

The Very Busy Life of a Joint Degree Student

Alison A. Shea, J.D./M.L.S. student, The Catholic University of America

The ironic thing about writing an essay on a day in the life of a joint degree student is that there is no such thing as a typical day in my life—and that's what makes it so exciting! For the past few years, each day of my life has been filled to the brim with a different mix of work, school, volunteering, language learning, traveling, and goodness-knows-what-else I'm forgetting. Because each day for me is completely different from the one before it, it might be easiest to give you an overview of the different elements in my life that give rise to my daily activities. To understand where I am today, however, it would probably be best to start from the beginning.

In late 2003, as my undergraduate career was drawing to a close, I was faced with the familiar question asked by anxious mothers around the world: What are you going to do with yourself when you graduate?! Although it was my original intention to go straight into library school, having worked in libraries since I was in high school, I was prodded into looking at other options, including law school. While perusing the AALL website, I discovered that there was an even more challenging route to take—that of the dual-degree law and library science program. Catholic University, as one of only a few schools who offered such a program, seemed like the perfect fit as it was in Washington, D.C.—an area rife with law libraries in all sectors of society.

Arriving at Catholic with what I've been told was a “disturbing” enthusiasm for my chosen profession, I soon discovered that things were not going to be as easy as I had previously assumed. For starters, neither the law nor the

library school had any idea how to set up my account and course schedule to reflect my joint-degree status. After many frustrating weeks of trying to convince the law school that I wasn't actually there to learn how to be a lawyer, the problems were rectified and I was officially recognized as a joint-degree student.

Aside from the technical issues that were eventually worked out, there were quite a few other issues that proved much more difficult to deal with. A wholly unanticipated problem was the reaction from my peers, both in the law school and in the library school. Although these two schools are both part of Catholic University, they could pretty much exist on different planets and no one would really notice. My peers in law school, who were unaware to begin with that there even was such a thing as library school (let alone one on our campus), have always been amused by my ferocious declarations of love for librarianship, but enjoy having someone they can rely on when it comes time for them to write a research paper.

I did not get to begin taking my library courses in addition to law courses until my second year, due to the ABA-required first year curriculum in law school. Catholic has a great reputation for its law librarianship program, and so many of my classes have a good number of aspiring law librarians who could relate to my focus. I generally try and schedule one or two library courses a semester during the evenings so as to not conflict with my daytime law courses and my part-time jobs.

On the whole, I spend most of my time down in the law school, either in class, working

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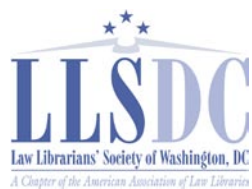
A Passion for Law Librarianship

Dawn Bohls, Covington & Burling LLP



I suspect that this issue of *Law Library Lights* may turn out to be my favorite one this year. I've had a great time reading and editing all the articles and learning more about my colleagues in the process. Two themes that really shine through in this issue's contributions are a passion for law librarianship in all its many permutations, and an amazing ability to adapt to whatever challenges each day brings. In fact, nearly all the authors say that the variety of their work is their favorite aspect of their jobs. Even those authors who don't talk about variety in so many words clearly enjoy the juggling act that is the law librarian's typical day.

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Law Library Lights

Deadline for Submissions

If you would like to write for *Lights*, please contact **Dawn Bohls** at dbohls@cov.com. For the up-to-date information regarding the 2006-2007 submission deadlines and issue themes, visit the LLSDC Web site at www.llsdc.org.

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In my own library career, I've had paraprofessional positions as a circulation desk attendant, a corporate library trainer/reference desk staffer, a cataloging technician, and a law library assistant. As a professional librarian, I've been an academic library cataloger, a law firm technical services librarian, and now a research librarian. Although I have to say that my current job as a research librarian is by far my favorite (see the article Elizabeth LeDoux and I wrote to understand why!), every library job I've had has helped to make me a more complete, and a better, librarian. I've had the pleasure of working

with interesting, inventive, and inspiring fellow librarians in academic, law, and special libraries; belonging to LLSDC just expands the network of talent.

I encourage you to distribute this issue widely. I hope this issue of *Lights* can serve as a recruiting tool for future law librarians. I don't know how anyone looking for a rewarding and stimulating career could read these articles and not want to run out and earn that MLS degree! And for those of us who've been law librarians for a while, this issue can help motivate and energize us by reminding us what a remarkable profession we belong to, and what great people share our calling. **LLL**

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Joint Degree Student *continued from page 1*

my LexisNexis student representative hours, or working at the circulation desk in the law library. Since the majority of credits for my program come from the law school, the majority of my classes each semester are law. This makes my library classes each semester even more enjoyable for me, as it allows me to escape the insanity that is commercial transactions, criminal procedure, professional responsibility, and conflict of laws—my law school “poison of choice” this semester.

Because I have often had a difficult time relating to my law school peers due to my unique career goals, I decided to look for someone who shared my interest in libraries and could point me in the right direction. Although I am not participating in the official AALL mentor program, I found a mentor who was willing to help me find my way in the field. Steve Young, one of the reference librarians at the law school, has been an invaluable resource in explaining not only what he does in his job, but also how the profession works. Steve has provided the answers to many of my questions, and has given me the much-needed confidence to figure out how to succeed in the profession. The mentoring process has allowed me to learn so much about the profession just from observing how a professional handles reference questions and other tasks related to the job, and I am incredibly grateful to Steve for allowing me the pleasure of being his mentee.

When I'm not on campus, I maintain a number of part-time jobs to keep me out of trouble. Late in my first year of school, I secured a position working part-time doing records management with Millican and Associates, a

contractor, in the Office of the Legal Adviser at the State Department. This job came with a number of thrilling perks: not only did I get experience in an area of information science that I was previously unfamiliar with, but I also got to do it in the field in which I was most familiar and interested—international law. In addition to the work experience, I was also given a top secret security clearance, which provided tremendous excitement for my family back in Wisconsin when they (and our neighbors) were visited by the FBI.

My bosses at the State Department—Susan Brown and Fred Graboske—were wonderful in making sure I was always doing something that was interesting and educational, whether it was scanning treaty documents or evaluating International Court of Justice materials to see if they were available online. They were also incredibly accommodating when I informed them (two years in a row) that I would be taking off for the summer and attending a study abroad program in Dublin, Ireland. Through the great people at the University of Tulsa, I attended law courses and secured internships at Ireland's Competition Authority in 2005 and the Commission for Aviation Regulation in 2006. These internships provided great experience in the legal field, and exposed me to a number of issues that I had not previously thought I would be interested in.

Upon returning from Dublin this past summer, I had the amazing opportunity to work as a temporary assistant in the law library of the International Monetary Fund. This position involved doing a number of different jobs within the library, including filing looseleaves,
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Greetings...

I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. How can it be January already? So much has happened in the last few months and there are dozens of things to come.

I recently attended the Internet Librarian Conference. I'm sometimes asked why I attend non-law librarian conferences. I wish those people had seen me return from the conference packed with information (literally, the suitcase was overweight). I heard new ideas, learned of new websites, new Web 2.0 applications, and met many new librarians from many different kinds of libraries ranging from corporate to elementary schools. There were great keynote speakers and individual sessions. See the conference website for details of the programs: <http://www.infotoday.com/il2006/>



Billie Jo Kaufman
American University
Law Library

There is so much out there to learn/discover/test; it's increasingly difficult to keep up. We law librarians can get a bit myopic, but we can learn from our users, from marketing specialists, and even from our colleagues in other types of libraries. That was brought home to me last week when I served as a panel participant at a University of Maryland library school class. Panel members from the public library, public school libraries, and Factiva shared remarkable information. Hearing about the services provided was incredible, but even more exciting was our collective enthusiasm for the profession. We showed the library school students that librarianship is a great profession. This enthusiasm ties in with the work of the LLSDC Mentoring Committee. We meet new potential law librarians every day—please think about hosting an intern or letting someone shadow you for a day. Seize the opportunity to share our exciting field.

From time to time, as your president, I get suggestions, complaints, or concerns. I do listen carefully to every single one. Often we can do a “quick fix” and the issue is resolved. Other issues are bigger and much more far-reaching. These issues need reflection, information gathering, brainstorming, and discussion. The LLSDC Board and a number of Committee Chairs will soon be meeting in a “retreat” mode. We're hoping to follow the practice of many AALL Chapters by developing a thoughtful strategic plan. We will investigate what's out there and ask: What are we doing well? What would we like to be doing for our members? We value your input, so please continue to share your aspirations for ways that LLSDC can continue to be one of leading chapters in the nation.

We will involve the entire membership in this process, so be prepared! We'll be creating ways to get your input and “rise to the challenge in 2007!”

I do have some bittersweet news to share with the membership as I close my remarks this month. Bonnie Fedchock, our Executive Director has resigned effective December 31. She received an offer she simply could not refuse. We absolutely wish her the very best. Ever the consummate professional, Bonnie has agreed to serve in a consultant capacity until we find just the right replacement.

All my best wishes for a great 2007!

