

The Chicago Association of Law Libraries, 1947-1955

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At an informal meeting held at the Chicago Bar Association on February 20, 1947, 17 law librarians met and formulated plans for the formation of the Chicago Association of Law Libraries. These law librarians represented 10 institutions consisting of law libraries servicing bar associations, law schools, courts, law firms, administrative agencies, and lawyer groups in the Chicago area.

At the next meeting held on March 20, 1947, a resolution recommending a formal organization of law libraries from the Chicago area was presented by a special committee created at the previous meeting and presided over by Mr. William R. Roalfe, law librarian at Northwestern University Law Library. This resolution was unanimously adopted. A constitution and by-laws were also presented and after a few suggested changes were made, this constitution and by-laws were likewise unanimously adopted. From the proceedings of these two meetings was created the Chicago Association of Law Libraries. Mr. Roalfe was chosen as its first president; Mr. Charles A. McNabb, executive librarian of the Chicago Bar Association, was chosen

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vice-president; and Miss Helen Ross, librarian of the Field Building Law Library, was elected secretary-treasurer.

The objectives of this Association as set forth in the constitution were:

1. To unite in one local organization those persons who are engaged in or interested in law libraries in the Chicago area.
2. To correlate and facilitate an inter-library loan policy.
3. To provide members of the Association access to other law libraries in the Chicago area.
4. To further and encourage the exchange of ideas and useful information.
5. To promulgate an inventory of the combined holdings.
6. To aid and assist in the preparation and completion of special projects or undertakings suggested or requested by members of the Association.
7. To provide cooperative development of specific accumulations.
8. To encourage and promote the maintenance of the joint-catalogue, i.e. the Union Law Catalogue.
9. To foster any other objective consistent with the constitution of this Association.

The broad scope of these objectives stimulated activities that have been beneficial not only to the individual law libraries in the Chicago area, but to their patrons as well.

Check-lists of the holdings of the four major law libraries in the Chicago area, namely, Northwestern University Law Library, University of Chicago Law Library, Chicago Bar Association Law Library, and The Chicago Law Institute, were immediately instituted. The first project undertaken and completed was a check-list of session laws of the forty-eight states from their beginning (in some cases even unto colonial and territorial days) to the year 1900, which were housed in these four law libraries. Similar check-lists were prepared for court reports of the British Isles; attorney general reports of the 48 states; non-English language legal periodicals; and the *Restatements* of the American Law Institute. These check-lists make the various law libraries aware of the gaps in their respective sets or collections, so that efforts, within the bounds of reasonable costs, will be made to fill these gaps whenever possible.

The Union Law Catalogue, which had been originally started by the Works Progress Administration during the Roosevelt era and later maintained by the four major law libraries, was placed in the rooms of the Chicago Bar Association Library under the supervision of Mr. Charles A. McNabb, who sees that all new acquisitions are listed and catalogued in the Union Law Catalogue soon after his receipt of the cards and lists of such acquisitions from the participating law

libraries. This catalogue is of great value to all law libraries in the Chicago area for the locating of legal treatises, statutes, reports, periodicals, digest, etc.

The Association has also sponsored two Workshops on Law Library Problems, the first of which was held at Northwestern University Law School on October 24-25, 1952, and the second at the University of Chicago School of Law on October 23-24, 1953. These Workshops dealt with a large variety of law library activities. Some of the topics discussed were:

- How To Evaluate a Law Library, by William R. Roalfe.
- How To Record Legal Reference Questions, by A. Elizabeth Holt.
- What Professional Organizations Can Do For You, by Jean Ashman.
- Library Resources in the Chicago Area, by Annabelle M. Paulson.
- Handling of Briefs and Memoranda in Law Firm Libraries, by William D. Murphy.
- Circulation Routines for Small Law Libraries, by Florence R. McMaster.
- Cataloging Problems in Large Law Libraries, by Elizabeth V. Benyon.
- Library Records, by Robert Q. Kelly.
- Inter-Library Loans, by Frank Di Canio.
- Cataloging Problems in Small Law Libraries, by Helen McLaury.
- Library Aids for Book Selections and Reference, by Marie K. Lawrence.
- Insurance for Law Libraries, by Charles A. McNabb.
- Locating Executive Orders, by Jean Ashman.
- Congressional Hearings and Reports, by Elaine Teigler.

Administrative Decisions—How Kept Up To Date, by Elizabeth V. Benyon.

Concepts and Problems in Law Cataloging, by Kurt Schwerin.

Duplicates—When Accession, Exchange, or Discard, by Charles A. McNabb.

Documents, by Redmond A. Burke, C.S.V.

Cataloging, by Francis J. Rooney.

Duplicates, by Marie K. Lawrence.

Panel Discussion on Education for Law Librarianship.

Panel Discussion on Library Administration.

The proceedings of these two Workshops were mimeographed and distributed to the membership of the Association. Posterity can read these proceedings at a future date for information and advice.

One of the most outstanding achievements of the Association was the issuance of a volume entitled *Guide To The Legal Collections in Chicago* which was prepared and edited by Mr. Kurt Schwerin, assistant law librarian at Northwestern University Law Library. The volume was issued in mimeographed form. This undertaking was painstakingly prepared by Mr. Schwerin and all volumes listed therein were checked by representatives of the four major law libraries.

