ALL-SIS Legal Research and Sourcebook Committee
Legal Research Roundtable
Sunday, July 16, 2017
Austin, TX

- Librarians reported the following formats for classes:
    - Individual sessions in the 1L and 2L year, including video modules to view beforehand. Classes include an introductory training session on statutes and a follow-up class in the 1L Fall semester, a class on free internet resources in the 1L Spring semester, and a 2L refresher on Westlaw and Lexis, with emphasis on practice aspects.
    - Four sessions teaching 1Ls cases, statutes, and codes, followed by an assessment.
    - An optional 2 session Introduction to Electronic Legal Research program for 1Ls covering secondary sources, cases, statutes, and administrative law on Westlaw, Lexis, and Bloomberg. Though not mandatory, LRW professors have encouraged their students' attendance.
    - Teaching legal research as a 7 week, ungraded 1L elective. An exercise from it is spun into a later, more comprehensive upper level ALR class. Although the 1L and ALR classes are popular, students can theoretically get through law school without having had any legal research classes.
    - Most schools have both survey/general ALR classes and specialized classes, such as international legal research, interdisciplinary legal research, litigation research, and transactional legal research.
    - Some librarians offer their ALR classes as pass/fail.
    - Some librarians have a "redo" option in their classes – students have a chance to redo what they've gotten wrong – and they've found that can work well. Another librarian reported students don't take advantage of the offer.

- Librarians reported teaching the following topics and exercises:
    - Cost effective research
        - Several librarians teach costs of database and find it's an effective way to get student buy in.
        - A few schools teach free legal research resources. In one case, a writing professor who was interested in open access to the law specifically requested that the librarians teach CLII, SCOTUS Mapper, and other free open access tools.
    - Have students take photos of signs citing laws or things they think should be regulated by law (e.g. why doesn't my bedroom ceiling have a light?) Have them research the relevant laws.
    - Have students pick an item from the Crime a Day Twitter (devoted to silly laws.) Have them locate the actual law and identify how accurate or misleading Crime a Day's summary is.
    - Have students research law firms and attorneys they are interviewing with, to teach them field searching and litigation analytics.
    - Use the "Straight Outta Compton" lawsuit to teach docket searching.

- Use cricket-filled chocolate bars as a prop to teach researching regulations and guidance on bugs in food.
- Compare the same resources in print and online.
  - Ask students to research statutes in print codes and online. Which is easier?
  - Complete an exercise in print; then recomplete it in Westlaw, correlating the steps.

- Librarians reported using the following evaluation methods:
  - Full semester research problems with research logs
  - Final exams
  - Make students create Jing videos explaining and evaluating legal databases. Students hated it but the librarian was impressed by the final results.
  - Pathfinders
    - One librarian taught an IP research class that had everything from students who had never taken an IP class to students who had passed the patent bar. Developing a fair final exam was tough but pathfinders allowed her to meet students where they were.
    - Another librarian gave students the option of taking a final or building a pathfinder. The pathfinder was generally selected by students practicing in different jurisdictions, who used it as an opportunity to identify the sources in their jurisdiction.
  - Multiple choice questions
    - Some librarians were skeptical multiple choice could be effective because research is a process.
    - Librarians who used them indicated that they did so to make sure students understand the basics.
      - E.g. Is F. Supp. mandatory? What does U.S.C. mean? Some students thought it referred to the U.S. Constitution.
      - One librarian based her questions on the RIP-SIS Core Research Competencies.
      - One librarian compared these concepts to a new language students needed to learn.
      - Another librarian asked: What do students need to understand to not look like idiots?
  - Walk and talk
    - In the print version, the librarian physically followed students around the library as they completed their research.
    - In the online version, the librarian watches as students research online.
    - Provides great insight into how effectively students actually research and what they've actually learned.