Joint Degree Student *continued from page 3*

distributing newspapers, preparing journals for the bindery, and answering reference questions for the attorneys in the department. This was a great experience in that I gained necessary technical service skills required for library jobs, and also had the opportunity to receive practical, hands-on training as a reference librarian.

As of early December 2006, I have returned to the IMF part-time for five weeks while the assistant is off on home leave, and, for something completely different, I will be starting a new position as the de facto law librarian at the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States in January. My days are currently filled with juggling library projects, working at the IMF and the law library on campus, and studying for exams. I currently should be studying for my aviation law exam at George Mason tonight (a course that I decided to take “for fun” after being exposed to the field in my internship this past summer in Dublin), so I’m very shortly off to complete that task.

The big question for me these days (and one that I had hoped to have answered by the time I wrote this essay) is where I’m going to be working next year. What I failed to realize before embarking on this journey—and a point that I would make to anyone considering a

similar program—is that while employers in libraries look for relevant experience when making their hiring decisions, attorney recruiters look primarily to grades. Being a joint degree student therefore places you in a Catch-22 situation: how do you get the requisite experience for librarianship while spending enough time studying for your law school courses? Not everyone is as naturally hyperactive as I am, so I consider myself extremely lucky that I have been able to obtain a great deal of experience while still maintaining a decent grade point average.

And so I find myself currently in the same position as I was in three years ago, although I have advised my mother that she is not allowed to ask her trademark question any more. No matter what opportunities present themselves for me, I can honestly say that I have enjoyed these past three years here at Catholic, and have immensely enjoyed getting to know everyone in the LLSDC community. Although I might not know what tomorrow holds for me, I am confident that I will find a way to participate in law librarianship, whether it be a full time position in an academic law library, a part-time reference gig, or something completely different. And heck, why not try them all—I think I have shown that I have quite a knack for multi-tasking! **LLL**

Being a joint degree student places you in a Catch-22 situation: how do you get the requisite experience for librarianship while spending enough time studying for your law school courses?

The LexisNexis Call for Papers Has Begun

Have you been thinking of writing an article of interest to law librarians? Need a push to get started? Well, here it is. The AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers Committee is soliciting articles in three categories:

Open Division: for active and retired AALL members with five or more years of experience;

New Members Division: for recent graduates and AALL members who have been in the profession for less than five years; and the

Student Division: for students in library, information management or law school. Participants in this division need not be members of AALL.

The winner in each division receives \$750 generously donated by LexisNexis plus the opportunity to present the winning paper at a program during the AALL Annual Meeting, coming up in New Orleans! Winning papers are also considered for publication in the Association’s prestigious *Law Library Journal*.

For more information, a list of previous winners and an application, please visit the AALL Web site at http://www.aallnet.org/about/award_call_for_papers.asp. Submissions this year must be postmarked by March 1, 2007, so don’t waste any time getting started.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the AALL/LexisNexis Call for Papers Committee: Chair, Renee Rastorfer, rrastorfer@mac.com; Ed Greenlee, egreenle@law.upenn.edu; or Joe Gerken, gerken@buffalo.edu. Good luck!

From Electronic Resources to Librarian Relations: Making the Switch

Cindy Carlson, Librarian Relations Manager, Thomson West

I loved my job at Fried Frank, where I worked as Electronic Resources Librarian from July 2000 to June 2006. I got to design and deliver lots of training, and I had a great reputation as a search expert, so I was well respected by attorneys and staff. I even had time to work on some side projects like articles for LLRX.com and coordinating sessions for the LLSDC Legal Research Training Focus Group. I also loved the staff and my boss, Diane Sandford. She was always supportive and did her best to give me freedom to work on whatever interested me and to provide opportunities for me to grow in my job. So why am I now working for Thomson West? Mainly, I wanted to spend less of my non-work life commuting and was looking for something a little different after having been a law firm librarian for ten years.

My experiences with Thomson West, and especially with my predecessor Wendy Brown, made me think that being a Librarian Relations Manager might be the change I was looking for. When I applied for the job after Wendy left to move to Florida, I was not worried about working for West, mainly thanks to Wendy's terrific example. Wendy was always responsible and knowledgeable, and she never made you think, "Oh no, not another vendor visit." She always respected her competition and simply did her best to keep us well informed about useful new West features and content. She was also always honest about West's products, welcoming our feedback and taking it very seriously. Plus, the position seemed like a good fit for my background in training and marketing.

Changed Responsibilities?

My daily work in librarian relations is not that different from my law firm work—the difference is mainly a matter of scale. I still do lots of training, though now it tends to be with people I do not know as well or with much larger groups, and I do lots more presentations. This is definitely not a job for anyone with a fear of public speaking. It is strange to be one of the people arranging for those large events, but I have some experience with that work too from organizing association meetings and National

Library Week events. I also spend lots of time learning about new research tools just like at my old job, though now they are all West tools and this is a daily event rather than an occasional necessity.

The two biggest differences in the content of my job are that I do hardly any reference work and that I have many more administrative tasks. It is definitely a challenge to keep everyone in our management structure informed about what I am doing. The bigger challenge, though, is the juggling involved in my daily job with librarians. I need to know whom to talk to in all the firms I am responsible for, and need to be conscious of their schedules and those of the West Account Managers who work with them. I need to tailor training for every firm. In my old job, I always worked with the same main practice areas, but now I work with different training topics every day depending on which librarians I see. It is my job to know as much as possible about a firm before I go in so that what I show is helpful and does not waste anyone's time. After all, I have been on the librarian's side of the desk, and I know how precious that time is.

Greater Schedule Flexibility

Another huge difference is in my schedule. As a family, we have enough troubles with sleeping to make a traditional commute from Northern Virginia a real challenge. I remember driving downtown exhausted once after a particularly bad night with a sick child thinking, "Oh no! There are probably other people on the road who have infants too!" Really, it is a wonder that there are not more car accidents. Everyone will be happy to know that now that I work from home, I gain back an hour or more of sleep or family time by not having to leave the house every day early enough to struggle with a commute and still arrive at an office by 9:00 A.M.

Most days, I work at home on administrative tasks early in the morning and then go to appointments downtown after the worst of the commuting traffic has passed. I spend less time on the road and more time doing the relevant stuff—hurrah! The price? I do more work now

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outside of traditional business hours. I carry a Blackberry and have a cell phone so that I can be as accessible as possible to my clients. I can practically hear the groans, but it is not all bad. I check my e-mail most mornings when I get up, well before office hours, and I am often exchanging e-mails about something or other after 5:30 P.M., but the time I have gained back in not commuting during the standard rush hours still puts me ahead for family time.

Logistics

So what are the biggest adjustments? Working from home means I am the only person who can really impose discipline on my time. I may work earlier and later in the day than I did as a firm librarian, but I need to put in the same number of hours each day and not to go overboard in either direction. There is always a balance to think about that I did not encounter in a firm. Now I work some weekends and am also required to be away for whole weeks traveling, but since I usually get to see my family a couple of extra hours a day the rest of the time, that seems a worthwhile trade.

And can I mention that it is surprisingly challenging not to be confined to an office during my work day? If I put something down at work as a firm librarian, I could depend on it being somewhere in a limited space. Now, it could very well be anywhere in the house. Thank goodness mobile phones ring; otherwise, I would lose mine at least once a week.

And while I say that I work from home, I am actually rarely there. I am hardly ever at a desk! Most often I am downtown for meetings, in my car, or on the streets of D.C. between my appointments. I find that it is much harder to keep track of all the projects and responsibilities on my to-do list. I must take advantage of all the electronic tools (calendars, task lists, reminder alarms) that I rarely needed to use as a firm librarian to stay on top of everything. I need to consciously check voice mail and turn the alarms and ring tones on and off as I go through my day and am meeting with people in a way I never had to before. They are small things, but when I lose track of them, they can result in big problems.

Also, since I am no longer in an office environment, I miss having daily coworkers. I do get to see many more librarians, but it is not quite the same as the Monday morning coffee talk I was used to. It is good to have a person sharing my territory—I do at least have a colleague I

see often with whom I can share stories and who can answer some of my many questions.

New Challenges, New Perspectives

How else is working as a librarian relations manager different from being a librarian in a law firm? I get more quality time with other librarians to talk about all kinds of issues in librarianship in a way that I rarely got to do at my old job. I can go to more association events, and I have more opportunities to speak, write articles, and serve on committees—maybe I will even be able to get the LLSDC Legal Research Training Focus Group up and running again. Also, I have much more contact now every day with people from all kinds of libraries: academic, firm, court, and government alike. It has been a revelation. I understand much better the advantages and limitations of each environment and the challenges that all kinds of librarians face.

It is also nice that I am not a sales person. I have the unique job of keeping West's customers informed about the best new products and features that we have to offer and also of advocating for customers. It is great to see what developers are working on WAY in advance, and amazing to find out from the vendor side of things how much weight the opinions of librarians really carry.

