



Law Library Lights

When the Roof Caves in: Handling Huge Changes in the Library

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We all know that change is a constant in life and in careers. People come and go and things are added to your job description or shifted to another staff member. That's normal and to be expected but what do you do when the roof caves in on your daily work life? In an instant, what was a regular work day becomes surreal when....

A colleague stops by your desk looking triumphant. This person has been terribly unhappy and quite vocal about it. She whispers to you that she has a new job and is going to get back at "them" by not giving any notice.

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Your grim faced library director calls a meeting and announces that, despite major cuts from the budget, it is still not enough. The head of reference, who has been at the firm for 30 years and has never written a thing down, is taking a buy-out and you will be taking over his duties.

You look up from your computer monitor to see your teary eyed co-worker carrying a box, accompanied by someone from the human resources department. To your utter shock, you learn that she's been let go and you will now be doing her job plus yours.

The library director or a direct supervisor dies suddenly.

Your boss suffers a major family tragedy and will be either working part-time from now on or leaving the firm immediately.

To everyone's surprise, it is announced that those silly rumors you were told to ignore are, in fact, true and the firm is merging with a larger firm. The head of human resources briskly informs you that the new entity will not need two fully staffed libraries. You will be staying. Two of your colleagues and your boss will not.

"We all know that change is a constant in life and in careers. . . That's normal and to be expected but what do you do when the roof caves in on your daily work life?"

Your library director and the assistant library director resign within a few days of each other. I lived through this experience twice!

All of these scenarios mean one thing: You need to adapt very quickly. If you are lucky, you belong to a team that practiced cross training, so taking on new duties won't come as too much of a shock. If you have a large library where particular duties are strictly performed by only person, you may find yourself in unfamiliar territory and could probably use a cheat sheet to survive until things settle down.

1. Stay calm. If your firm superiors are reasonable people, they know that you suddenly have to learn a lot of stuff in a short time. Enlist the help of other co-workers and other departments if necessary. You can't master a job that you never expected to have overnight. Mistakes are going to happen as you teach yourself on the fly.

2. Immediately, find your library's vendor information and make yourself a chart of representative contact names, phone numbers, and account numbers. As soon as you are able get in touch with your most important reps, let them know that the person who used to handle this task is gone or about to go and get all of the account alerts and invoices sent to your attention.

3. Unless it is the case of a sudden death, try to get a departing staff member to give you a



quick rundown of his/her most important daily responsibilities. If the person or group is leaving in anger, don't be surprised if you are rebuffed directly or just ignored. If this is an immediate dismissal case then you may not get the chance to ask. In that case, you may need to go to human resources and get a copy of your former colleague's job description. It will probably be out of date, but you need to start somewhere.

4. Did your departed boss or colleague use a particular database that you never touched?

Call customer service and get a quick tutorial now. If you are going to need to know how use Lexis' PowerInvoice, Lexis CD & Print , Westlaw Quickview, and/or Westlaw My Account, get your library reps to walk you through them and set aside at least 45 minutes of uninterrupted time for questions and answers. Quickview has several two to five minute online tutorials that are actually helpful. Do not settle for whoever answers the customer service line. You need the expertise of your rep.

5. Is your cataloger leaving? Learn to copy catalog. Either contact the customer service

line of the company that provided your system and get a tutorial or take one of the many free or fee-based online classes available. If you can't get the firm to pay for it (that's a bad sign), then pay for a class yourself. Familiarize yourself with the Library of Congress Z39 Gateway page and spend a few hours at the OCLC site. Start telling your boss about contract cataloging services such as Marchive, CatExpress, or an outsourcing firm.

6. If it's your library director who is leaving, and if you haven't done this already, make sure you let your boss know that you would like to assist with budget preparation and sit it on meetings until the director leaves. At the very least, learn where the budget information is kept.

7. Be kind to your family. Your work situation is not their fault. Your children either don't understand or will be racked with anxiety, and the adult members of the household will lose patience very quickly if you take your stress out on them. I was able to see an example of this while attending a family reunion. One of my older relatives told me about a very rough period in his work life many years ago and how he overcame it. His 45 year old son happened to overhear us, and to his father's chagrin, mentioned that although he'd been very young at the time, he recalled that period as being like living with an angry bear for a month. Don't let that be you.