The future of the Chicago Association of Law Libraries looms brighter, indeed. In the short span of nine years this Association can proudly display the results of its efforts. Further fields will be explored and other tasks will be carried through to completion. A study of the activities of other chap-

ters of the American Association of Law Libraries and their accomplishments can also guide this Association for future projects and undertakings, such as:

1. Preparing histories of particular law libraries—of the past and of law libraries today.
2. Answering of law library queries.
3. Compiling of directories of law libraries.
4. Methods of cooperation between law libraries and law librarians.
5. Loan and use policy among law libraries.
6. Plans for purchasing of legal materials and avoiding needless duplication in adjacent law libraries.
7. Studying ways and means of rendering a more comprehensive coverage of legal materials to users of law libraries.
8. Exchange of law library procedures such as: classifications, cataloging, repairing books, insurance of law libraries, law library administration, check-lists of holdings, arrangement of legal materials in law libraries, legal research clinics on the use of law books such as digests, citators, statutes, loose-leaf services, legal encyclopedias, etc.
9. Devising plans for purchase of specialized materials such as loose-leaf services, governmental agencies publications, United Nations documents, codes and statutes of foreign countries.
10. Other subjects of specific interest.
11. Preparation of manuals for law libraries on various subjects of interest to law librarians.

In the early days of law libraries in the Chicago area, no real spirit of cooperation among the few law libraries existed. In fact, in the early 1800's The Chicago Law Institute was the only law library that existed. In 1840 a group of Chicago lawyers organized by pooling their respective law books for the mutual use of all. This small group was really the beginning of The Chicago Law Institute. In 1846 they organized The Chicago Law Institute and 11 years later they incorporated under the laws of the state of Illinois as a non-profit organization.

A spark of cooperation became evident in 1907 when Dean John H. Wigmore of Northwestern University Law Library proposed to The Chicago Law Institute and the University of Chicago Law Library that they divide their spheres of purchases so that volumes rarely used would not be duplicated in all three law libraries. Mr. William H. Holden, librarian of The Chicago Law Institute, reported in his annual report of 1906 that the three great law libraries had agreed to divide the field of purchases so that duplicates of seldom used books would not be purchased by all three law libraries and thus enlarge the field of purchases. The plan as agreed upon and approved limited the purchase of those books that are useful to the practical lawyer to The Chicago Law Institute. Northwestern University Law Library would purchase volumes to complete its collections of continental, ancient, and international law, and the University of Chicago Law Library was to avoid the extensive purchase of books these other two law libraries were purchas-

ing. Although this cooperative effort did not seem to be too definite, it nevertheless was a move in the right direction. Mr. Holden cleared up some of the ambiguity in his annual report when he stated that The Chicago Law Institute was to devote itself to the purchase of all English, and English colonial material. During this same period of time The Chicago Law Institute loaned to Northwestern University Law Library several hundred volumes of international law, Roman law, and ecclesiastical law. These volumes received very little use at the Institute. Today these volumes are still housed at Northwestern.

In 1930 an agreement was almost consummated between the University of Chicago Law Library and The Chicago Law Institute whereby all session laws of all the 48 States, except Illinois, would be transferred from the Institute to the University of Chicago on a loan basis. However, a violent clamor by the members of The Chicago Law Institute at their annual meeting precluded any transfer and aborted the attempt of moving these volumes to the University of Chicago. But, the spirit of cooperation prevailed.

Today the Chicago Association of Law Libraries has a membership of 63 persons representing 31 law libraries in the Greater Metropolitan Chicago area. Its terrain has a vast coverage. Members come from Madison, Wisconsin; Notre Dame, Indiana; Indianapolis, Indiana; Iowa City, Iowa; Urbana, Illinois; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and St. Louis, Missouri.

All meetings are well attended and nearly all members are active in the

various activities undertaken. Meetings have been held at Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, De Paul University, Loyola University, John Marshall Law School, The Chicago Law Institute, and Chicago Bar Association, and plans are now being made for holding a meeting at Notre Dame University.

The Association has also issued periodically a bulletin reporting to the membership events pertaining to law libraries, law librarians, and containing general library news of interest to the membership at large.

The Chicago Association of Law Libraries is a chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries, having received its chapter status in 1947. The activities of the local chapter do not overlap, or take any powers from, the parent Association. They deal only

with the problems of member law libraries; generate familiarity with law librarians and law libraries and their clientele; more work can be accomplished because more time is available due to its frequency of meetings; broaden knowledge of actual methods of operation and service used in neighboring law libraries; promote visiting among member law libraries; and appropriate speakers can be chosen to discuss subjects pertaining to law libraries.

The following have served as president of the Association to date: William R. Roalfe, Charles A. McNabb, Frank Di Canio, Francis J. Rooney, Virginia Dunlap, Annabelle M. Paulson, Elizabeth V. Benyon, Jean Ashman, Rev. Redmond A. Burke, and Dorothy Scarborough.