While there are some things about not working in a firm that I miss, the switch for me has been a great choice. I look forward every day to learning more new things and to working with so many of my librarian colleagues. Hope to see you soon! LLL

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Which Hat Will I Wear Today?

Leanne B. Battle, LexisNexis, Senior Librarian Relations Consultant

I love hats. The top of my closet is stacked with hat boxes of every shape and size, filled with hats of every color and description: black, purple and cream; wool, suede and straw; new, vintage and heirloom. Each one is unique and suitable for a specific type of event or situation. I love to attend events where I can wear one of my hats and I take great care in choosing exactly the right one. Examining my hats for work is a no less thoughtful process, but often requires me to be something of a quick change artist.

Like you, I rarely have the luxury of choosing a single hat on any given day. I'm a trainer, an event planner, a desktop publisher, a feedback channel, a reference librarian, a colleague, a committee volunteer, a speaker. It was the variety in the work that drew me to a job in the library as an undergraduate student and it is the variety that keeps me in this profession more than fifteen years later. Here are a few of the hats I wear in my work as a librarian relations consultant. I imagine several of them will fit you too!

The Thinking Cap

Believe it or not, I actually have a thinking cap. It was a gift from a colleague and mentor who has a slightly warped sense of humor. It is a gray plastic Viking helmet with gold horns. I used to wear it sometimes in my office at the University of Richmond to serve as a signal to colleagues that I was deeply involved in the project of the day and not to be disturbed unless absolutely necessary. On the rare occasions when I have a day in my office now, I put on my thinking cap to help me focus. This is my opportunity to bring myself up to speed on new LexisNexis sources, features, and products so that I will be ready to answer your questions. It is a day of virtual meetings and conference calls. It is my time to perfect sound editing skills that I use for producing Web-based presentations. It is a few hours catching up on the professional reading that piles up on the corner of my desk. It is a day spent brainstorming about articles to write or presentations to develop for the next quarter or the next conference.

In the past six years, I have developed presentations on everything from LexisNexis

SmartIndexing™ to stress management to legal research for non-law librarians. My thinking cap helps me to not take myself or my work too seriously. It frees up the creativity in me. Of course, you don't have to have an actual thinking cap to be creative or productive, but you might be surprised how much it helps.

The Hard Hat

My grandfather worked in industrial construction. He helped to build the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel in Virginia. His Tidewater Construction Company hard hat sits in my office as a reminder that no matter how hard my day is, I am rarely in any physical stress or danger, the occasional ride in a D.C. taxi aside.

Regardless of the lack of actual physical danger, we all have those days when we feel like we work in a hard hat zone. The world of librarian relations is no exception. The path between librarian feedback and product development can have a falling limb or unexpected pitfall. The road that leads from a huge print distribution center to a single book shipped to a single customer is often under construction. Librarians are known for their tenacity—the ability to keep trying until you find not just an answer, but the best answer. I think our tenacity functions like a hard hat when we have to travel a long and difficult path. I am fortunate to work with talented and dedicated colleagues at LexisNexis and with talented and dedicated librarian customers. I don't need my hard hat very often, but it's nice to know it's there when I do.

The Backwards Baseball Cap

Sometimes you just need to roll up your sleeves and pitch in. I have been an active member of LLSDC, VALL, and AALL for years. Committee work is rarely glamorous, but it is always rewarding. I have taken minutes, written reports, stuffed envelopes, licked stamps, or written articles for every organization I have ever been a part of. The return on my investment has always been ten times more than I contribute. Professional development starts with professional involvement, and I feel lucky to have a job that affords me the opportunity to be involved. Participating in committee work allows me to

It was the variety in the work that drew me to a job in the library as an undergraduate student and it is the variety that keeps me in this profession more than fifteen years later.

meet and work with colleagues I might not otherwise encounter. Ours is a profession that relies upon and excels at cooperation, collaboration, and networking. Local, regional, and national associations are the perfect place to develop those skills and relationships.

Recently I was honored to serve as a member of the AALL Annual Meeting Program Committee for the 2007 annual meeting. The committee was composed of an astounding array of librarian talent from across every law library discipline and every region of the country. We read close to 200 proposals from librarians across the AALL organization and beyond. The selection meeting is amazing. It begins with a huge list of programs already reviewed and ranked by each individual committee member and ends with a completed annual meeting program chosen by the consensus of the full committee. If ever there is a time in librarian work to put on a backwards baseball cap, this meeting is it. It's very hard work, but very well worth it. I hope you will think so too at the 2007 annual meeting.

corners of napkins. The LexisNexis librarian Web seminars reflect hours of careful editing to remove the inevitable stumbling over words and long pauses. These are the tasks that allow me to use a part of my brain that sometimes gets overshadowed in the very factual world of legal and business research.

The Top Hat

From time to time, I get to dust off my top hat for a slightly more formal presentation. Those of you who have had the dubious honor of giving presentations at 7:30 A.M. or in the late afternoon slot can appreciate that it sometimes takes a few fancy steps to hold your audience. Those of you who have experienced a technology failure during a presentation can appreciate the skill and practice it takes to effectively perform an Astaire-and-Rogers-like twirl to keep things moving.

Traveling from firm to firm, law school to law school, and conference to conference has given me the opportunity to present in a wide variety of locations to audiences from one

So those are a few of the hats that are part of my Librarian Relations Consultant millinery. No doubt you have worn some of these and a number of others in your library career. I hope you have many left to try. The key is to keep trying them until you find the ones that fit!



The Artsy Beret

This is one of my favorite hats. These are the days when I can show my creative side. I get to design event invitations, plan menus, and choose party centerpieces. I create flyers that showcase new sources and services. This year, I even had the opportunity to learn about sound editing and creating Web casts.

I am one of those people who can get lost for hours looking through photo files and trying out different fonts and colors. Much of the time, I try to control the impulse to reformat and recolor documents and presentations in a dozen different ways, but preparing for events gives me license to play a little bit. So when you see an invitation to a LexisNexis librarians' holiday event, know that I have spent a blissful hour or two finding exactly the right graphics, the perfect font, and the most appealing colors. Catchy titles for presentations represent dozens of possibilities jotted on scraps of paper, the backs of receipts, the

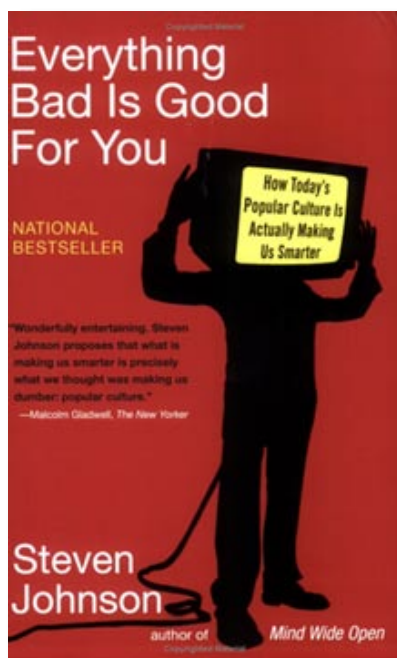
person to a few hundred people. I have learned the hard way to keep a presentation on my laptop even if I am planning for a live Internet connection. I have learned that good handouts can turn failure into success. Most importantly, I have learned that the ability to breathe deeply, smile, and keep going even in the face of a sleepy audience or broken equipment is an invaluable skill. I'm not Ginger Rogers yet, but I really enjoy working on my steps!

So those are a few of the hats that are part of my Librarian Relations Consultant millinery. No doubt you have worn some of these and a number of others in your library career. I hope you have many left to try. The key is to keep trying them until you find the ones that fit! **LLL**

Karen W. Silber, Legal Reference Librarian, BNA, Inc.

Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter by Steven Johnson

Johnson's main argument in *Everything Bad is Good For You* is that today's video games and television programs are not necessarily bad for society. Some hold the belief that society is following a downward path because the masses want dumb, simple pleasure and big media companies want to give the masses what they want. But in fact, according to Johnson, "the exact opposite is happening: the culture is getting more intellectually demanding, not less." He defines this phenomenon as the Sleeper Curve, whereby "the most debased forms of mass diversion—video games and violent television dramas and juvenile sitcoms—turn out to be nutritional after all."



Johnson backs up his argument in detail throughout the book. He compares the rewards of reading, concentration, attention, the ability to make sense of words or to follow narrative threads, etc., to other forms of culture such as games, television, movies, and the Internet. He stresses that many newer forms of culture "have intellectual or cognitive virtues in their own right—different from, but comparable to, the rewards of reading." In addition, heavy gamers show improved skills compared to non-gamers in manual dexterity and/or visual memory. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. Games are challenging, not merely fun. Johnson details a few games and what one must do to achieve victory or get to the end. Time must be spent figuring out strategy as there is a sequence of tasks that must be completed to

proceed further. He explains that the tasks "are more like chores than entertainment" and one may become frustrated, confused, disoriented, and even stuck. Time in the "real world," or time spent away from the game, may lead to "mentally working through the problem you've been wrestling with." It's not instant gratification as some would believe.

