been a fun place to work. We have excellent staff and many long-time members. We have a wonderful work environment and great Christmas parties. You will always find a good mix of partners, associates and staff involved in each and every firm activity. This mix is a very important component for building a successful team environ-

ment. From our baseball team, golf tournament to the Christmas party, everyone has a great time at EKB firm events. They are encouraged to participate or they receive a visit from me.”

As President of VALA, Wayne finds the role, and the VALA organization overall, very valuable. “This profession has been very good to me over the last 16 years so I felt it was time to give something back. The ability to contribute to an organization and to help others was part of my decision to get involved with VALA. It has been interesting balancing the work load of VALA and EKB but it has been rewarding. The most valuable aspect of the VALA membership is networking. Being able to pick up the phone and get questions answered is very valuable to me and my firm.”

So what does Wayne have his sights set on now? “I look forward to Edwards, Kenny & Bray growing over the next few years. With this growth, will come the ability for me to move some of my more interesting work to other people. This will allow growth for the other individuals and new challenges for me.”

It may also give Wayne the time to pursue his first love – flying. Wayne is currently building an airplane. “It’s a long process and another learning experience. My goal is to have my RV6 flying so that I can attend the 2005 Oshkosh Wisconsin Air Show.” Wayne has already managed to build a cabin on Savary Island where he and his family spend as much time in the summer as possible.

Wayne Scott is a substantial illustration that reaching for the skies is paramount for success. “I’m a strong believer that you need to work your way [up] in order to grow.”

Up, up, and away!

SMALL FIRM SUB-SECTION

BY Colleen Chapman

The Small Firm Sub-section caters to the administrators of small firms. An administrator of a small firm will likely be responsible for all the areas that in a large firm the Administrator would have delegated among various managers. Yes, the small firm Administrator will probably do all the human resources, marketing, technology, accounting (day to day and/or monthly), and any other project that might arise. Due to the load that a small firm administrator carries, it is not always convenient to attend all the other sub-section meetings on a regular basis. Due to the limited time the Small Firm Sub-section tries to cover a wide range of topics that are covered in the other sub-sections. The administrators that are able to attend other sub-sections will bring back information to share with the rest of the Small Firm Sub-section.

We presently meet the third Tuesday of the month at the Sutton Place Hotel from 12:00 to approximately 2:00 p.m. We schedule monthly meetings for February, March, April, May, October, and November. We will try at times to do a small social in June and December. Our next meeting is October 21, 2003 and Kathie Smith of Bradbrooke, Crawford & Green will be chairing that meeting.

At our October meeting we distribute our annual Small Firm Administrators Salary Survey form to be completed. Then at our November meeting we distribute the completed survey and also set our agendas and chairpersons for the next year. We rotate our monthly chairpersons to keep everyone's work load down. As Sub-section Head I ensure that all the contracts with the hotel are set and make sure all the chairpersons get their packages for setting up the meetings. As the Sub-section head I encourage everyone to attend meetings as they always have something of interest or help to everyone. We need each other as peers. VALA is a special organization that caters to our needs and we encourage all the members of the Small Firm Sub-section to take advantage of as many of the resources as possible.

On behalf of the Small Firm Sub-section I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate everyone who has worked so hard on the new web site and for all that people involved in setting up TOPICS. We look forward to using these great tools.

FINANCIAL SUB-SECTION

BY Jennifer Sandberg

We're ready for another interesting and informative series of sessions for 2003/2004 in the Financial Sub-section. Catherine Jacobs has volunteered as the Vancouver Education Coordinator, and so has passed the Financial Sub-section Chairperson position over to Jeniffer Sandberg, Controller of Oyen Wiggs Green & Mutala. We have selected our topics for the year, which should be updated shortly on the VALA website, www.vala.org. Our meetings will be changed to the third Thursday of each month, so as not to conflict with other sub-section meetings or with our financial month-ends. We have round-table discussion meetings as well as speaker meetings planned on various financial topics.



As well, new this year, we are planning to set up a "sub" sub-section of the Financial Sub-section, specifically for Credit, AR, and Collections. We will encourage any Credit/AR/Collections Managers or Employees to join this sub-section. Current members of the Financial Sub-section will already be granted membership, as will Full Members, i.e. they won't have to pay again for this sub-section. We hope that this new sub-section will allow Credit/AR Professionals to share problems, solutions and ideas about this very important area of law firm finance.

Please join me in welcoming Jeniffer Sandberg as our new Chairperson and please come and enjoy the networking, learning and friendship at the upcoming meetings.



MARKETING SUB-SECTION

BY Allison Wolf and Kathy Hogarth

GETTING THE WORD OUT LOCALLY

The journalist calls and all the lawyer can offer is “no comment”. Or, you have an expert on a particular legal issue but another firm’s lawyer keeps getting quoted on the subject. Sound familiar?

