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Academic Achievers

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Academic Achievers

Academic law librarians promote scholarship in the profession

A law librarian leading a thoughtful discussion about conference hotel carpet is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when picturing a law librarian as a scholar. Yet Jonathan A. Franklin, associate law librarian at the University of Washington Gallagher Law Library, did exactly that at the "Librarian as Scholar" program sponsored by the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) Section on Libraries at the 2009 AALS annual meeting. Franklin used the design of the carpet in the meeting room as the basis of tangible examples of the tensions between the developed and developing world as they relate to the protection of traditional cultural property.

Franklin was one of five law librarian scholars speaking at the program in San Diego, California. The program featured a diverse group of librarians and their scholarship, raising the profile of the law librarian as a scholar within the legal community: Julie Jones, head of information services at Cornell University Law Library, spoke about how user interface design affects legal research; Margaret Leary, director of the law library at University of Michigan Law Library, presented information about William W. Cook, a benefactor of the University of Michigan Law Library who also had tremendous influence in

library and computing services at the University of Washington Gallagher Law Library, former AALL president, and current chair of the AALS Section on Law Libraries, explained another difference. According to Hazelton, AALS “focuses on networking for folks in the same interest area,” since the annual meeting programs are generally attended by members of the section sponsoring the program and section business meetings often follow in the same room.

Presenter Lee Peoples brought new eyes to the AALS annual meeting. Although he had attended mid-year meetings in the past, the San Diego

Another project by a group of academic law librarians is further raising the profile of law librarians as scholars. Randy Diamond, director of library and technology resources at the University of Missouri School of Law, and Peoples are co-editors for the new publication *Legal Information & Technology eJournal* on the Social Science Research Network (SSRN). As described by Peoples, the *eJournal* was conceived at the AALS mid-year meeting in June 2008, but came to life at the 2009 AALS annual meeting. During the mid-year meeting, Diamond noticed the emphasis on law librarians’ scholarship and was struck that a connection could be made with SSRN. “SSRN provides a ready-made platform to get our scholarship noticed, read, recognized,” says Diamond. The Mid-America Law Library Consortium Association of Law Libraries (MALLCO) agreed to serve as the initial sponsor for the *eJournal*.

According to Diamond, an advisory board of prominent law librarians stepped up to guide the *eJournal* by helping to envision “legal information” as its core focus. Board members include editors from *International Journal of Legal Information*, *Law Library Journal*, *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, and *Perspectives*. Diamond recognizes the professional journals for “working with us to allow their authors to post their articles to the *eJournal*. We look to the advisory board helping to spread the word in their individual capacities and encouraging folks that they counsel on writing to contribute their work to the *eJournal*.”

Hazelton agrees that *eJournal* is significant because it promotes law librarian scholarship to the outside world and makes it much more accessible. “We publish a lot in our business.

People vote with their feet and everybody’s feet stayed in the same place.

the area of corporate law; Lee Peoples, associate professor of law library science and director of international programs at Oklahoma City University Law Library, compared the no-citation and publication practices of England and the United States; and Marilyn Raisch, associate law librarian for international and foreign law at Georgetown University Law Libraries, addressed the transformative effect of hypertext technology on historical marginal commentary of international and comparative law texts.

In creating the panel, the section wanted to promote the work of librarians as scholars, and the speakers selected fulfilled that goal. Linda Ryan, director of law library at St. John’s University Law School and immediate past chair of the Section on Law Libraries, explains that the panel of speakers was selected to address a diverse selection of topics. She also notes that the panel reflected the diversity of law librarians—speakers included library directors and first-time AALS attendees.

Though there is significant overlap between the AALS Section on Law Libraries and the American Association of Law Libraries, the AALS annual meeting fills a different purpose than the AALL Annual Meeting. Many librarians are familiar with the types of topics presented at AALL Annual Meetings, such as how to teach or how to manage a library. Also familiar is the advice that a librarian attending AALL’s Annual Meeting should try to attend at least one program outside of his or her area of focus.

On the other hand, the AALS annual meeting is the “premiere conference for the legal academy to attend in substantive areas,” according to Ryan. Penny Hazelton, associate dean for

annual meeting was his first. He says he was pleased with his experience and would encourage other law librarians to attend the conference. “It’s a good opportunity to network with directors and other law librarians—to meet people you otherwise wouldn’t meet, like deans, faculty members. It’s a good chance to be noticed,” notes Peoples. It also shows your support for the faculty at your school to visit their talks, which helps to be familiar with their areas of interest.”

Hazelton, who moderated the “Librarian as Scholar” panel, was “thrilled with the quality of the presentations and scholarship and the reception it received from colleagues” and only wishes the panel had been afforded a larger room, since the audience more than filled the chairs in the room. Even with people standing and no air-conditioning, however, the audience was attentive. According to

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Hazelton, “People vote with their feet and everybody’s feet stayed in the same place.” (The presentations from the 2009 AALS annual meeting are freely available for streaming on the AALS site, www.aals.org.) The AALS Section on Libraries program was so successful, in fact, that the section intends to offer a similar program at the 2010 AALS annual meeting. For those who might be interested in proposing a paper for the 2011 AALS Annual Meeting, Hazelton notes that the plan at this time is to focus on empirical research by law librarians.

