

Newsletter of the State, Court and County Section of the American Association of Law Libraries

From the Chair

Before I begin telling you about plans for the 1996 annual meeting, I want to assuage my guilt and correct my error in the last newsletter. Our listserve is "STATECOURTCOUNTYLAWLIB-L". To subscribe, send an e-mail message as follows:

(address)

listserv@lawlib.wuacc.edu

(message)


**subscribe STATECOURTCOUNTYLAWLIB-L
[your name]**

I will certainly be more careful next time I direct people to a listserve--I've never had so much e-mail. Thanks to all of you who pointed out my error to me (diplomatically of course). If I goofed

again, my e-mail address is: dnorwood@wln.com. One thing that I have discovered as we move to an electronic world is the need to keep in touch. This may sound contradictory as e-mail and other services make communicating so easy. However, e-mail lends a certain anonymity. A recent article in a local newspaper discussed the benefits of e-mail and other types of electronic communication for shy people. Those who are shy or who dislike personal interaction may revel in the new order. They can create their own world with little or no personal interaction--even groceries can be delivered by e-mail request. I suggest that we all need to carefully nurture our personal interaction with others. As a corollary, I think we need to be conscious of collegiality among peers. We need to treat each other with respect for our work, for our time and for our individuality. We can disagree respectfully with one another. A loyal opposition is a valuable asset in any organization or group. After reading some of the messages that appear on e-mail, I think we could all take some lessons from Benjamin Franklin, known for his diplomacy, in expressing ourselves. Because electronic communication makes it so easy to lose the personal touch, I think that events such as the annual meeting take on a special importance. Staying in touch with other law librarians in your area--meeting for lunch, exchanging phone calls, going on tours--is just as important. These events are opportunities to meet with those you enjoy and to parlay with those with whom you have differences. Many of us have been busy planning for the annual meeting in Indianapolis, July 20 - 25, 1996. The State, Court & County Law Libraries SIS


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meeting will be on Sunday, July 21. We will start with our traditional light breakfast followed by our business meeting. After the business meeting, Chair-Elect Frank Herch is planning a joint program with the Automation-Scientific Development SIS entitled "Automated Access to Legal Information." The program will include demonstrations of automated means of access including kiosks, Internet access to legal forms, Interactive Voice Response (telephone) message systems. Be sure to plan on attending the breakfast meeting and the program on Sunday morning. Michele Finerty, our education chair, has planned two SIS-sponsored programs for Indianapolis. One is on the authenticity of electronic documents and the other is on the cost of legal publications. Both promise to be excellent programs. Additionally, Jackie Jurkins and our Standards Committee have been working to finalize the revisions to the standards for county and appellate court law libraries. Jackie received a few comments on the revised standards from only one person. We will be going forward with our plans to present them to the AALL Executive Board for its approval. Thanks very much to Jackie and the committee for guiding the standards to a final draft. Sue Roach, Nominations Chair, has been busy searching for candidates for the upcoming SIS elections. By the time this issue of the newsletter is distributed, the slate will most likely be set. If you are interested in running for office or if you would like to recommend someone, be sure to let the nominations committee know early in the Section's year. I hope you plan to attend the AALL annual meeting in Indianapolis in July. It will be an excellent educational experience and an opportunity for staying in personal contact with your colleagues. 

*--Deborah Norwood
Washington State Law Librarian*

SCCLL Program in Indianapolis

On Sunday morning, July 21, 1996, following the business meeting, the State, Court and County Law Libraries SIS will co-sponsor with the Automation and Scientific Development SIS a program entitled "Automated Access to Legal Information." This program will feature demonstrations of North Communications kiosks, an interactive telephone system and Internet access to legal forms and instructions. These automated solutions have been successfully pioneered by the Superior Courts of Maricopa County in Phoenix, Arizona. A description of these creative automated solutions and a self-service center for pro se use will appear in an article in the next issue of this newsletter. For more information, contact Frank Alan Herch at (702) 455-4697. 

*--Frank Alan Herch
Clark County Law Library*

Feature

City of Eagan, State of Confusion

In December 1994, our office entered into a new *WESTLAW* contract, which provided us with unlimited usage for a fixed fee. Being a poor state agency (that's tautology), we had previously used computer research very sparingly. Our new contract made everyone in the office very happy and won me many brownie points (undeserved). So, what's the beef? I have run into so many weird and unexpected problems that I have felt compelled to warn others: go West, young man, at your peril!

First, some disclaimers:

1) Our local reps and account executives have been extremely helpful in every way. Everyone who went for training had only good things to say about our three trainers.

2) With a few exceptions, the people at West headquarters were solicitous and courteous in a chirpy, All-American, cheerleader way.

3) West is so far above its competitor that there is no comparison (but that's another story for another day).

And, now, the tale of woe.

