

Meeting the Needs of Students and Their Future Employers: Discussions on Legal Research Instruction and Student Services Inspired by Practitioner Feedback

Summary of Discussions – AALL Annual Meeting 2013 – Seattle, WA

Working with Firms/Practicing Attorneys/Etc.

- Bring in a panel of local attorneys to ALR class to discuss research
 - Mostly solo and small since that's where students tend to work when they graduate
 - Where to find attorneys? Ask career services for alumni recommendations
- ALR panel of librarians from small firms, public law libraries, other to discuss resources available
- “Prepare to practice” workshop
 - For students before summer jobs/graduates
 - Taught by firm librarians
 - Partner with area law schools
 - Have multiple workshops for when students from different schools are available
- Librarian sent letters to famous lawyers asking for advice for law students on legal research
 - Compiled responses
 - Shared with students
 - Got response from SCOTUS justice
- Bar association has a librarian section – get involved and/or start one
- In technology and the law class, go to local court rooms to see the technology
- Go on tours of other libraries in the area to see what's available (e.g., law school library staff going on tour of firm library)
- Offer CLE courses in legal research
 - Opportunity to market services
 - Emphasize importance of legal research
- Student services librarians should collaborate with law firm librarians for joint programs

Stopping Bad Research Habits

- Show why sources other than (e.g., Google) are better
- Show why need to know other sources

- Give clear examples
- One librarian gave students an assignment where had to interview a lawyer and ask about legal research
- Have former ALR students come back to class and talk about how important legal research is
- Videos – many schools are making videos for their students.
 - Some great examples were videos of current students who are doing internships/clinics discussing research tools.
 - Another example was a recent graduate discussing the importance of legal research on the job.
 - Someone mentioned a video where a recent graduate discusses “What I wish I had learned” in law school (in terms of a research skill that they did not learn until they began practicing).
- Have students solve problems with different resources and discuss the pros/cons
- Offer “advanced Google” instruction sessions
- Explain strengths and weaknesses of Google/search engine search vs. terms and connectors searches

Essential ALR/opportunities in instruction

- Information literacy
- Resource evaluation
- Analytical thinking
- Increase instruction on administrative law
- Increase coverage: on digest/topic/key number browsing; transactional/business tools (SEC); dockets (students now exposed more with Bloomberg)
- Offer subject-specific legal research courses/sessions: IP, foreign/int'l, bankruptcy, etc. for students taking those courses

- Find out where students are going to work over summer/when graduate and reach out to librarians there to see what resources they have
- “Jump start” program
 - shortly before spring semester finals
 - find out in which states students will be working during the summer and go over resources for those locations (legislative history, form books, court systems, primary sources, etc.)
- Someone spoke on resources used to determine what their school’s students are doing after graduation (e.g. what types of firms they are going to, areas of practice, etc.). Resources identified:
 - 1) ABA reports: http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/reports/law_grad_employment_data.authcheckdam.pdf
 - 2) NALP: <http://www.nalp.org/recentgraduates>
 - 3) Internal Career Development Office Reports
- Emphasize research process; help students develop research plan
- Involve faculty in instruction; encourage them to promote the development of research skills
- Have certificate/award program for legal research
 - Point system with points earned for participation and completion of assignments and workshops
- 5 in 5 Program – short instructional sessions. Librarians go to where the students often can be found. Hold brief instructional sessions (eg: 5 minute lesson on court structure). Hold these in late morning and early evening.
- Partner with LWI
- Cover free resources
 - Casemaker
 - Thomas (soon to be Congress.gov)
 - Practice resources
 - Court rules
 - State legislature sites
- Teach students to know when to stop/when they’ve reached the end of the research trail

- See Orin Kerr's post from Green Bag
http://www.greenbag.org/v16n1/v16n1_ex_post_kerr.pdf
- Create an assignment to find a source or piece of information that is not out there

Teachable moments and other ways to improve the students' experience

- Teach from point of view
- Use real life examples and anecdotes
 - E.g. "When servers went down, students who knew how to use print resource could continue to work..."
- Have attorney's and/or recent grads share real life experiences
- Have students use practical examples in assignments
 - E.g. For admin law: restaurants with food safety violations, tattoo parlor regulations, etc.
- Integrate technology in teaching/make assignments more interactive
 - Have students use smartphone/tablet cameras to take photos of points along the way in research process (e.g. take photos of digest entries, where to go from there, etc.)
- Build trust and strong professional relationships with students
- Encourage questions; have "open door" policy
- Teach students to be self learners
- Use props for teachable moments
- Create short (three minute or less) research tutorials to be used on an "as-needed" basis with questions for testing comprehension
- Be more visible among students
 - Library table in common area
 - Roaming reference
 - Coffee and donuts with librarians once a month (or twice a semester)
 - Involvement in orientation
- Coordinate with student or other law school tour guides to ensure correct information is given about library services and resources

- Know your school's culture and develop services and instruction sessions that fit that model
- Form better partnerships with other departments within the law school.
 - Team up with one's Career Development Office or Student Services Department to hold joint events or to collaborate on something for the students.
 - Have the library house a dedicated section for Career Development materials.
- Circulation – Many schools are providing charging stations for their students who forget their power cords at home. Someone spoke of Westlaw purchasing one of these stations for their school.
- Furniture – some schools have begun to use standing desks for their students.
- Hot Water Dispenser – One school has a Hot Water Dispenser available for their students (allows them to make tea, soup, noodles, etc.)
- Pet therapy
 - One school brought in miniature horses during its "Library Fun Day" for students to come and pet/bring their children to see.