



atyourservice

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Picture This

As I continue to paint my ever-evolving picture of what it means to be ALA's President, one of my favorite brushstrokes is serving as an ambassador for the Association. In this capacity, while visiting chapters and serving as the ALA representative at various functions in the United States and abroad, I am meeting or reacquainting myself with many of our members. Building these relationships is one of the most rewarding aspects of my service to ALA.

In addition to building valuable personal and professional relationships in the legal community, this networking provides me with an up-to-date perspective and understanding of the issues facing our members. I also have the great pleasure of learning about chapter and member accomplishments.

ALA member surveys, as well as surveys conducted by other professional organizations, consistently reveal that networking with colleagues is considered one of the greatest benefits of membership. Some people may believe networking is beneficial only with colleagues in their own cities, states, provinces, or countries. I believe, however, that in a constantly evolving global economy, the ability to develop and maintain a broad network of business friendships is increasingly valuable for all of us.

Networking is about building relationships, being genuine and authentic,

**A picture is worth a thousand words.
An interface is worth a thousand pictures.**

– Ben Schneiderman

building trust, and seeing how you can help others. People with strong networks get more things done more effectively and they learn from others with different knowledge or experience. And, just as with anything in life, you get out of it what you put into it.

The wonderful thing about networking is the unexpected impact it can have on you, your career, and your personal life. Through my ALA network I have saved my firm money, facilitated meetings in other locales, and assisted my firm in a variety of other ways. From a personal perspective, I have become acquainted with some wonderful people whom I now consider friends.

Joining ALA and taking advantage of the vast array of member benefits can add up to a significant boost for your career, but it requires more than simply attending meetings to realize the often underutilized benefit of networking. Full benefit truly comes from taking the time to network whenever possible. This may mean arriving for the meeting a little early or staying on after the speaker to meet a



I had the opportunity to meet speaker Stedman Graham (center) and many more attendees during ALA's 2007 Annual Educational Conference and Exposition.

couple of new colleagues. Please make the time; you won't regret it.

The art of good networking is to relax and be yourself. In ALA, you are surrounded by people with whom you share a strong interest. Take advantage of this community and commonality. Interfacing with your colleagues and peers may provide you with new opportunities for growth or, just as important, provide you with opportunities to assist them with challenges they may be experiencing.

In the coming months, I will be visiting several ALA chapters and traveling to many places outside the continental United States, including England, China, and Puerto Rico. I hope to further develop my network of relationships during these travels and look forward to seeing many of you. Each individual I meet adds another color or perspective to the ever-changing picture of my ALA presidency. Which color will you add?

Please feel free to e-mail me any time with questions or comments at plgroff@butzdunn.com; I would love to hear from you. ♦