The learning advantages of playing video games spring from the fact that games force you to decide, to choose, to prioritize. Johnson goes into further detail about the complexities of playing video games, noting that the rules become apparent only through probing the depths of the game and exploring the "world." When non-gamers ask, "What am I supposed to do?," the reply is usually, "You're supposed to figure out what you're supposed to do." It's a probing expedition in which you get results by trial and error, by stumbling across things, and/or by following hunches (sounds a little like legal research). Remember Pac-Man? Today's games are far more complex and more is expected of the gamer. There are multiple layers with immediate problems and long distance goals coupled with puzzles thrown in by the game designers.

Just as video games have grown in complexity, so have our television programs. And although television shows are more passive than video games, TV shows have "increased the cognitive work they demand from their audience, exercising the mind in ways that would have been unheard of thirty years ago." This development is due in part to the multiple threading we see in today's programs. Johnson compares several popular dramas starting with *Dragnet*. *Dragnet* follows one of two lead characters, has a single dominant plot, and reaches a decisive conclusion at the end of each episode. Fast forward to *Starsky and Hutch*. You have the same format plus the additional

comic subplot at the end of the show and perhaps a few twists. Fast forward to *Hill Street Blues*. There are more characters and the episodes may include threads from previous episodes (albeit some of the threads are quick scenes scattered throughout the episode). The initial reaction to the *Hill Street Blues* pilot brought complaints from the audience that it was too complicated. Fast forward to today and we have *The Sopranos* “with narratives that makes *Hill Street* look like *Three’s Company*.” Viewers may have complained about the complexity of *Hill Street Blues* when it first aired, but after years of watching *The West Wing* and/or *Lost*, etc., we have honed our analytical skills. Today’s dramas layer each scene with a “thick network of affiliations. You have to focus to follow the plot, and in focusing you’re exercising the part of your brain that maps social networks.” We want more out of our leisure time and happily

embrace the challenges which technology and complexity offer. Johnson also discusses ways that the Internet and films increase our cognitive ability.

Why are the themes of Johnson’s book important to us as law librarians? Because the generation now in law school grew up playing video games and watching more complex television programs than *Gilligan’s Island*. Due to the increased complexity of entertainment media, this generation has come of age in “an environment likely to enhance problem-solving skills.” Rather than playing with toys that simulate household chores, today’s children use cell phones, IM, and e-mail to communicate with friends. They immerse themselves in complex games, adapt to new technologies, trouble shoot when systems crash, and exercise logic skills to find a solution. We must be ready to accept this new generation and its expectations in our libraries. **LLL**

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Amy Taylor, Georgetown University Law Library

Congratulations!

Trina Robinson is the new head of acquisitions at the George Washington University Law Library. Trina was formerly the acquisitions librarian at Tulane University Law Library.

Roger V. Skalbeck joined the Georgetown University Law Library as the Associate Law Librarian for Electronic Resources and Services. Roger was formerly the Assistant Law Librarian for Technology Services at George Mason School of Law.

Joy Hanson is the new Research Librarian at the U.S. Supreme Court Library.

Ross Kiser joined the Internal Revenue Service as the new librarian for the agency’s Legislative Affairs office. He previously worked as the legislative research coordinator at the American Staffing Association. He received his MLS in 2006 from the University of Maryland and his law degree from American University.

Jennifer Eckel joined Dixon & Bell, LLP as the new library manager, replacing Robyn Rebollo. Jennifer was formerly with Dorsey and Whitney.

Cecile Kay Richter received credit as the primary researcher of *The Wanderer: The Last American Slave Ship* and the *The Conspiracy That Set Its Sails* by Erik Calonius. Ceceile performed research in many of the area’s libraries, including the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

Congratulations to David Mao from LLSDC!

David Mao, a longtime LLSDC member and former LLSDC Treasurer, has just been elected to serve as AALL Treasurer for the July 2007 through July 2010 term. A Covington & Burling LLP alumnus, David now works with the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress. We are proud to have one of our own on the AALL Board and know that David will do a great job.



A Day in the Life of the Covington & Burling LLP Reference Desk

Elizabeth LeDoux and Dawn Bohls, Senior Research Librarian and Research Librarian, Covington & Burling LLP

8:56 a.m. Monday morning. Coffee? Check. Water? Check. Login to reference desk computer? Check. Answering ringing phone...and we're off!

Our reference desk is busy, busy, busy. We typically respond to anywhere from fifteen to 30 non-billable questions a day (those taking less than ten minutes or so), and we all bill between 20 and 80 hours a month depending on the demand for our services. We tend to get from five to ten more substantive research requests a day that range from pulling pleadings from a docket on PACER to finding out everything there is to know about a company for a client development brief in the afternoon. In addition, with 77 summer associates this past summer and something over 50 associates who started this past fall, we've always got new patrons to introduce to the library's resources and our capabilities.

Covington & Burling LLP has six research librarians, and four of us staff the reference desk during the week in a kaleidoscope of reference shifts, two librarians at a time. Carolyn McKelvey and Elizabeth staff the reference desk on Monday morning. We answer the same three questions over and over again:

What is my Lexis password?
What is our PACER login?
Can I get a desk copy of the *Bluebook/Federal Rules of Civil Procedure* [insert desired title here]?

When there's an outside meeting in the large conference room just down the hall, we also have repeated requests for directions to the restrooms, but thankfully, there's no meeting this particular Monday morning.

While Carolyn and Elizabeth are covering the general reference requests at the desk, our boss Jennifer Korpacz, the head of public services and our food and drug expert, is doing in-depth research to compile statistical information on the tentative approval time for para-

graph IV and other abbreviated new FDA drug applications. Meanwhile, our legislative librarian Priscilla Day is compiling a regulatory history from the state of Maine, monitoring recent Congressional activity, and pulling electronic documents together for an e-legislative history on the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006.

Off the reference desk, Dawn has spent the morning busy in her cubicle. She is always working on the next issue of *Lights*, which is hugely time consuming; she is recording her billable time in the time entry database; and she is dealing with follow-up questions to last week's research projects, including corresponding with our Brussels librarian to get a copy of an old bilateral investment treaty to which Belgium is a party. This afternoon, away from the reference desk, Elizabeth will spend her time in similar employ. Our time off the reference desk is also used for more complex, time-consuming research projects that require more concentration than we usually have available to us at the reference desk.

1:00 p.m. Changing of the guard. When Elizabeth is relieved at the desk by Dawn, she heads back to her office to start a large research project compiling lists of company executives who own more than \$50 million in shares of their companies.

Carolyn is on the desk all day on Mondays, with an hour break for lunch. She spends fifteen minutes of that break calling a court reporter in Seattle to track down a transcript, and another thirty minutes working on a weeding project in the international collection which needs to get done so technical services can shift the collection. In her days off the reference desk, Carolyn spends much of her time assisting with interlibrary loan administration.

Speaking of interlibrary loan, our ILL librarian Larry Guthrie is the unsung hero of the library and an indispensable member of the public services team. More than once, the reference staff has teared up upon his return from vacation because we are so happy to have him back. Larry has been with the firm for more than ten years, and is one of those people who knows everyone. There is nothing Larry can't

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find, and he has been credited with finding that one thing needed to win a case on more than one occasion.

Heather Macdonald, our fourth reference desk librarian, staffs the desk on Thursdays and Fridays. She splits her week between conflicts and reference, and is a genius at both.

5:30 p.m. As the reference desk closes down for the night, we all have a chance to wrap up our research projects, check our calendars for the next day, and work on our own projects, whether that is volunteer work for LLSDC, planning a party for the library (almost inevitably to be hosted by social organizer extraordinaire Elizabeth), or figuring out a better way to manage all those Lexis passwords.

As Covington research librarians, we take our jobs very, very seriously, and take pride in being part of a crack reference team. In return, we are blessed with patrons who love us, and who respect our intelligence, our work, and the Library. We get really interesting research questions; the attorneys aren't afraid to ask us to find information they've failed to track down themselves. Our days are a mix of the routine and the challenging, which makes for a satisfying blend of work. We can go from feeling completely competent one minute to having no idea where to find something the next minute, but our research librarians have no problem with taking on the unknown and feel confident that we have the skills, resources, and creativity to conquer (almost) any assignment.

The reference desk is located in a very high-traffic area of the office just down the hall from reception and right across from the office area that houses our managing partner Stuart Stock; we probably see more people in a day than anyone other than reception and the cafeteria workers. Although we sometimes get a bit tired of all the requests for directions to the coffee room and the restrooms, we generally see our exposed position as a blessing. We try to greet everyone who passes by, which increases our visibility and shows our friendliness and willingness to help.

The reference work always takes center stage, but we have time for other pursuits as well. We are encouraged by John Harbison, the library director, and by Jennifer Korpacz, our manager, to participate in professional activities and to attend professional training opportunities whenever possible. We are incredibly active in

LLSDC: Elizabeth, Dawn, Carolyn, Priscilla, and Jennifer all hold or have held positions in the Society; and Elizabeth, Carolyn, and Larry have been heavily involved with their respective national organizations, AALL and SLA.

