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Innovative Media Solutions  
320 W. Chestnut Street  
P.O. Box 399  
Oneida, IL 61467  
Telephone: 309/483-6467  
Fax: 309/483-2371  
E-mail: [bill@innovativemediasolutions.com](mailto:bill@innovativemediasolutions.com)

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## Law Library Lectionary

One Sunday morning I stumbled onto a solution to a long-standing question stored in my long-term memory: how to find sufficient time and energy for strategic activities when many urgent tasks distract me.

The solution entered my consciousness that Sunday while listening to my sister, a Methodist minister, deliver her sermon. She's a good preacher and a good pastor, and that morning I realized she and other ministers face time demands similar to those faced by law librarians. Throughout the week, she attends to her congregation's spiritual and emotional needs, ranging from illness to injury or death of a loved one. But she also must deliver a fresh sermon to her congregation each Sunday.

Ministers can have little time to plan and write their weekly sermons. Yet somehow they manage to stay on message each week. My sister's secret—and that of many other ministers—is the lectionary, a kind of long-term pre-planned study/sermon guide.

The lectionary has ancient roots—the Jews first developed it to systematically cover the Torah. In the Methodist church, it evolved into a method that ensures that a parishioner will encounter all the key verses in the Bible in a three-year cycle.

From a practical perspective, the lectionary solves the “pick a topic, start the outline” challenge. Each week for a three-year cycle, the lectionary offers a selection of scripture and some commentary for each preacher to customize to her own congregation. Because the lectionary links to the calendar, either liturgical or otherwise, the theme changes each week but remains common among Methodist denominations across the country. Thus, a congregation in New York could hear the same theme as a congregation in Montana.

Imagine applying this concept to law libraries. Instead of preachers delivering sermons to congregations, 5,500 law librarians could deliver similar messages each week to their users, all aligned with the AALL theme of the week. Within each

library, its parent institution, and across the country, when library users hear a compelling message, they'll tell someone else and the AALL theme of the week will become a meme.

The compelling and attractive part of the law library lectionary are the pre-planned topics for the entire year. I can spin out words responding to a question or a topic but often stumble and stick when starting a sermon. In law library land, of course, the sermon is the elevator speech or the answer to “What's new in the library?” or “Do we really still need all those books?” It might also be promoting a new database or book along with the training to use the database, etc.

Each week, I envision everyone communicating one of three or four themes customized to their own libraries and jobs. Because the calendar is published for the year, everyone knows in January what the three or four themes for the second week of August will be. As a result, individual stress is reduced and collectively law librarians improve their marketing and promotion by delivering a consistent, powerful message of the value of law libraries.

Because the law library lectionary provides the topics and outlines, each library and librarian can readily adapt the message to their own purpose. We can then spend our energy more effectively and productively—perhaps by listening just a little better for information needs or by offering another way to save the reader's time.

There's much to be done before this law library lectionary becomes a reality. Visit the *Spectrum* blog at [aallspectrum.wordpress.com](http://aallspectrum.wordpress.com) to see more of my ideas about the law library lectionary—and, I hope, to contribute your thoughts. ■



[mark.estes@acgov.org](mailto:mark.estes@acgov.org)  
[aallspectrum.wordpress.com](http://aallspectrum.wordpress.com)