The next several weeks are going to be exhausting, maddening, and one day when you least expect it, absolutely incredible when you discover that yes, you can do this. Good luck. ■

"Be kind to your family. Your work situation is not their fault. Your children either don't understand or will be racked with anxiety, and the adult members of the household will lose patience very quickly if you take your stress out on them."



From the Editor

Goodbye, Y'all!

Amy Taylor

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I hope you enjoy this summer issue. We have compiled a handy list of all the AALL Conference programs in which our LLSDC colleagues will be participating.

Also in this issue, our LLSDC President, Pamela Lipscomb shares her final President's Column. Additionally, Shannon Roddy brings you the latest updated member news and the answers to our summer member question: "What's your favorite thing to do in DC in the summer?"

Jill Smith interviews our new Tech Talk columnist, Matt Zimmerman in her final Tech Talk column. And Anne Guha has another fascinating book review: *The Law Book: From Hammurabi to the International Criminal Court, 250 Milestones in the History of Law*.

Finally, I want to thank those who have contributed to volume 59 of *Law Library Lights*: all of our talented authors; LLSDC President Pamela Lipscomb; Assistant Editor Shannon Roddy; and our columnists, Jill Smith and Anne Guha.

I wish you all a lovely summer. ■



Submission Information

If you would like to write for *Law Library Lights*, contact Amy Taylor at [new email?](#) For information regarding submission deadlines and issue themes, visit the LLSDC website at www.llsd.org.



President's Column

You Can't Conquer Fear Until You Face It

Pamela Lipscomb

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When I was first approached about running for the LLSDC Executive Board, I said that I would be happy to run for anything, but I didn't want to be President and I didn't want to handle the money. I still don't want to handle the money. (There is more than one reason why I married an accountant.) Even after I agreed to run for Vice-President/President-Elect, I wasn't sure about being in charge. Being in charge meant being asked to make decisions that affected all of you, our members. Being in charge meant having to write a column for *Law Library Lights*. Being in charge meant public speaking. While the first could be conquered by sharing all decisions with the Board (as they should be), and the second was daunting but not insurmountable given that I had both an English BA and MSLS, the thought of having to give speeches terrified me.

People are always surprised when I tell them that I hate public speaking. They tell me that they would never know that stage fright invades my life for weeks before having to do even the shortest speeches. I have been known to give the world's shortest new hire orientation. I have used my boss as a crutch to lead trainings so that all I had to do was interject with commentary. He retired this year, though, and left me with the admonishment that I was going to have to learn to talk in front of crowds. And so I learn by doing.

I have learned to be comfortable thanking members for coming to our events. I have learned to be comfortable running Board meetings. I have learned to be comfortable running learning lunches. I



President's Column, Continued

have learned to interject my opinions in large rooms of people who all seem much smarter and more experienced than me. And still, stage fright often rears its ugly head.

In November, I got an email from a colleague asking if I knew anyone who could teach business research to her Advanced Legal Research class. I was on vacation at the time and my husband looked at me when I told him and said, "You need to do it." An hour later, after a considerable discussion of the reasons why I needed to do it versus my absolute panic at having to do it, I sent her an email back volunteering myself. Cue six months of anxiety and procrastination. Why do I get myself into these things?

As the date approached, the defensive mechanisms started kicking in. My poor colleague and others endured countless terrible jokes about how nervous I was, most of which involved nausea. I started rationalizing all the ways that I could get out of my commitment. I was too busy. There were others who knew the material better. On and on until my internal monologue told me to knock it off. I made a commitment. I needed to do this. As I have preached many times before, you can't conquer fear until you face it.

I started working on collecting information. I ran my thoughts past one of my co-workers who then asked to attend. I stayed up late the night before writing and rewriting my slides and notes. Just enough information to keep me on point, but not enough to read. I sent my slides to my colleague. I fought back the nerves. I made more bad jokes.

And then it was time. A room not quite full of law students staring at me. My hands shook on the mouse as I started my presentation. About five minutes in, I leaned my head back, made some weird noise while shaking my hands next to my sides, took a deep breath, and continued. It got more comfortable. I knew my topic. I was well-prepared. This wasn't horrible. I got to the break too early and finished earlier than anticipated, but only by a few minutes. They listened and maybe even learned a thing or two that they will use later. I, however, learned more.

I have agreed to give two more presentations this summer to the paralegals in my firm. I am nervous, but more confident because I now know that I can do this. I will be prepared and maybe they will learn something. And I will be one step closer to kicking stage fright off the stage.