We work hard, but we also try to have as much fun as we possibly can every day. We chat a bit with our patrons and the office staff as they pass by our reference desk, we consult each other on research strategies, we discuss our weekend plans, and we vent our frustrations over research projects that aren't going smoothly. On the rare slow day, sometimes we even get a little silly, like the day Elizabeth and Dawn took turns wearing a dollar-store tiara.

We can't finish this article without talking about the rest of the Covington library team. The reference librarians may be the library's public face, but technical services and conflicts are equally important to the successful running of the library.

Our tech services staff is made up of three librarians and three paraprofessionals who keep the physical library running and manage all our electronic licensing agreements. They pay the bills, process the daily mountain of mail, keep track of the full time looseleaf filing staff, handle attorneys' requests for materials, and maintain a catalog across all our offices.

While the rest of us are toiling away at a more-or-less steady pace, our conflicts department slams to the beat of a much faster drummer. The basic task of conflicts is to ensure that we are not suing a client we also represent. The conflicts group performs hugely intensive business and corporate research, and is in high demand from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (and beyond) seven days a week. Everyone in that department has an MLS and an attention to detail that would make your head spin.

With a total staff of eighteen, including fourteen librarians and four paraprofessionals, the Washington library of Covington & Burling LLP is a large one. Our capabilities are enhanced by our other librarians in New York, London, Brussels, and San Francisco. The size of the Covington staff is part of the satisfaction of working here. We all have our individual responsibilities, yet they all overlap. We all have our individual personalities, yet we are all part of the Covington library team. We are proud of our library, and we enjoy working for attorneys, paralegals, and staff who count on us and who appreciate our contributions. **LLL**

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The World Bank Law Library: A Truly Global Experience

Laura Lalime-Mowry and Olesya Zaremba, Information Analysts, World Bank Law Library

The variety of research topics along with the multicultural staff make the World Bank one of the most enriching places to be an international law librarian.

They do not call us librarians here; officially we are “Information Analysts.” We think of ourselves as “holistic librarians,” handling every aspect of the library from materials selection and procurement to cataloging; from reference and research to Webmaster and newsletter author. Librarians wear many hats, are multi-skilled, and must be able to multitask, switching from one project to another in the matter of seconds. The wide variety of questions we receive in one day forces us to change focus rather quickly, moving from country to country, and very often language to language. Fluency in English and a reading knowledge of at least one additional language is critical in our multicultural environment.

The World Bank Law Library, a member of the Joint Bank-Fund (IMF) Library Network consortium, has two librarians: Laura Lalime-Mowry, a U.S. national with 24 years of research experience and twelve years in international legal research, and Olesya Zaremba, a Ukrainian national with five years of non-legal research experience. Our clients are primarily the legal staff in the World Bank Group, although we assist any staff member who needs assistance. Through our role as a legal help desk, we are also the contact point for external requests concerning legal aspects of the Bank’s work. You could say that anyone in the world could be our client, as long as the question concerns the World Bank!

What is the World Bank?

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the World Bank Group is a multilateral organization that includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). As a

source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries, the World Bank plays a supportive role in global poverty reduction and the improvement of living standards.

Learning About International Law— What Experience Has Taught Us

While a basic understanding of U.S. law, knowledge of other legal systems, and exposure to international law concepts are the foundation of a World Bank law librarian’s knowledge set, we did not have all of these components when we started out as librarians in the World Bank.

“Learning by doing” is the motto of the experienced law librarian. Originally a cataloger and general reference librarian with a background in Spanish and Latin American studies, Laura gained an in-depth knowledge of the World Bank law library collection through the process of cataloging and classification. Her experience in designing and maintaining the library Web pages and in procurement of information allowed her to keep current on electronic resources. Working with a mentor law librarian for nine years and taking advantage of various training opportunities were invaluable in gaining expertise in research.

For the novice law librarian, acquiring these topical skills is exciting and enlightening. Self-education on the subject matter and seeking the assistance of colleagues are vital to progressing as a law librarian. As a Ukrainian national, Olesya needed to learn about the U.S. legal system. As an alumnus of Catholic University, she was able to enroll in a legal literature class, where she was exposed to a variety of resources on the topic. The class included an introduction to bibliographic organization, techniques of legal research, and the use of primary and secondary sources. In addition, subject readings and a review of past reference questions also helped her to gain a good view of what she might encounter in her daily work. Finally, when in doubt, we never hesitate to ask our colleagues for advice

We think of ourselves as “holistic librarians,” handling every aspect of the library from materials selection and procurement to cataloging; from reference and research to Web master and newsletter author.

and assistance. It is worse to give the wrong answer to the client than to take a minute to double check with your co-workers. Seeking knowledge and being open to new concepts are essential for success.

How Our Research Helps

Our clients are some of the best and brightest from their own countries. The World Bank attracts some of the most talented lawyers from all over the world. These global clients of ours can be located in Washington, D.C. or in offices around the world. We often provide general information to staff who are heading to the field and need a basic overview of the legal systems in place. These staff briefings are a good example of how our work translates directly to the operational work of the Bank—the projects in the field.

Every staff member takes a shift at the reference desk. The amount of off-desk time can vary, and we are likely to be pulled back out to the reference desk to assist during the busiest times. The questions can stagger in or come in droves. Sometimes you feel like a juggler with several balls in the air.

Research questions cover a wide range of topics and are not limited to law-related issues. Specific requests for information vary from the privatization laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the tax laws of Peru, or even the 1892 treaty between Afghanistan and Persia on the Helmund River. In-depth research requests cover topics such as the future of the Kyoto Protocol, the impact of NAFTA implementation, wind energy development, and debt in African Francophone countries. Searching a variety of databases with different interfaces, sometimes in languages you do not know, is standard practice.

Case law requests can range from international courts (International Court of Justice, the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal, European Court of Human Rights, etc.) to national or regional courts (European Union, United Kingdom, Philippines, United States, etc.). We also receive many requests for the interpretation and the application of the World Bank's Articles of Agreement and its operational rules.

Some of the most challenging questions highlight the importance of institutional memory—"I need the small red book that the former department head used to use on commercial treaties," or "Do you have the paper

written by a former General Counsel that all staff used to be given when they first started in the Legal Department?"

Long-term research projects often require one-on-one training to allow the legal staff to do the bulk of the work themselves. Projects might include locating the civil procedure laws of twenty countries, the mining codes of ten countries, or even the competition laws worldwide. Our librarians must be able to train staff on different subject matter using a variety of databases. In our orientation sessions for new legal staff, we include a tour of our Web pages and highlight resources staff can use on their desktops.

At the End of the Day, What Really Matters

With the ultimate goal of helping the poor around the world, the true excitement in our work is seeing the impact of our research in practice, either through a legal opinion or memorandum, a research paper, or use by a lawyer in the field. When you put all the pieces of the puzzle together and the client is thankful and happy, you know that through your efforts you are contributing to the work of the World Bank in the fight against poverty. **LLL**

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Susan Chinoransky, *The George Washington University Law Library*

A Day in the Life of the Serials Department

The day begins early for the Serials Department, as the “dailies” (newspapers and daily current awareness publications) must be checked in, processed, and sent on their way first thing in the morning. As soon as the USPS mail is delivered to Receiving (also under the purview of Serials), the mail is sorted; then the periodicals, serials, and continuations are brought to the appropriate staff member for check in and prep work prior to being processed by our student assistants.

Meanwhile, in another part of the library, our bindery specialist gathers and prepares material to be shipped to our bindery near Hershey, Pennsylvania. The turnaround time for our bindery materials is two weeks, so there is always something to do, either getting material ready to ship out or processing the bound materials upon return. Four of the five members of the serials department are involved with the acquisition of missing issues for the collection; we spend a great deal of time and energy trying to “scare up” older issues of periodicals and serials in order to bind complete runs of titles.

The influx of mail in today’s environment is constant; we receive shipments from the post

office, as well as UPS, FedEx, and DHL. These shipments are delivered throughout the day, as is library mail that has been misdelivered to other parts of the law school and hand deliveries from couriers. We are ever vigilant to keep Receiving empty of mail, an ongoing task.

My “second-in-command,” the serials supervisor, has her hands full managing the daily flow of work through the department, performing quality control on all items leaving the department, and handling “claiming” duties. She is the first line of defense for problems that are brought to the department.

My job, in theory, is to make sure everyone else is doing their job. In practice, I put out fires from the time I walk in until the time I leave each day. I have stacks of papers, each representing some problem with a bibliographic record. I have a file of “ticklers” alerting me to problems in publication status, subscription status, or the latest unnamed mystery. Sometimes I feel like the Sherlock Holmes of the library, solving mysteries with ambiguous clues. Who knew how exciting the world of serials could be?