We just haven’t thought about isolating it and putting our arms around it to make it more accessible to others,” says Hazelton, who also serves on the *eJournal* advisory board.

The first electronic issue was sent to 140 initial subscribers. The *eJournal* editors sent announcements about the debut to various listservs, increasing subsequent circulation. Subscribers receive an e-mail with announcements, a table of contents, and abstracts of the articles that are included in each issue.

Each issue is expected to feature five to seven articles that are available on the

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yet, five months after the move. When I started my career, I was in the library virtually every day.” Karen Sharp, an associate in the education law group, also admits, “With the improvement in technology and the availability of research materials online, I have not visited the library once since the move.” These comments reinforce the attorneys’ increasing reliance on the online research technology readily available from the desktop. In addition, many attorneys and paralegals have been taking greater advantage of the myriad training opportunities the library has always offered, as training continues to be very

crucial in the wake of the decentralization and more virtual library world in which the firm now exists.

The often-quoted phrase “Change is the only constant” was most certainly true during the reorganization and downsizing of the library and continues to be so even now, eight months later. Change always has been in greater or lesser degrees a part of libraries. Nonetheless, as British Theologian, Richard Hooker (1554-1600) said long ago, “Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.”

The firm’s library always was and

continues to be an important resource in the firm’s practice of law. The library in its old form was definitely not worse, nor is its current form necessarily better, but simply different. Perhaps there have been minor inconveniences; however, any difficulty is expected to be short-lived. Library staff confidence abounds that since all things are subject to change, staff will ultimately adjust and may even wonder why they ever did things the old way. ■

Cheryl Niemeier (cniemeier@boselaw.com) is director of library services at Bose McKinney & Evans LLP in Indianapolis.

takin’ it to the streets— continued from page 11

Maybe you want to do some internal promotion to increase library staff morale or simply get the word out that your law library is staffed by hip and happening people. A while back, the County of Riverside invited county employees to join a newly created bowling league. In anticipation of joining said league, I worked on a bowling league shirt for the RCLL staff that was distinctive and fun for our library.

Whether you’re an avid amateur or the greenest of outreach greenhorns, know that there are a few thousand fellow librarians pulling for you. We’ve done it, we’ve been there, and if you need to get there too, we’re here to help you look great and be successful! ■

Bret N. Christensen (bchrise@rclawlib.org) is the head of public services, newsletter editor, and webmaster at Riverside County Law Library in Riverside, California.

While it may not look like it, public relations can often be quite intimidating for the average librarian who has little practice doing outreach activities. Some resources I turn to when I need ideas for outreach include:

Library Media and PR
www.ssdesign.com/librarypr

Ohio Library Council
www.ohlc.org/marketing

American Library Association (ALA) electronic discussion lists
www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/hqops/pio/subscribe/lists/lists.cfm

The Free Management Library
http://managementhelp.org/pblic_rel/pblic_rel.htm

AALL PR Committee Resources Web site
www.aallnet.org/committee/pr/Resources/resources_index.html

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SSRN site. The inaugural issue reflects the diversity of law librarians’ scholarship, including articles about innovations in access to research and knowledge, a bibliography of Robert C. Berring’s writings, and the citation of fiction in federal appellate and Supreme Court opinions. The papers presented by Julie Jones and Margaret Leary at the AALS Section on Libraries Panel are also available in the first *eJournal* issue.

The *eJournal* will benefit the law librarian community, both academic and beyond. As Peoples explains, “This is one more way we can help [AALL Academic Law Libraries Special Interest Section (ALL-SIS)] members put their best face forward with their publications and writing. We have tons of articles by ALL-SIS members in the journal, and we welcome more.”

Diamond adds, “We’re excited about the *eJournals* potential to grow over time. We hope it’s going to stimulate new thinking about our profession and legal information, and that it will generate more articles for the professional literature.”

The *eJournal* will, without a doubt, benefit the law librarianship community in many ways. As Hazelton notes, “The SSRN journal has the potential to create more visibility for our scholarship in the broader community. People can download and read materials not in their area, increasing interdisciplinary work.” Ryan also suggests that the *eJournal* may improve the ability of librarians to participate in professional development, particularly in the current economic climate. Although there are clear benefits to attending conferences—whether

sponsored by AALL or AALS—many institutions are cutting back on travel costs. The *eJournal* provides another opportunity for law librarians to grow professionally, whether through reading articles that are posted or by researching, writing, and posting their own articles.

Law librarians research and write in diverse areas of substantive topics. The efforts of the AALS Section on Law Libraries, as well as the law librarians who initiate and support the work of the *Legal Information & Technology eJournal*, will only serve to draw attention from the law librarian community as well as the wider legal world to the outstanding scholarship created by law librarians. ■

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