Thank you all for giving me the honor of being your President this year. It has been a pleasure to work with such great members, and I appreciate your giving me the opportunity to discover that being in charge is not so scary after all. ■



AALL Annual Meeting & Conference: LLSDC Highlights

Amy Taylor

Research Librarian, Crowell & Moring

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Sunday, July 17th

11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

**Harvesting Democracy: Archiving
Federal Government Web Content at End
of Term**

Abigail Grotke

*Lead Information Technology Specialist, Web
Archiving Team, Library of Congress*

Hyatt-Columbus EF

4:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

**Diversity Symposium: Exploring
Resources and Library Services to Better
Serve the LGBT Community**

Cameron Gowan

Library Services Manager, Jones Day

Hyatt-Columbus IJ

4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

How Congress Really Works: Rethinking Legislative History

Morgan Stoddard

Research Services Coordinator, George Washington University Library

Hyatt-Columbus KL



Monday, July 18th

9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

Virtual Footprints: Vetting People in the Digital Age

Michele Masias

Chief Librarian, U.S. Department of Justice

Partnering with Consultants: New Ways to Accomplish More

Scott D. Bailey

Global Director of Research Services, Squire Patton Boggs LLP

Jennifer McMahan

Deputy Director, Library Staff, U.S. Department of Justice

Hyatt-Regency Ballroom D

Hyatt-Columbus KL

Tuesday, July 19th

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

9:45 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

"Disruptunity": The Legal Research Revolution Is Now!

Jean O'Grady

Director of Research and Knowledge Services, DLA Piper

Poster #11: Display Cases That Pop: Using Popular Culture to Craft Educational Displays

Mary Kate Hunter

Reference/Government Contracts Librarian, George Washington Law Library

Hyatt-Columbus IJ

Exhibit Hall

Library displays are a great way to engage with patrons by highlighting materials in your library's collection, in addition to providing a brief, educational take-away. This poster session explores ways that pop culture can be used to inspire displays that showcase your library's materials and resources. Over the past few years, the George Washington University Law Library has mounted displays using legal themes found in pop culture. A few recent successes have included "Harry Potter and the Law," "Star Wars and the Law," and "Game of Thrones and the Law." Utilizing these three examples, this poster session will include tips on how to create simple, visually appealing displays that utilize resources in your library's collection, while staying on a tight schedule and budget.



Member Spotlight

Shannon Roddy

Student Services Librarian, American University, Washington College of Law
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Amy Taylor

In June, Amy Taylor started at Crowell & Moring as a Research Librarian. Previously, she was the Emerging Technologies Librarian at American University, Washington College of Law.

Christine Glaab

Christine Glaab passed away on May 14, 2016, after a five year battle with breast cancer. She worked for three large DC law firms and ended her professional career at the Surface Transportation Board.

Liz Schiller

Vice-President/President-Elect

Amy Taylor

Assistant Treasurer/Treasurer-Elect

Jennifer Dollar

Recording Secretary

Jeff Berns

Membership Chair

Anne Guha

Board Member at Large

Congratulations to the new members of the LLSDC Executive Board:



Member Spotlight, Continued

Member Question

What's your favorite thing to do in D.C. in the summer?

Enjoy the A/C at home!

—*Tom Kolodziej, Legislative Analyst, Hogan Lovells US LLP*

One of my favorite things to do in DC in the summer is to attend a free Friday evening concert in the Yards Park (on the waterfront very near the Nationals Stadium). A nice venue along the river, lots of places to comfortably sit and stroll, lots of families, no rowdiness. In 2015 by special dispensation of the mayor you could bring alcoholic beverages (not sure if this is true for 2016). Bring a picnic dinner - you can't grill - or eat at a nearby restaurant or bar. Navy Yard/Ballpark Metro (New Jersey Ave Exit) on the Green Line. And served by a few bus lines. See <http://www.yardspark.org/search.php?kw=friday+night+concert+series&kwsubmit.x=13&kwsubmit.y=14>

—*Heather Rories, Research Librarian, U.S. Department of Justice*

LLSDC Arrangements Chair: Nothing says summer in D.C. more to me than heading down to Southwest for a Nationals ball game! Between the many amazing food choices, drinks with friends, and fun atmosphere – you just can't go wrong. LLSDC Members will have a chance to go to a ball game together at the end of this summer, so mark your calendars now and look out for an announcement coming soon!!