New Periodical Titles

Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution

Two issues yearly, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University

Intercultural Human Rights

Law Review, 2006-
Annual, Saint Thomas University
School of Law

Journal of Animal Law and Ethics, 2006-

Annual, University of Pennsylvania
Law School

Journal of International Aging, Law & Policy, 2005-

Annual, Stetson University College of Law

Journal of World Intellectual

Property Rights, 2005-
Semiannual, Serials Publications

Stanford Journal of Civil Rights & Civil Liberties, 2005-

Semiannual, Stanford University Law School

Texas Journal of Oil, Gas & Energy Law, 2006-

Semiannual, University of Texas School of Law

Title Changes

The American, 2006-

Six issues per year, American
Enterprise Institute
Continues: American Enterprise

Berkeley Journal of African-American Law & Policy, 2006-
Annual, Boalt Hall School of Law
Continues: *African-American Law & Policy Report*

Federal-State Court Directory, 2007-
Annual, CQ Press
Continues: *Walt's Federal-State Court Directory*

NAELA Journal, 2005-
Semiannual, National Academy
of Elder Law Attorneys
Continues: *NAELA Quarterly*

Washington University Law Review, 2006-
Six times per year, Washington
University School of Law
Continues: *Washington University Law Quarterly* **LLL**

TECH TALK

Roger V. Skalbeck, Georgetown University Law Library

In the spirit of the theme “A Day in the Life of a Law Librarian,” I focus this Tech Talk column on three topics to make some daily technology tasks easier. Whether working in a court, law firm, law school, or other law library, it is a safe bet to say that every law library employee has to use a web browser and read e-mail. I suspect most law librarians regularly have to search, download, describe, attach, unzip, decrypt, package, summarize, and send countless types of information using a web browser and e-mail. The more efficient these tasks become, the more time we have for thinking and learning.

Read on to learn about updates to Internet Explorer and Firefox, a more efficient way to download documents, and two tools to help manage e-mail using Thunderbird software.

Moving to a New Internet Browser

Microsoft's Internet Explorer is the default browser on all Windows-based computers, and is the most commonly-used browser bar none. Interestingly, for more than five years Microsoft made few if any improvements to the features of this program. Internet Explorer 6 was released in August 2001, with the next version not appearing in final form until October 2006.

This latest version, branded as Microsoft Internet Explorer 7 (MSIE 7), includes new features for navigating Web sites, improved security, and better standards compliance. With this upgrade, Microsoft was playing a bit of catch-up with competing browsers like Mozilla's Firefox and Opera. It is, therefore, no surprise that many of the new MSIE 7 features look a lot like those in other browsers. Regular IE users may be disoriented by the new placement of naviga-

tion buttons on the MSIE7 interface. The new version is an improvement, however, as it makes browsing the Internet easier and more secure.

In terms of improving the daily life of a law librarian, the following are what I see as the three best features of MSIE 7: 1) “tabbed browsing,” which allows you to open multiple Web sites in a single application window; 2) improved support for RSS newsfeeds, permitting you to actually read and search an RSS feed in the browser directly, instead of being presented with the raw XML source code with no active links of visible images; and 3) better support of web-based standards, so you can, for instance, resize the text of almost any web page. Adding to the ease of transition, MSIE 7 was an automatic update for Windows, so you may be using it already.

On the day MSIE 7 was released, Mozilla also released a trial version of Firefox 2.0, which is now no longer beta software. Firefox 2.0 also has better support for reading and subscribing to RSS feeds. Upgraded security helps it to identify phishing and fraudulent web sites. Finally, it comes preinstalled with a spell-checking program. It does not let you correct others' spelling errors, but it does allow you to check the spelling on forms you fill out online, helping you avoid typing words like “infomation” or “libarian” which are “imbearassing” mistakes to say the least!

Make Downloading Documents Easier

Law librarians often download documents, frequently in large groups. Maybe you want all the Congressional hearings from a particular Committee Web site or perhaps all the annual reports for a single company. For most people, this activity involves clicking on a link, asking to

continued on page 18

download them one-at-a-time, and then printing or e-mailing all of the results. Thankfully, this multi-step process is no longer necessary. Now you can get a free download manager to automate the process for you.

Librarians who are high-volume downloaders should consider getting the free download manager called FlashGet (<http://www.flashget.com/>). This program allows you to go to a page of documents, select them in the window and download everything at once. The program can also be used to follow links on webpages to discover documents in multiple directories. This program works for many document types, making it just as easy to get all PDF court documents from a page as it is to get all the pictures of your friend's dog from an online photo album.

The FlashGet program integrates automatically with Internet Explorer, so its functions are available in the browser toolbar or by clicking the right mouse button when viewing a page. Firefox users can install the free extension called FlashGot (<http://www.flashgot.org>), which delivers the same features. With either program, it may still take a while to download large document collections, but this process runs in a separate program, so you can go on to do other tasks while items are being downloaded.

Improved Thunderbird E-mail Experience

On the final topic of improving daily life, two free extensions make managing and responding to e-mail a lot easier—but only if you are using Mozilla's Thunderbird program.

NostalgY – E-mail Message Filing

<http://addons.mozilla.org/thunderbird/2487>

One duty common to almost all librarians is that we need to organize things. Whether it's books, documents, or data, we're pros at organizing knowledge. And since we all get a lot of e-mail, we also have to organize it as well.

For years, I dutifully dedicated time each week to filing my e-mail in folders to collect messages on similar topics. Recently though, I found an extension program for Thunderbird that made this much easier. With the NostalgY extension, I can now file e-mail in local or server

folders with the click of just a few buttons. I can even copy items to multiple folders with no added effort. If you use Thunderbird and like to file your e-mail, check out NostalgY.

Quicktext—Pre-scripted E-mail Responses

<http://addons.mozilla.org/firefox/640>

Much of my e-mail correspondence tends to be a bit routine. In a previous job at a law school library, I got repeated requests for admissions information, inquiries about teaching opportunities, and questions seeking legal advice. Since most of these questions could be answered with a standard response, I created short text files to cut and paste into my responses. Even that proved tedious, so I was delighted to find the Quicktext extension for Thunderbird. With this program, you can pre-script responses to e-mails and send them with only a few keystrokes. For example, I could type ALT-9 to tell people the requirements for proposing a new course or ALT-8 to send a student detailed download instructions and the password for using a computer-based training system.

The responses can also have variables such as the person's name or e-mail address or the current date, so they don't look too impersonal. If you find that you tend to write the same e-mail often, check out Quicktext to help make your life easier. There's also a commercial version that adds more bells and whistles. **LLL**

Life as a Solo Librarian: Master of My Domain

Louis Abramovitz, Librarian, Wilkinson Barker Knauer LLP

So, you ask, what's it like being a solo librarian? As Forrest Gump might have said, you never know what you're going to get. Although there is what one could call a daily routine, every day is a little different.

My "typical" day begins with a review of the morning's news from trade press and major newspapers. News items are forwarded to the attorneys early in the day, both for general awareness purposes and to help them better advise their clients. In addition, other information, such as *Federal Register* notices, is circulated via e-mail to the firm's attorneys and paralegals. Many of the articles I sort through arrive in the form of automated alerts, but I also take time to scan a wide variety of sources for items of interest to individual attorneys and/or the office as a whole. Sometimes important developments take place after regular business hours, in which case I may scan and forward court opinions or other updates over the weekend or in the evening hours. It's all part of the job.

One of the most interesting and challenging parts of my routine involves fielding reference requests. Some are relatively simple, such as tracking down a specific piece of recent legislation. Other times, the requests are a bit more complex. For example, I was recently asked to determine the status of an issue of importance to communications companies that was slowly winding its way through several states' public utility commissions. Trying to adhere to the principles of cost-effective research, I first jumped online to see what I could find on the free Web. Because I was getting nowhere fast, I turned to one of the major online legal research services. My search returned no results. Just to be sure I hadn't missed something, and to save time, I called the service's customer service line and enlisted the help of one of their research professionals. Still no luck.

At that point, I decided to try a more old-fashioned approach: I picked up the phone and started calling legislative and state Public Utilities Commission research offices. At first, I played telephone tag, but the calls started to pay off before the end of the day. Like many in

our profession, I am somewhat of an introvert, so cold calling people is not exactly my favorite thing to do. But I was pleasantly surprised at how responsive and willing to help the bureaucrats I spoke to were—and none of them were fellow librarians!

On any given day, I may be interrupted by vendors hoping to send me a trial subscription to one of their publications. I don't necessarily mind these calls, even on busier days, because they may present an opportunity to learn about a new resource that is worth a closer look. On the other hand, there are times it's clear that the salesperson calling me hasn't done his or her homework. Given all the mergers in the legal publishing industry, I probably shouldn't be surprised, but some of these calls are from vendors with whom the firm has done business for many years, pushing publications that have absolutely nothing to do with our specialized practice.

Another regular part of my routine involves keeping up with a seemingly endless stream of vendor invoices and account statements. These tasks include reviewing all of the online searches undertaken during a given billing period, in part to verify that attorneys and paralegals are not unnecessarily running up thousands of dollars worth of charges. In this respect, newer attorneys may require some education, or rather, re-education: "What do you mean my little bit of online research cost the firm \$5K?—in law school we searched as much as we wanted, and it was free." This is your brain on [fill in your favorite online service]—any questions? Then there's the challenge of figuring out where to assign searches in cases when users have input nonexistent client codes, which sometimes seem to have been pulled out of thin air. Although specialized software is available to help with this, the cost of the software is arguably harder for a relatively small firm to justify.

