Shifting Into High Gear

Last summer the Whittier Law School Library acquired a large amount of shelving to accommodate our growing collection. When assembled, the new shelving increased our Library shelf capacity by nearly 1,500 linear feet, enough growth space for the next five years. Once the shelving was in place, the Library staff moved 3/4 of the print collection—that’s about 200,000 print volumes—in about four weeks!

Planning for this project began last spring. Additional shelving will be erected during the period between Fall and Spring Semesters, adding still more linear feet of space to contain our collection. Our remaining 50,000 print volumes then will be moved to their new shelf locations before WLS students return to their studies in January.

The additional shelving has not resulted in any loss of seating capacity in the Library. We continue to provide seating space for nearly 400 persons. The added shelving actually improves the environment in which our students study and research. Many of the new shelving areas create alcoves ideal for quiet study; the additional stacks help to decrease overall noise levels for the benefit of our students and other Library users.

— Hugh Treacy—

Got Work?

Positions Available:

WLS Library Student Assistants

Spring and Summer Semesters

Contact: Diane Whitaker
(714) 444-4141, x-478
Email: dwhitaker@law.whittier.edu

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The 2011-2012 term of the United States Supreme Court promises to be an interesting one. The Court has agreed to hear oral arguments in about 80 cases, including an important challenge to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed by Congress in March 2010.

By law, the Court begins and ends each term on the first Monday in October. The current term began on Monday, October 3, 2011 and will end on Monday, October 1, 2012, the date on which the next term begins. During that time, the Court will receive about 10,000 petitions to be filed, and each Justice will receive an additional 1,200 applications from persons desiring action by a Justice on particular matters.

The Whittier Law School Library is currently featuring a display inside the Library main entrance that offers interesting information about the United States Supreme Court, including its calendar, caseload, and other topics.

In this official photo from the 2010 term, Chief Justice John G. Roberts (seated, center) is flanked in order of seniority by Associate Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Standing behind CJ Roberts are Associate Justices Stephen Breyer, Samuel Alito, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. When the Court is in session, the most senior Associate Justice sits to the right of and next to the Chief Justice. The next most senior Associate Justice sits to the immediate left of the Chief Justice, and so forth. The most junior Associate Justice is seated to the far left of the Chief Justice. See the display inside the front entrance to the Whittier Law School Library for the official seating chart.

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—Hugh Treacy—

A FRIENDLY REMINDER....

Only WATER in permanently-sealed containers like water bottles is allowed in the Library. Containers with temporary “pop top” plastic lids are not allowed in the Library. Besides stack and study areas, the Library includes all conference rooms, computer labs, and restrooms.
Seldom do law firm and law school librarians have an opportunity to share their views to hundreds of colleagues on how they measure the skill level of new associates or law students. This program at the July AALL annual meeting in Philadelphia provided such an occasion.

In light of recent discussions about Proposed ABA Standards on Student Learning Outcomes, assessment of legal education is of growing importance. The possibility of a legal research component on the bar exam is under discussion. Law schools have an increasing need to impart an appropriate level of research skill ability to their students. Teaching legal research in an environment shifting from print to online, law firm and academic librarians must also cope with time and resource limitations in their efforts to sharpen research skills of new associates and law students.

The need for improved skills is very important as more is expected of law school graduates now. New associates no longer have the luxury of time to sharpen their research skills on the job. Graduates of all law schools must demonstrate effective research skills immediately. Now, more than ever, expectations are high.

A panel of law librarians, two academic and two from law firms, discussed their efforts to measure the effectiveness of their schools’ legal research programs and their in-house efforts to assess the legal research skills of new associates. BYU law librarian David Armond presented his thoughts about assessing legal research skills in the context of integrating research skills with legal writing as a mediated learning activity in order for the students to make the connection between their final work product and what they could find. He compared this type of learning to that of learning to ride a bike on a grassy slope instead of downhill on asphalt. He used a combination of pre-class quizzes on Westlaw’s TWEN and in-class quizzes to assess and build an appreciation by his students for research skills. Armond compared the strength of legal research skills to the sturdiness of the foundation of a house. He highlighted the importance of framing questions that will assist students to see the importance of building their legal research skills and the ability to evaluate those skills.