Librarians @ the Ball Game (Returns!)

Saturday, August 27 – 1:05 p.m.

More information coming soon!

—*Alicia Pappas, Manager, Research & Library Services, KPMG*

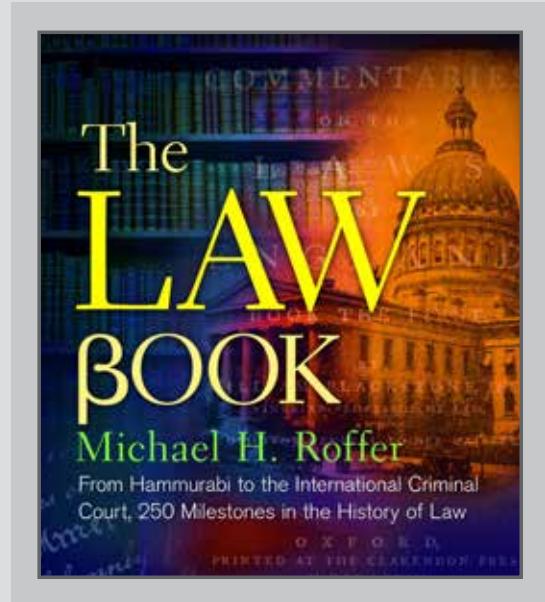


Book Review

Michael H. Roffer, *The Law Book: From Hammurabi to the International Criminal Court, 250 Milestones in the History of Law* (New York, N.Y.: Sterling, 2015)

Anne Guha

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When I was a child I used to love Dorling Kindersley's nonfiction children's book series, *Eyewitness Books*. Both educational and visually stunning, each page was full of vibrant color photos, illustrations, and diagrams that popped off the page and inspired you to devour the text. It was a genuine delight to page through those books, and it was likewise a delight to page through this issue's glossily illustrated book, *The Law Book*.

Written by New York Law School librarian Michael H. Roffer, this book is a recent addition to the Sterling Milestones series – which also includes titles like *The Math Book*, *The Space Book*, and *The Psychology Book* – each compiling 250 “milestones” in the history of its topic. Likewise, *The Law Book* chronicles 250 “meaningful and influential” events, ancient and modern, that have shaped the development of the law [p. 9].

The Law Book's 250 entries are arranged chronologically, beginning with c. 2550 BCE (“The Oldest Written Will”¹) and running right up until 2015 (“The Legal Fight for Gay Marriage”). In his introduction, Roffer says he has “taken an eclectic approach” in how he selected the 250 milestones included in his book [p. 7]. In making his choices, he tells us that he sought to “supply a basic understanding of what



Book Review, Continued

have become fundamental legal principles" and also to "connect the dots between the principles and their relevant landmarks" [p. 9]. Although the focus is often on the American legal tradition – especially as you get into the more modern entries – the book also includes milestones pulled from other nations, as well as from international law and ancient civilizations. Each entry is a two-page spread with a short essay on the left accompanied by a full-color image (or black and white photo) on the right.

Among the 250 milestones that Roffer has selected, you'll find a range of topics, including judicial decisions, codes and statutes, trials, impeachments, and other law-related events, drawn from many different types of law. There are, for example, entries describing the emergence of novel legal concepts – such as privacy and copyright – as well as that of newer legal rights and protections – such as civil rights, consumer rights, and women's rights.

There are entries on developments in legal education, on the creation of new entities and agencies – such as the founding of the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1861 or the creation of the European Union in 1993 – and even on the launch of new legal publications – such as the *United States Code* in 1926 or the

Federal Register in 1936. Though brief, each entry is engaging and accessibly-written. If your interest is piqued, a Notes and Further Reading section is included in the back of the book, giving readers a place to start when delving deeper into any of the entries' topics. There is also a topical index, and each entry includes cross-references to related entries.

The author admits in his introduction that, of course, "these 250 milestones cannot be taken as *the* 250 milestones of legal history" and that "reasonable minds will disagree" on the significance of specific legal events and developments [p. 9, emphasis in original]. Nevertheless, Hoffer has done a fantastic job of making diverse and interesting choices. In terms of the illustrations, there is much here to delight the eye: vivid photographs, rich paintings, movie posters, political cartoons, vintage advertisements, courtroom sketches, period illustrations, and more. If you're looking for something to flip through this summer that is both informative and fun, this just might be the pick for you! ■

Notes

¹Interestingly, this will left a husband's property to his wife, showing that women were in fact permitted to own property in Ancient Egypt contrary to what scholars had previously believed.