Wearing multiple hats is often part of a solo's job. As a stand-in for a formal marketing department, I am frequently asked to put together detailed company briefing reports on

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Yes, work can be like a box of chocolates for a solo librarian. Sometimes you just have to watch out for the nuts.

Life as a Solo Librarian

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short notice. These reports are used to support the efforts of the firm's client development partners. While the tight deadlines can be stressful, the detective work involved in preparing the reports can be interesting.

In addition to all of the above activities, I occasionally have to route periodicals and sort through the mail. Although I'm fortunate to have access to an assistant, her position is structured so that she also serves as the firm's relief receptionist. If the regular receptionist is away for an extended period of time, or if my assistant is otherwise unavailable, it may be necessary for me to take on some of these tasks.

Finding new ways to provide value-added services to my users can be both fun and challenging. One ongoing project is the office intranet, designed to provide one-stop shopping for attorneys, paralegals, and other staff. The intranet features annotated research links, Webliographies on "hot topics" of current interest, and trade press RSS feeds. For client schmoozing purposes, there is a database of restaurant reviews and related information. There are also movie reviews and a monthly staff profile to help people get to know their coworkers.

Getting attorneys to visit the library is another big challenge, given the increasing number of information resources that reside on their desktops. In addition to the obligatory

library candy jar and a few puzzles on the coffee table, several events over the course of the year have helped me draw users to the library. These events may require days or even weeks of planning. As part of this year's annual office Halloween party, the library was transformed into a graveyard, complete with skeletons, tombstones and special effects, thanks to a fog machine and strobe lights. Attorneys and staff brought their kids to the library, where they were given Halloween-themed mugs to decorate and keep, or to give their parents as mementos. No holiday or occasion is too small to exploit: In celebration of our collective 'Irish heritage' on St. Patrick's Day, I put up a neon shamrock display—which has sometimes been accompanied by a platter of (intentionally) green bagels and cream cheese.

A willingness to take on functions that are not typical for a librarian also helps to enhance the perceived value of the library. For instance, I was not a notary public when I started my job, nor was it part of the "official" job description. However, because of turnover and other factors, the few administrative staff who completed the paperwork required to become a D.C. notary were not always available. So I volunteered to become the firm's backup notary. The attorneys have been extremely appreciative of this effort. At the same time, it has not interfered with my daily routine.

Yes, work can be like a box of chocolates for a solo librarian. Sometimes you just have to watch out for the nuts. **LLL**

ILL: A Look Behind the Scenes

Steven Shearer, ILL Specialist, Steptoe & Johnson

"Library, Steptoe and Johnson, this is Steven"

Most days, the phone is ringing before I get settled into my desk. The e-mail requests are already pouring in, and the voicemail light is on and waiting for me to check the messages. Today, as with any day, requests can range from those for standard legal texts and articles, to letters from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 1880's. One day, I had a request for an article from *Playboy*. My job, as you can see, is never boring. It is more than simply looking for books and e-mailing information. It consists of the challenge of locating obscure, unusual, and hard-

to-find items not available via a simple Google or database search. There are foreign language requests to decipher, conference proceedings from forty years ago that need to be found, and more. As the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Specialist at Steptoe & Johnson, it is my job to beg, borrow, or steal (well, not literally) books, articles, and whatever else our patrons need.

ILL Day to Day

I am in charge of both the circulation desk and ILL. Currently, we have two people working full time in this area and a total library staff of eighteen. With approximately 3,000 individual

items obtained each year and nearly 1,000 books lent to other libraries, my job consists of managing a constant flow of materials in and out. I had assumed the majority of our requests would be for legal materials, but I was quickly proved wrong. Approximately 25% of the requests we receive are for legal materials and nearly half are for scientific and medical documents, leaving 25% of the requests for items that you just never know about, and which are often the most interesting.

Through this job, I am in contact with people all around the world in an attempt to track down the materials requested. Many documents are available through Lexis, Westlaw, and the many other databases we have access to, but what about someone who wants an article from an early 1990s issue of *Computer Shopper*? With the never-ending advances in technology and the shortage of space at many libraries, I was very skeptical of finding a library that had kept the needed issue, never mind one that also took rush requests. By the end of the morning, however, the patron had what he needed from the British Library and was extremely happy. We take pride in the fact that there are few requests we've had to admit defeat on.

Being able to connect with my library colleagues and other book-related professionals both locally and around the globe is one of the favorite parts of my job. You quickly learn who can help you with the inevitable last-minute requests, or who picks up the phone. I realize that just as some of my requests sometimes are needed within hours, other libraries' requests are as urgent, and I try to offer the same service I hope to receive. In some cases, other libraries go above and beyond to try and help out. A good example of this responsiveness was a request we recently received for an outdated map. After many hours of searching without success, we were all but ready to give up on this request. Later that day I received a call from U.S. Geological Society Library in Colorado, which had been contacted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, whom I had called earlier. They had the map and were happy to forward it to me.

A Translator Please?

In addition to the day-to-day work, the ILL staff also works on many long-term major requests. One was a large project requiring over 1,000

items, mostly medical-related, many with bad citations or from foreign medical journals. As we don't read any languages other than English with any proficiency, finding medical articles listed only in the Polish, French, or German languages added a unique twist to the search process. Unfortunately, the online translator programs were of little use and it took much trial and error to track these down.

We also have worked on several large requests for patrons who were writing books or articles. One of these projects involved finding and obtaining over 400 items, many of which were not widely held. It was interesting to see the many different items that were requested, and you just never knew what you would be asked for next. It was also rewarding to see the final published products and know that our work went into its completion. In many cases, you never really know if what you found was useful or even used.

At Day's End

As you can see, each day can bring something different. Nevertheless, some things remain the same. We strive to serve our patrons with quick and efficient customer service. We try not to let calls go to voicemail, preferring to offer live assistance to any colleague whenever possible. There are basic administrative duties to contend with, books we've loaned out to retrieve, and countless other tasks to be done. Working in ILL has taught me how to multitask and prioritize. I've learned shortcuts on how to effectively use search engines of all types, and even after several years, I still remain interested and surprised by the requests I process. But mostly, it is the countless people who help me out that I like most about my job. Without the help I get from the many LLSDC libraries, I couldn't do my job. **LLL**

Working in ILL has taught me how to multitask and prioritize. I've learned shortcuts on how to effectively use search engines of all types, and even after several years, I still remain interested and surprised by the requests I process. Without the help I get from the many LLSDC libraries, I couldn't do my job.

Life in an Academic Law Library

*Christine Ciambella, Access & Research Services Librarian,
George Mason University School of Law Library*

Just What IS “Access Services”?

Run a Google search on “access services” and most of the hits have to do with accessibility issues for people with disabilities. That is but one small part of my job. In the library world, Access Services encompasses the circulation system and the circulation desk staff. It also includes maintaining the collection in good working order, creating and implementing policies on access and usage, seeing that the physical library building is kept in good condition, and ensuring patron safety and security.

Access Services can also be a catch-all department for functions that do not clearly belong to reference or technical services, such as interlibrary loan, photocopier and computer equipment maintenance, disaster preparedness, and media services (videotaping lectures and special events for the university).

One of the great pleasures of my job is the variety. I have three areas of responsibility: Access Services and circulation, reference, and training. This article will focus primarily on the Access Services part of my job. Much of my job is administrative and preemptive. I try to address problems before they arise, and to implement policies and procedures that will ensure that the library runs as smoothly as possible.

The first person a library patron sees or speaks with is usually someone on the circulation staff, so excellent customer service is our primary goal. We are the trouble shooters for the library and for our patrons. Questions and problems are usually submitted here first. We refer patrons to the appropriate department, whether reference, technical services, computer services, or law school administration. When you walk in the law school building, the library is the first thing you see; the other administrative offices are located elsewhere in the building. We function as the information desk for the entire law school. Consequently, we get lots of questions about things other than the library. The circulation staff must keep abreast of events on the campus and be informed of the areas of responsibility of the rest of the law school departments in order to refer people correctly.

I am responsible for ensuring that the circulation desk is staffed during all of the ninety-six hours per week that we are open. In order to do this, I work closely with the two circulation managers (one for day and one for evening) who report directly to me. They in turn supervise the desk attendants. The desk attendants are all student workers; most are law students but some are graduate students from other departments. Supervising these students requires some special considerations. By definition, the law students are temporary employees and their first priority is their studies. We ask for a firm commitment from them regarding their schedules, but we are flexible when they need to miss shifts to accommodate assignments or other school-related activities. It’s a balancing act, but it usually works pretty well. Most students are responsible and hard working even though library work is not their career goal.