Duke Law School reference librarian Molly Brownfield discussed her approach to assessing research skills of lawyers engaged in health and medical research issues. Recent law graduates in practice find they must become adept at research in various fields of knowledge depending on needs of their clients. Brownfield focused on students’ proven ability to find relevant sources and to demonstrate an understanding of why and how sources are used. Her efforts and assessment of students were designed to build within each student an appreciation for the need to establish a sound research strategy, and to seek and find a variety of sources, the most relevant sources. Students were also assessed on their use of secondary and primary sources as well as their organization, clarity and presentation of the relevant results they found. Armond’s and Brownfield’s presentations highlighted difficulties faced by librarians who must not only teach students the value of various resources and how they are used, but also to identify the best ways to measure student success with the research process.

Law firm librarians are often required to teach legal research to large numbers of new associates; but in today’s economic environment, firm librarians are given little time to assess their skills and build on those already acquired. The ensuing discussions by law firm librarians attending this program emphasized that the time limits allowed in mentoring and training programs formerly offered were now drastically curtailed, all the more reason why law schools must provide graduates with research skills that will allow them to be less dependent on learning on the job.

Library director Linda-Jean Schneider at Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP in Philadelphia outlined her firm’s efforts to bring new associates up to speed and emphasized that there was little substitute now for online research skills. In her opinion, it is wrong for librarians to prevent new associates from using electronic resources.
Knowledge manager Don MacLeod at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP in New York City emphasized the same reliance on electronic resources. At his firm, MacLeod is given only one 3-hour opportunity to train incoming associates; then, they are on their own. He placed great importance on the need to determine if a new associate is trainable. Can they be taught not only to find a better answer, but to do it in a cost effective manner? He emphasized that new associates were expected to have sufficient research skills using Lexis and Westlaw and, as a result, they would naturally be able to exploit the firm’s own portal that provided access to over 20,000 documents. In other words, they were expected to navigate Lexis and Westlaw, and use those same skills to “know what we know” in the law firm since so much of the firm’s knowledge was reflected in this portal. He cautioned that finding an answer on Google may be clever, but it would not fly with the clients at his firm. As a result, MacLeod cautioned that new associates do not know what they need to know and often do not see the need to learn about different resources. He reasoned that rational ignorance was not an asset but a liability to produce the best work product.

These discussions highlighted the importance of legal research skills while at the same time illustrated the daunting task faced by law librarians and others attempting to impart the skills and traits necessary to operate in the modern legal environment. Certainly, in the present economic climate, law schools must be proactive in the ways in which they integrate their legal research skills courses with work product outcomes in order to stay ahead of the changing ABA standards. Programs must be developed to help law students master the bar examination and to provide their graduates a legal research edge in today’s law practice environment.

—Curt Jones—

How to Use Interlibrary Loan Service

If Whittier Law School Library does not own a needed book or journal title, try our helpful interlibrary loan (ILL) service to obtain it. ILL is available to Whittier Law School faculty and staff, and students who have obtained faculty approval to use this service.

Make your ILL request by filling our an ILL form found on the WLS website. Then send it in an email to ill@law.whittier.edu. You will find the form at http://www.law.whittier.edu/index/law-library/services/interlibrary-loan/.

Choose the appropriate form for journal articles, books, or government documents. Fill out all required information. You may use one form for more than one item of the same type. Please verify the citation information before submitting your request.

ILL requests are not available for titles or articles owned by the WLS Library, or for those items that are accessible in full text from online databases to which the Library subscribes.

So that our established borrowing relationships with lending libraries may continue without interruption, please return all borrowed materials to the WLS Library promptly within the time permitted by the lender.

—Curt Jones—

A FRIENDLY REMINDER....

The Library conference study rooms are for two or more students only, even if the rooms are all unoccupied—think carpool lane! Please keep your voices down as these rooms are not sound-proof. Food and drink are not allowed in the conference rooms.
A typical Google search often supplies the information a searcher had in mind within the first page or two of results. Yet, Google has little-known features and capabilities to focus searches, details often overlooked in our haste to use the most popular search engine on earth.