Retirement Announcements

Michael Hartigan

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Jean O'Grady

Director of Research Services, DLA Piper, jean.ogrady@dlapiper.com

Retirement of Ron Seele

By Michael Hartigan

After more than 40 years, Ron Seele will retire as Arnold & Porter's Legislative Librarian. Ron and his wife Michelle plan on spending their time travelling and visiting their beloved granddaughters in England.

Ron began his career in the library at Covington & Burling before coming over to Arnold & Porter. During his tenure at Arnold & Porter, Ron built and compiled the largest private collection of legislative materials and histories in the country. Many attorneys and professional researchers currently use these histories through licensing agreements with Westlaw and HeinOnline. At one point leading a staff of seven professionals, Ron developed a unique and innovative method of providing legislative research services for legal professionals during an era of enormous change in the Washington, DC legal landscape.

Originally from the front range of Colorado, Ron came to DC to study at The George Washington University.

Retirement of Jim Shelar

By Jean O'Grady

Have you ever noticed how many icons of the law library world originated in the American Heartland? OCLC (Columbus), Lexis (Dayton), Westlaw (Minneapolis), and Jim Shelar (Cleveland). Jim Shelar, who has been the Library Director at Arnold & Porter for over 40 years, has just announced his retirement, and boy does he leave a legacy behind. When I moved to DC for a job at Wilmer Cutler & Pickering in 1993, Jim welcomed me into the local community and became one of my "go to" advisors on secret DC treasures and upcoming products which he deemed worthy of attention. Jim was a relentless negotiator and managed to secure product trials of truly epic length. I swear he tried out some ILS modules for about 3 years before signing a contract! He was part of a local CD-ROM uprising. A group of large law firm directors called a "summit" with major legal publishers to demand CD-ROM standards. Thankfully, web-based products began to emerge which mooted the CD-ROM debate, and we all moved on to "hardware free" resources. I believe that Jim also holds a record on library moves and renovations.



Jim planned six complete law libraries for the firm and three major renovations at the firm's current location at 555 12th Street NW.

I asked Jim to give me a rundown of some of his career highlights. Even though I have known Jim for 23 years, some of this is news to me. His stories illustrate not only how Jim was always pushing the limit, trialing every new product, but also advising publishers on how to create better products. Newer information professionals will find some of Jim's stories rather incredible, but these stories illustrate the radical transformation of law libraries over the course of Jim's career. When Jim entered his first law library there was only one way to do legal research--using print reporters along with digests, citators, and treatises. Jim has lived through the successive transformations of legal research through dial up databases, CD-ROMs, web based products, listening platforms, and analytics.

Jim's first job out of library school was as a librarian at Squire, Sanders and Dempsey in Cleveland, Ohio. The firm was located in the Union Commerce building where there were three other law firms on contiguous floors: Baker, Hostetler; Jones Day; and Thompson, Hine. Interlibrary loan was a simple trip up or down an elevator, and the Cleveland Bar Library lent to all law firms and had almost everything they needed. Jim had previously worked as a children's librarian in an elementary school in Cleveland while attending library school at Case Western Reserve. When asked the difference between an elementary school library and a law firm library, Jim said, "the issues are the same, but the chairs are bigger in the law firm library." Jim is retiring as law libraries are almost devoid of chairs.

Jim came to Washington in the winter of 1975 to attend a conference. He had previously befriended Steve Margeson, the librarian at Steptoe & Johnson, at an AALL conference. Margeson suggested that Jim interview for a job at Arnold & Porter, which

was across the street from Steptoe. His Arnold & Porter interview involved being "whisked from one office to another along N Street where the firm's offices were spread out in the row houses stretching from Connecticut Avenue to 19th Street NW." He saw very little of the law library--perhaps 10 minutes max--and did not meet the staff. He went back to Cleveland and then went on vacation with no thought that he would actually move to Washington. His vacation was interrupted by a very persuasive call asking him to return to Washington for additional interviews, and "the rest is history," as they say.