Nobody Was Driving, Officer, We Were All In The Back Seat

Our contract was due to go into effect on July 1st--it actually started December 1st. Some of the delay was due to State law, which required standard language and standard clauses. But after both sides had agreed to the exact wording, it took months to get a signed contract from reps in Washington to West in Minnesota. We were told again and again that they were walking the contract down the hall to be signed. It must have been the world's longest corridor. On December 1st, I received the word that the contract was now in force and spread the news

only to be given hell by our Fiscal Office for jumping the gun. They had still not received the signed contract. In despair, I called our rep and said that I would probably be fired if we did not receive the contract immediately. We received it the next day. And all was well. Or was it? In April, our rep, sounding worried and harassed, called me to say that West had never received a signed contract from us. My response, "It took them four months to discover this?" We sent them a second copy by overnight delivery and we all lived happily ever after--or did we?

The Square Of The Hypotenuse Equals. . .

Everyone in our office was thrilled with the new contract and did their online research with great enthusiasm. I basked in the praise I received until I was forced to confront the dreaded. . .INVOICE. Some databases--DIALOG, Dow-Jones, BNA, etc.--are not included under our contract. When we received our monthly invoice, the total charges for these extras were listed but, in the billing detail, they were not. I called West's Accounts Receivable and explained that we had to know who had used these databases in order to bill the appropriate division or office. At first, they did not seem to understand what I was saying; later, they said that they could not yet break down the charges but were working on it. Meanwhile, I sent plaintive little notes to our Fiscal Office saying that I knew that the totals did not match the totals on the invoice, but that this was the best that I could do. They were not amused. In March, we started getting invoices that did spell out who did what, but I was never able (and am still not able) to make the figures correspond.

Since I imbibed guilt with my mother's milk, I always assume that I am responsible for everything

that goes wrong. Last summer, however, our Systems Administrator had some student help and offered to set up a model grid in WordPerfect that I could use each month to list *WESTLAW* usage by password. To my profuse thanks, she answered that the students enjoyed the exercise; the only problem was their frustration because they could never get the totals of the users to match the totals on the invoice. My reply? "Ha and ha!"

**Henry David Thoreau,
Occam's Razor
And
The Golden Age of Televison**

One of the ways that our local rep made my life easier and removed from me some of the burdens of administering the *WESTLAW* contract was by ordering passwords for the people that he trained. There was just one problem--he was using an outdated staff directory. When I received the ID cards from West, I discovered that he had ordered passwords for people who were long gone and for people who already had passwords. In one case, an attorney ended up with two passwords, one in her maiden name and one in her married name. The last proved a real challenge to one of the chirpy ladies in West's RPM service. She could not understand how one person could have two different names. Surely, America's heartland is not filled with Lucy Stoners!

While spending many hours checking passwords, cancelling them and making explanations, I thought fondly of Thoreau, who said, "Simplify, simplify," William of Ockham, who said, "Cut away everything extraneous," and the child in the old television commercial, who said, "Please, Mommy, I'd rather do it myself."

Which brings us to a related matter. . .

And They Shall Live Forever and Ever

Several years before I started working there, the Attorney General's Office had moved but some mail from West still came addressed to the previous office. As I noticed this, I carefully called Accounts

Receivable to change the addresses and to give them the names of people who no longer worked here but were still receiving mail. And still the mail comes--to people long gone, to people who are dead, to people who never were. I ordered a password for someone in our office named Bernadette. The card came with the name "Bernard." I immediately called to correct it. Ever since, we have received duplicate mailings, one for Bernard, one for Bernadette. I have come to regard Bernard as our own Lieutenant Kije. By the way, the explanation I was given is that there are two separate mailing lists at West headquarters. Making corrections with Accounts Receivable does not affect the mysterious second office that must reside at the Pearly Gates keeping a permanent record that cannot be corrected or erased.

And that brings us to another quirk. . .

***Some Animals Are More Equal
Than Others***

As part of our contract, our previous fifty-plus billing groups were combined into one and we receive one invoice that lists all usage by password, regardless of division or office. We understand this and so does Accounts Receivable but someone at West does not. We have a stand-alone printer--one of those that prints in dual columns. But not everyone can use it. Only certain passwords are attached to it. Our rep tried to have all the passwords transferred to the new combined bill group but to no avail. I even made a list of all our passwords and faxed it to West, requesting that they all be transferred. The RPM service refused to do this. I have had to make multiple phone calls and have the passwords transferred one by one. We have 500-plus employees in our office and by the year 2000, we should all be able to use the stand-alone printer.

A similar problem developed when West took over Information America. The publicity they mailed to all subscribers sounded so enticing that about a dozen of our people immediately went online to access it before someone thought to ask me if the new database was included in our contract. When I learned that we were being charged \$8/minute (the