Last summer, the AALL convention in Philadelphia gave Don MacLeod, Manager of Knowledge Management at Debevoise & Plimpton LLC, an opportunity to share many of these overlooked options with an audience of law librarians who, judging by their reactions, were grateful to learn how Google could be used for more than a simple word or phrase search. Many of us had never taken the time to explore these features before. Yet, MacLeod’s presentation proved that our time would be well-spent to become familiar with all of Google’s capabilities instead of relying on simple word searches.

For example, the (+) (no longer available since October 2011) and (not) search can cut the results of a single search and add to its precision instead of relying merely on an (and) Google search. Google can also be used to locate material on a specific website. There are some 15 search options, some of which will restrict searches to webpage titles or to terms in URLs.

Google also serves as a ready reference source of information through its built-in reference tools. Approximately 22 special features are activated by trigger words. For example, for the current time in Moscow, type Time Moscow in the search box. To find a particular numbered patent, type Patent 8123125, for example. Simply enter the trigger word and the appropriate entry to obtain the desired result. Researchers should scan the list of available options (see the URL below) for future use.

Some of the trigger words, such as book, define, phonebook or rphonebook (for residential phonebook) may seem intuitive, but the complete list of trigger words should be consulted along with examples of the search syntax provided at the URL below.

The program also reminded those present of how Google Books can be used for locating a quotation within a text, or how Google Scholar can assist a researchers interested in tracking citations to a given article of interest. These search options may easily solve a researcher’s information need quickly and successfully after taking the time to review them.

Please visit http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html for a detailed list of trigger words and other Google search tips.

—Curt Jones—

Q: Is there anything useful to students behind the circulation desk?

There are a lot of useful materials behind the circulation desk in the Library. Here you will find a wide variety of materials that will help you during your first year of law school. Some of the series titles we have include: Examples and Explanations, Q and A, Concepts and Insights, Concise Hornbook series and Nutshells. My personal favorite is the Understanding... series.

The Understanding series contains one volume paperback texts on a given topic (e.g. Copyright). They are very readable and explain the concepts in understandable way. All of the study materials in the circulation area are organized by subject (e.g. Contracts) so just ask the student worker if there are any others like the ones you are interested in.

Given the cost of law school textbooks one advantage of having a variety of first year materials in the library is that one can compare various types and formats in order to see which ones might be most useful to you before purchasing them.

Q: The Rule Against Perpetuities means what?!

Hornbooks are concise usually single-volume hardcover books on various first-year and upper level law courses. These texts are often most helpful to students when they walk out of class thinking, “I did not understand anything I just heard in the last fifty minutes!”

They can be especially helpful when the hornbook author is the same author of your textbook. Hornbooks are so named for the protective sheet of transparent horn that covered a printed sheet of paper attached to a paddle-shaped board. The original hornbooks were used in the 17th and 18th century England as a teaching device in elementary schools.

—John O’Donnell—
Packing the Court at Whittier Law School Library

You may have noticed that for years now, we’ve been "packing the Court" into a display case inside the main entry to the Law Library. May it please the Court, to date we have ten collectible figurines of notable and lesser known Justices and Chief Justices of the United States Supreme Court, and each year we add more. As subscribers to *The Green Bag*, a scholarly publication of the George Mason University School of Law, we are entitled to receive one or more of these “bobbleheads” annually. Because they are fragile, they are no longer shipped to subscribers, so we must travel to Arlington, Virginia to pick them up. Earlier this year we acquired John Jay, first Chief Justice, and three other justices from that period. Recently, we obtained Clarence Thomas to add to our modern era justices. Each figurine features an object denoting a notable case associated with the featured Justice. As you might imagine, the heads of these figurines move up and down. Thus always in agreement, if the Justices of this bobblehead court were to hear a case today, they would likely unanimously affirm the decision of the lower court....

—Hugh Treacy—

Library Staff News of Note...


During week 7 of the Fall semester, WLS librarians Hugh Treacy, John O’Donnell and Curtis Jones lectured all sections of our first-year Legal Writing classes on using secondary sources effectively in legal research. They have been invited back to teach the first-year students how to research federal and California legislative history and sources of information on the subject of administrative law for a week during Spring semester.

Library Hours
Fall Semester
Monday—Thursday
8:00 am—12:00 am
Friday
8:00 am—10:00 pm
Saturday
10:00 am—8:00 pm
Sunday
10:00 am—12:00 am