Jim can brag that he worked in the first law firm library to have a Lexis terminal. One of the partners at Squire Sanders was instrumental in the project known as OBAR (Ohio Bar Automated Research), which evolved into Lexis and was owned by a Dayton paper company, Mead Data Central. The primitive Lexis terminal included a screen, similar to the Unix screens, which displayed green characters on a black background. Since using Lexis involved a keyboard, something that attorneys could not be seen using, firms hired people known as "Lexis Operators." A sign of the times is that, typically, "Lexis Operators" were female law students.

While at Squire Sanders, Jim also pioneered an early citation checking service, which was known

"Jim can brag that he worked in the first law firm library to have a Lexis terminal. One of the partners at Squire Sanders was instrumental in the project known as OBAR (Ohio Bar Automated Research), which evolved into Lexis and was owned by a Dayton paper company, Mead Data Central. "



as "auto-cite." "The Operator" typed citations on a Mag card and then put the card in a device that had a phone and an acoustic coupler which dialed up to Rochester, New York where the Lawyer's Co-op computers were located . When the operator heard a high pitched squeal they would put the phone in the acoustic coupler, and the mag card machine and the computer checked your citations and printed out a report.

The lawyers at Arnold & Porter were interested in implementing the use of Lexis but as one partner observed, "Lexis has case law from when Ohio was still the Northwest Territory but why is the coverage of federal case law so lacking." Jim explained that the system had started in Ohio. Steptoe had the first Lexis installation in Washington, but Arnold & Porter was not far behind.

Jim was the first law library director in DC to subscribe to OCLC, and the first law firm librarian to subscribe to the HeinOnline service. Jim thought that Hein saw their market in the law schools but he saw the potential for law firms. Arnold & Porter donated 17,000 Congressional hearings and most of their huge collection of legislative histories and a massive collection of USITC reports to Hein.

Jim also participated in a project with West to put some of the Arnold & Porter legislative histories on Westlaw. This legislative history collection is the major life work of Ron Seele, who will also be retiring from Arnold & Porter this year. Jim believes

that legislative histories were invented by the legendary Elizabeth Finley from Covington. Jim describes Ron as "part of the apostolic succession from Finley." At one point, the EPA asked West if they could put up legislative histories of all the major air and water laws, and Jim and Arnold & Porter came to the rescue once more.

Steve Lastres, Director of Knowledge Management Services at Debevoise & Plimpton, worked with Jim at Arnold & Porter for over 13 years. Steve regards Jim as a mentor who provided him with the extraordinary opportunity to collaborate on building a library LAN well before the firm had a wide area network. Steve recalls that A&P was one of the first firms to install an ILS when other firms were still doing things manually. Steve describes Jim as a "master negotiator." Steve aptly observes that, "No one could last 40 years at the helm of a law firm library without being a great leader who was well respected by both this staff and the management Committee." I couldn't agree more.

I could always count on Jim to give me a call about the latest and greatest new product... then he would spend half of the call describing what the company needed to do to make the product even better.

Jim always gave generously of his time to assist other colleagues. But he also gave a lot to the legal community as a whole by contributing to the digitization of legislative materials and endlessly pushing legal publishers and technology vendors to stay focused on the needs of lawyers and information professionals. I will miss being able to call Jim for his advice, but he has left such a tangible legacy behind that Jim will never really be gone.

I think I speak for all of Jim's friends and colleagues and for the wider AALL and LLSDC communities in thanking Jim for the extraordinary legacy he leaves behind for the next generation! ■

"..he also gave a lot to the legal community as a whole by contributing to the digitization of legislative materials and endlessly pushing legal publishers and technology vendors to stay focused on the needs of lawyers and information professionals."



Tech Talk

You're In Good Hands

Jill Smith

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Dear LLSDC: I am relinquishing the Tech Talk mantle for the 2016-17 year to my colleague and friend Matt Zimmerman. So, for Tech Talk this month, I decided to have an...actual tech talk with my successor so you all could have a chance to virtually meet him. We conducted our chat via Slack (which we use every day to communicate).



So, tell the LLSDC audience a little about yourself, Matt!

My title is Electronic Resources Librarian. I have a master's degree in Library and Information Science from the Catholic University of America. I've been at the Georgetown University Law Library since 2011; first as a web developer and then a librarian.

Prior to becoming a librarian, I had a long career working with information technology. I arrived in DC fresh out of college in the mid '90s. I had a sociology degree from a liberal arts college and little else in my possession...



Just a young man and a dream, huh?