This September the Marketing Sub-section put media relations in the spotlight. Over lunch one Monday afternoon, our two guest speakers from *Business in Vancouver*,

Editor Ian Noble and Features Editor David Jordan revealed the secrets of PR savvy success to a lucky group of law firm administrators and marketers.

When pitching story ideas and articles to the local press it is vital to talk and write in plain language. Reporters and editors don’t have a deep grasp of the law. Boil down the important points for them into easy-to-understand language.

In order to build a rapport with a journalist consider giving the journalists story ideas, even when the stories have nothing to do with your firm. If you are able to supply them with interesting ideas then they will be more receptive to your stories in the future.

And beware. Don’t use advertising dollars to try and buy editorial copy. Journalists are insulted by the notion and will be sure to avoid your contributions in the future.

What’s next for the Marketing Sub-section? Coming up in late October we will be holding a session on “Better Practice Management - What is it and why do we need it?”. Details will be announced on the VALA web site in October and emailed to VALA members.

For more information about the Marketing Sub-section please give us a call:

Allison Wolf, Marketing Manager, Harper Grey Easton
604 895 2863 or awolf@hgelaw.com

Kathy Hogarth, Marketing Administrator, Lawson Lundell
604 631 9247 or khogarth@lawsonlundell.com



FACILITIES & SERVICES MANAGEMENT SUB-SECTION

BY JaniceMcAuley

.....WHAT IS IT AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The Facilities & Services Management ('FSM') Sub-section of VALA replaces the previously named group, 'Office Services Sub-section'. It was felt that the previous title didn't quite capture the variety of job descriptions most of us have and as a result hindered the level of attendance at meetings.

Our job titles, which range from Facilities Manager at a large firm to Office Services Supervisor in a smaller firm, encompass a variety of roles. What drives our activity level is usually the expansion (or contraction) of the firm's activity level. Without defining individual job descriptions, if you feel you are responsible for or play a key role in

- the visual presentation of the firm;
- the receiving and/or sending of firm documents;
- the purchasing of firm supplies and their related cost; and/or
- the overseeing of entry-level positions

then attendance at our meetings would be of benefit to you.

The format of our meetings will be a mixture of structured round-robin discussions and guest speakers. Some of the topics we would like to cover this year are

- how to negotiate prices to receive the highest level of service at the lowest price;
- reviewing equipment contracts;
- how to integrate inexperienced people into the workplace; and
- project management.

The FSM sub-section meets monthly on the first Tuesday of every month. Prior to each meeting, an agenda will be sent via the VALA web site. If you would like to attend, please mark your calendar – we happily welcome visitors from any sub-section and are always eager to meet others in the industry.





TECHNOLOGY SUB-SECTION

BY Brenda Johnson

The October meeting of the Technology Sub-section features Charlene Traynor from Travelling Coaches out of Dallas, Texas. She will be presenting information on setting up “Firm Universities” to maximize the use of technology within the firm to help get the most out of every technology dollar. This event is jointly sponsored between VALA and LawNet.

The Technology Sub-section is acting to broaden the range of topics featured in the VALA events in order to open the meetings up to the entire Information Technology Departments of each law firm and not just the Network Administrators.

We will be lining up other speakers and events for the rest of the year that will address high-impact topics. We will also be doing more joint events with LawNet to increase the value of the VALA Technology Sub-section membership.

HUMAN RESOURCES SUB-SECTION

BY Tina Giallonardo

The Human Resources Sub-section has accomplished a great deal over the past 15 years. From developing and sharing basic HR workplace policies, being responsible for the VALA salary survey, promoting legal positions to educational institutions, participating on college education boards and keeping abreast of an area that is constantly changing, this sub-section does not lack for challenge or topics.

Last year, our sub-section embarked on another journey, the Strategic Role of HR in law firms: How HR professionals contribute to the bottom line. The topic was so successful that we continued the theme this year with more expert guest speakers in the area.

The HR sub-section meets at noon on the second Wednesday of every month at the Four Seasons or Met. Our agenda is set and posted on the VALA web site. At every meeting time is always made for questions and concerns that our members want to address.

Our main focus was and continues to be networking. We encourage the sharing of ideas, policies and procedures and current issues in our profession. We look to each other for support and guidance.

The success of this sub-section is due primarily to the many HR managers in the bigger law firms who work with me year after year to ensure that we assist our members in the ever changing world of “human resources”.

People have become our most valuable asset. Therefore as HR professionals we have many more challenges ahead. From corporate culture to the changing role of legal staff, our subsection will continue to move to higher ground.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.

