

Spread the Word: Recruitment Tips for Law Librarians

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We have all worked with promising young students, library staff or paralegals that have the right stuff to become wonderful law librarians. Some of you may lament that if only you had taken a bit of time to talk to a young colleague about your work as law librarian, and had shared information about library schools and law librarianship, you might have recruited him or her into the fold.

Now you have a second chance to take concrete steps to befriend and mentor younger students and colleagues, in whom you see bright promise. The AALL Recruitment Committee presents Recruitment Tips for Law Librarians to encourage you to make real your commitment to recruit into law librarianship the bright lights you come across in your daily lives at work, whether it be in law firm, court or government, or law school libraries.

You have heard the warnings that our profession is graying. These are practical tips you can use to try to reverse that trend. Some tips are for all law librarians, and some are tailored specifically for law firm, court and government, or academic law librarians to use in your unique environment.

1. Recruitment tips for all law librarians

Offer internships or volunteer opportunities to area library school students. See <http://lib.law.washington.edu/colle/Fellowships.htm#inship> for information about law library internship exchanges. Add your library to the list of internship host sites.

Create and maintain a good law library website. Include links to information about careers in law librarianship, such as the career resources at the AALL Recruitment Committee's website, at <http://www.aallnet.org/committee/rllc/index.asp>. Also include links to AALL and local or regional law library associations.

Develop a reputation for friendliness and approachability within your organization. Smile and engage people in conversation; they will be attracted to you and will sense that you are enthusiastic about your work as a law librarian.

Get involved with your area library school(s). Teach classes in law librarianship topics and talk about careers in law libraries. Participate in library school career programs, where you can speak about law librarianship and the work you do in your library. Invite students to attend local or regional law library association meetings.

Participate in your local bar association. Write articles about legal research for bar association publications and participate in bar programs about research topics. This exposes law librarianship to members of the local bar and it positions you to answer the questions of attorneys who may be considering alternate careers.

Follow up all promising recruitment contacts to provide information about AALL and local/regional associations, library schools and scholarship opportunities. You may want to refer a contact to the resources at the AALL Recruitment Committee website, at <http://www.aallnet.org/committee/rllc/index.asp>.

2. Recruitment tips for law firm librarians

Host training sessions for paralegals. Highlight library services that are designed to assist paralegals. These sessions can give you a “foot in the door” to discuss law librarianship as a career alternative with a group that already possesses legal research skills.

Mentor library paraprofessionals. They already know something about what you do as a law librarian. Encourage them to attend local or regional law library association meetings with you.

Talk to your filers. Many law firm libraries use filers to update their looseleaf materials and they may be curious about what you do. Talk to them about your work and the career opportunities in law librarianship.

Encourage the firm’s attorneys to attend training sessions. Training sessions are great marketing tools and can offer an opportunity to demonstrate professional skills that may pique the interest of attorneys. Choose training times that are convenient for their busy schedules, such as lunchtime, and provide food, if possible.

Offer one-on-one library orientations to all new law firm hires. These sessions will offer another opportunity to market the library’s services. In addition, they may give you an opportunity to discuss your own career in law librarianship, and to answer their questions.

Attend SLA and other professional association events. Talk up law firm librarianship and your work as a law librarian to other librarians attending the event, who are likely already interested in careers in private sector settings. Advertise openings at your library at these events.

3. Recruitment tips for court, county and government agency librarians

Develop a good working relationship with your court, county or government agency’s external affairs office. This can enhance the visibility of law librarians within your organization. Often external affairs will coordinate the volunteer, intern and job shadowing programs offered by your court, county or government agency. These

programs provide great opportunities to showcase our profession and teach others what we do.

Offer research training sessions for court, county and government agency personnel. These sessions will demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities of law librarians. They can provide a forum for discussion about law librarianship and the work you do at your court, county or government agency library. Because career changes are more prevalent in today's society, your enthusiasm for the work you do may inspire a colleague to join our profession.

Distribute your entry-level job openings to numerous library listservs, web recruitment sources and library schools. Librarians who are just starting their careers may not be focusing on law librarianship, but might be attracted to the field through an entry-level position. Make sure that you fully describe the court, county or government agency library environment you are advertising for and the work of the position you are seeking to fill.

Volunteer to staff a court, county or government agency exhibit booth at the state bar association's annual meeting. If your organization has an exhibit booth at the state bar association's annual meeting, volunteer to staff the booth. This provides visibility to our profession and gives us an opportunity to talk about law librarianship to attorneys who seem interested in what we do.

Arrange for your local or regional law library association to set up an exhibit booth at the state library association's annual meeting. Share your enthusiasm for law librarianship with those who stop by and talk about what your work at the court, county or government agency library involves. These conversations may attract other librarians to our specialty.

Attend SLA, state library association and other allied association events. Talk up court, county or government law librarianship and your work as a law librarian to others attending these events, who are probably already interested in careers in non-academic settings. Advertise openings at your library at these events.

4. Recruitment tips for academic law librarians

Make it clear that you are readily available to meet with law students, and not only when you are on the reference desk.

Get to know your student body and participate in student events. This will allow the students you befriend to see what you do as a law librarian. It will give you openings to talk to them about careers in law librarianship and how having a JD can enhance those opportunities.

If you have a JD, let law students know that. While not necessary to be a top-notch academic law librarian, having a JD will give you even more credibility with law students

when discussing career opportunities in law librarianship. Tell them why you decided to become a law librarian, instead of practicing law.

Teach legal research or other classes and offer library research sessions to the students. One of the best ways to recruit law students is for them to see you teach. It shows them that law librarians play an important role in the law school and that their work is interesting and varied. Teaching also provides another opportunity for librarians to get to know students, so they may become more informed about the work academic law librarians do.

Hire law students to work in your library as part-time student employees and full-time library paraprofessionals, if they are part-time students. This is a good way for law students to learn first-hand about the opportunities available in law librarianship and for you to mentor law students with promise.

Get involved with your area law school's career services office. Participate in law school career programs and speak about law librarianship as an alternate career for those with JDs. Mention the opportunities to teach. Talk about what law librarians in law school, court/government and law firm libraries do; invite law firm and court or government librarians to speak, as well. Discuss the scholarships available to attend library school. Invite students to attend local or regional law library association meetings.

Conclusion

As you go about your workday, consider those who may seem to be especially curious about what you do as a law librarian, or those who are star performers in your organization. Go ahead and apply some of these practical recruitment tips to interest a few of them to join our profession. Don't let them get away!