Something like that. There may have been a woman I was interested in or something. Anyway, it was a long time ago. My first job had me writing about science and technology issues in Congress for a nonprofit organization. I've always loved tech, and since I had taught myself HTML and some design skills, I got the newsletter I was writing for on the web.

Eventually doing web stuff became my entire job. I've been coding, building databases, and doing a wide variety of other IT-type tasks ever since.



Tech Talk, Continued

What made you want to make the jump to librarianship?

After a stint as a stay-at-home dad, I came to work at Georgetown. I was doing data management for an office on campus when I met Roger Skalbeck, who at the time was the Associate Law Librarian for Electronic Resources and Services. He and his team were working on interesting stuff, building custom applications for student services. I thought my broad skill set would be a good fit, and the library folks seemed great. They always understood my *Doctor Who* references. So I jumped on the web developer position when it came open.

After a short time in the library, I knew I had found a good home and wanted to make the most of it. I enrolled in Catholic's LIS program and got my degree. Now I'm a full-fledged librarian, and I'm figuring out how to forge a professional identity as such.

Do you have an over-arching philosophy about technology, or technology in libraries, that you'd like to talk about?

This is a tough one for me because I love nothing more than diving headlong into a new technology, mastering it, and building something with it. That rush of discovery can overwhelm the need--and there is definitely a need--to step back and consider the over-arching implications of what I'm doing.

I get that! Learning new stuff is a shiny distraction for my brain as

well. How do you help people who don't take to learning new things as well?

I try to focus on what's essential. It took a while, but I eventually learned that not everybody is passionate about technology. And that's okay! It's enough to help people do their jobs. I think this is something that both good IT people and librarians do: Talk to your user/patron. Listen. Support. Teach when possible, but focus on the issues at hand. Suit your approach to the individual.

Sorry if this sounds trite. But it was a hard lesson for brash young Matt. Patient support gets you much farther than strident insistence.

Oh, definitely. Strident insistence or sometimes even passionate evangelism can really turn a potential user off.

This gets us back around to the question of over-arching philosophy.

Yes. Yes it does.

Part of the problem in answering the over-arching philosophy question is that my mind is just a stew of inconclusive thoughts and lessons learned. And technology changes so, so rapidly.

How does one cope with such overwhelming, complex, and continuous change? For me, at least, the answer is to stay focused on values. Remembering who I am and why I do what I do helps me in times of change, and it helps me



Tech Talk, Continued

find the patience and insight to help others.

Indeed. Focusing on the problem rather than jumping immediately to what you think the solution should be is also a good way to proceed.

Exactly. Which is why (on the subject of patience) I can appreciate strategic planning and the bureaucracy that comes with working at a large institution like Georgetown Law. While I don't think the best designs come out of committees, identifying the values and priorities that guide the design process requires input.

So what technology/ies can't you live without in your personal and professional life? Or which ones would be REALLY hard to give up?

I rely on my various computing devices to keep me organized. I was never able to stick with a paper-based system for keeping track of contacts, appointments, and other details of my life. But as soon as devices like the PalmPilot appeared, the problem was solved.

Yes. Paper doesn't go "bong" and tell you that you need to be somewhere in 15 minutes.

Exactly. I tend to be very focused, so it's helpful for my smart watch to buzz at those times.

But I think you could take a lot of these modern gizmos away and I'd be happy with just a plain old computer, like the kind I grew up around in

the '80s. Something to tinker with. A platform for experimentation and building. That's what's essential. I could make my own calendar/contact database, if I needed one.

Understanding my own needs is the real trick. That comes with experience, and it lets one suit the technology to the problem.

ALERT! Theme detected!

So can you give us any sort of preview of the kinds of things you will be writing about in the 2016-17 issues of *Lights*?

Sure! Georgetown Law professor Paul Ohm offers a class on coding for lawyers. I'd love to learn more about it and report on it to the LLSDC community. I'm interested in how legal practitioners and educators may be using algorithms and AI for information processing. I may look into how FastCase's Bad Law Bot citator has worked out since its 2013 debut, for example. Technology decision making (acquisition, implementation, and assessment) is on my mind as well. Finally, I'm curious what aspects of "startup culture" and tech industry practices may have found their way into law libraries, and whether or not this is good or bad. Are we any more "agile" than we used to be?

I'd love to hear suggestions and requests.

Great, thanks for taking the time to "talk," Matt. I hope you enjoy writing *Tech Talk!* ■



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