The circulation department maintains all reserve materials, both permanent and course reserves. Permanent reserves are popular items that circulate for a short period of time, typically only a few hours. Course reserves, on the other hand, are items that a professor wishes to have readily available to students for his or her class. Reserve materials must comply with copyright guidelines, so our staff must be very conscientious about keeping current with copyright rules and university policies.

The circulation staff regularly monitors our collection for problems needing attention and ensures that the books and materials are available and accessible to all of our patrons. We pay attention to patron activity and try to regulate behavior as appropriate. For example, our library is open to the public but only for the purposes of legal research. We redirect people who wish to do other kinds of research to other libraries, and we try to maintain a quiet, scholarly atmosphere to ensure that the law students have a comfortable place to study.

We take advantage of the summer break, when there are fewer students and the library is quiet, to handle larger and less pressing projects. Typical summer projects include weeding and shifting the collection, updating maps and signs,

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working on long term projects (for example, revising procedure manuals), and dealing with administrative issues. Each spring, the library director takes a survey of the law students and solicits their input on ways the library can improve. Many of our new projects are suggested by the students.

The circulation staff must be flexible and anticipate issues before they become problems. We are constantly evaluating our policies and procedures in light of experience and in response to suggestions from our patrons and the library staff. The old adage about an ounce of prevention certainly pertains to library work. We do allow for flexibility rather than rigid adherence to the rules. Every situation is different and we strive to resolve problems in such a way that is most favorable to the patron and to the goals of the library. Our ultimate concern is providing a superior quality library that meets both the research and the studying needs of our students and faculty.

Pros and Cons

The variety of work is the biggest plus of my job. I never know what each day will bring. Of course, sometimes that variety is a curse and not a blessing, but on balance I would not change a thing. I am never bored. In addition, the academic setting lends itself more easily to self enrichment. Obviously, education is highly valued here and management is supportive of career development. There are many opportunities to take on special projects that are not necessarily within my job description; thus I am able to make my job my own.

I love working with students—both as a librarian and as an employer. Many of our student workers are just looking for a convenient job on campus, but others genuinely enjoy library work. Regardless, all of them have a fresh perspective that helps me to look at my job with new ideas.

I also like helping the students, particularly the first-year students, the “1Ls.” The circulation desk is an ideal place to ask all sorts of questions about the law school, not just the library, and it’s rewarding to help new students get acclimated to this scary new experience called law school.

No job is perfect, and there are some things about my job that I would change if I could. By necessity, a good portion of my job is reactive rather than proactive. I come in to work with a general idea of what I’d like to accomplish,

but my plans are sometimes derailed by the crisis of the day. I have learned to anticipate that possibility and to shift gears accordingly.

Additionally, I am constrained by the physical design of my workspace. The George Mason Law Library has a lovely open design and staff offices are located along the perimeter. It is a beautiful space, but not as functional as I would like. For example, I cannot see the circulation desk from my office. This requires me to “manage by walking around” in order to overcome the limitations of the space. Also, I do not feel that I am as approachable sitting in my office. The reference suite (where I am located) looks like an office suite, and patrons and staff are constantly apologizing for “bothering” me.

How Would You Get a Job Like Mine?

Take advantage of every professional development opportunity that comes your way. My first library job required that I assist in teaching training classes and I was terrified. Over time, I came to enjoy teaching and my skills improved. That experience was a real asset, as instruction is a central element of working in an academic library.

Remember, too, that although you may not have the exact skill set for a particular job, some skills do translate into others and you may still be the most qualified candidate for the advertised position. For example, I had never worked with an automated circulation system before joining George Mason. Most of my career was spent in the private sector and many law firms do not use automated circulation systems. However, my reference, management, and training skills counterbalanced this lack of experience, and I was able to quickly come up to speed on the circulation system.

I encourage everyone to join and participate in local and national professional organizations. They are an excellent way to meet your colleagues, enhance your skills and education, and give back to your profession. You will have a more meaningful experience if you volunteer to work on a committee or project, rather than merely attend a program or meeting. You will also make contacts that will not only enhance the richness of your professional life, but will also provide you with a wealth of resources in doing your work. **LLL**

I encourage everyone to join and participate in local and national professional organizations. They are an excellent way to meet your colleagues, enhance your skills and education, and give back to your profession.

“I Can Do the Job”: The Hiring, Training, and Daily Duties of a Library Clerk with Cognitive Disabilities

Edward O'Rourke, Manager of Library Services, Baker Botts LLP

This article is rather different from the others in this issue of *Lights* in that, rather than discussing my job, it highlights a paraprofessional library position designed to be filled by a person with cognitive disabilities. As the Manager of Library Services at Baker Botts, I've had the opportunity to hire, train, and supervise three library clerks with cognitive disabilities. Although the initial training of these personnel is more intense and in-depth, the time spent is extremely worthwhile and the department and the firm end up with a loyal, motivated, hard-working employee in the position who enjoys coming to the office every day and who makes a valuable contribution to the library team.

The firm also has cognitively disabled employees in other departments, and was featured in a recent *Washington Post* article for its hiring and retention efforts (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/27/AR2006102700970.html>). In addition, the firm received the 2006 Employer of the Year Award from the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board for the three people hired for the library clerk position. The employees are also a valued part of the firm's diversity initiatives, which include the hiring and retention of disabled employees.

The idea of employing a person with cognitive disabilities originated in 2002 when one of the Washington office's partners was encouraged to have his cognitively disabled daughter work in the library during the summer associate season. As there were only two library staff for over 100 attorneys at the time, a lot of consideration was given to this possibility. The partner provided (in conjunction with Human Resources) his daughter's resume, which included her experience with the local public library system. We had not worked with a disabled person before, but were willing to give the daughter a chance. She was still in high school, but was eager to work and also eager to show what she could do for us.

The summer experience with the daughter was successful both for the library and for her, particularly as her level of independence improved over that period. That experience has led to a fruitful relationship between our firm and the Fairfax County Public Schools' "Options for Life" program, which matches cognitively disabled students with employers in the Washington region. These students are usually participating in the education-work coop program (cognitively disabled students can remain in the program until age 22). This program provides valuable work experience, and in many cases, the students are hired on as permanent employees when they leave school. The students are usually matched to employers based on their interests and their level of disability. Due to their high unemployment rate (68% nationally), some of the candidates have no work experience but nevertheless desire a chance to contribute to the work force and prove they can "do the job" with sufficient training and resources.

Since that initial summer, two other students have made a valuable contribution to our library team. Prior to being hired, the students are matched by their local coordinator with potential employers. The coordinator forwards the resumes to the Human Resources (HR) Manager, who then contacts me and schedules the interviews. I interview the candidates and determine suitability based on the desire to work in a library. I am also mindful that the candidate should be able to perform physical tasks, such as shelving and bookdrop pickups. In addition, I also try to determine whether the candidate has a basic knowledge of number combinations and organizational skills (essential for checking in and shelving serials and books and for separating mail into various piles). The position has been part-time since 2002 with a schedule of 2.5 hours per day, five days per week. The person commutes on his or her own to the firm's office, which is a commendable achievement and furthers the person's independence.

Although the initial training of these personnel is more intense and in-depth, the time spent is extremely worthwhile and the department and the firm end up with a loyal, motivated, hard-working employee in the position who enjoys coming to the office every day and who makes a valuable contribution to the library team.

As stated above, training is a bit more intense and takes a little more time than that for a person with no disabilities, but the extra time spent pays dividends when the clerk can master certain tasks (with pride) and then be available for extra tasking. I provide written step-by-step instructions on the various tasks involved and have the clerks repeat the tasks for me before I let them perform on their own. In addition, some steps may have to be revisited more than once, particularly in the area of shelving due to the Library of Congress call numbering system used by our library.

Overall, training is an essential part of the clerk's development into a productive employee, and the time spent is very worthwhile. It pleases me greatly to see the clerks learn and master various tasks (in addition to shelving and bookdrop pickups) such as disposal of old newspapers, maintenance of the Library Archive and filing rooms, mail processing and routing, book labeling, assistance with filing of bills/invoices, minor troubleshooting of the Westlaw and Lexis printers on various floors, ensuring the trays are always filled with paper, and return of ILL materials to the messenger room located in the basement. Our current clerk enjoys the bookdrop pickups most of

all as he likes walking around the office and interacting with fellow employees. His development is at the level that he will be given extra tasks and levels of responsibility in the coming year. He is very conscientious and attempts a task before requesting help. If an error is made, we work through the matter together and I have him perform the task a few times to ensure he understands the steps involved.

The clerk is not part of the overall evaluation process (as yet), but a special progress report is sent to the Director of Administration and HR Manager twice per year detailing areas which require minimal (if any) advice or assistance, areas requiring further training, and goalsetting for the next six months. The current clerk is also a native speaker of Farsi; if it weren't for his disability, he would be an excellent candidate for a government or military position. However, in my view, the government's loss is my department's gain and I am very pleased to have him (and his predecessors) on my team. The clerk always beams with pride whenever I provide positive feedback and when he is commended for a job well done, which is often. He also enjoys telling me "I can do the job." I now know he can. **LLL**



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