As we begin a promising new year, I wish a Happy New Year’s to each of you. I hope that you all had a wonderful break and are (mostly) prepared for a new semester. I am pleased to provide an update on ALL-SIS in this Winter Newsletter.

The 2024-2027 strategic plan for ALL-SIS is taking shape thanks to your contributions. Your thoughts and comments were instrumental in shaping our priorities for the next three years. Your engagement shows the collaborative energy that defines our organization and helps move our profession forward.

I want to thank the Executive Board, the Strategic Task Force, and all of you for your efforts and participation.

This process has compelled me to consider all the current changes that are occurring within academic law librarianship and legal education. I am not sure whether it is exciting or overwhelming! Our profession itself faces many challenges, from increasing the numbers of academic law librarians to advancing our recognition, status and compensation. We must also continue to expand our justice, equity, diversity and inclusion efforts.

However, many external factors present great challenges as well. The forthcoming NextGen Bar Examination will require academic law librarians to assess, and most likely, revise the way we teach legal research to our students. Legal research instruction will need to account for how this test will measure bar applicants’ legal research skills. The number of

Your engagement shows the collaborative energy that defines our organization and helps move our profession forward.

Welcome to the winter issue! For this issue, we have members news and a review of the book *The Abundant University* by Julie Tedjeske Crane. Finally, the ALL-SIS Awards Committee has compiled a useful list of all of the awards and grants offered by ALL-SIS. I also want to announce that I will be rolling off as the editor of the ALL-SIS Newsletter in July. It has been a pleasure serving as the editor, and I want to thank everyone who contributed to it during my tenure. I could not have done it without you! If you are interested in taking over as the editor, please feel free to contact me. I would be happy to discuss the role further!

As you peruse this newsletter, please remember that we are always looking for content. The newsletter would not exist without interesting submissions from readers like you. We want to hear from you, so if you have any questions, suggestions, ideas or articles you would like to submit, please contact me, the Editor, at katie.hanschke@vanderbilt.edu.
states that are adopting this exam is rapidly increasing, and the implementation of the exam will be here before we know it. It is important that we continue to monitor the release of this exam, so we can properly instruct our students going forward.

Further, generative AI and large language models are going to reshape not only legal research but the practice of law itself. Lexis has already rolled out its AI product to law students, and Westlaw has started the process as well. Countless other legal tech companies will integrate the technology within their platforms. Law schools are leaning on law librarians to demystify, teach and apply it in the instruction to our students and in the research for our faculty. As you know, given how rapidly this technology is changing, staying informed of its uses and application is difficult. There is no doubt that the landscape will look a lot different when we welcome the new 1L’s next Fall. We will need to assist one another in determining effective ways to instruct students on how to use this ever-changing technology.

Finally, the ABA has recently made some proposed revisions to the academic standards that bear significant implications for law libraries and librarians. Academic law librarians must be proactive in our communications so that the ABA clearly understands the value of law libraries and librarians to legal education.

With that being said, all of these challenges present a wonderful opportunity for academic law librarians. Collectively, we can use these changes to drive innovation and elevate the role of law libraries and librarians. We can continue to collaborate and navigate the above challenges in order to change them into opportunities that are more exciting than overwhelming.

Best of luck to all of you in the Spring semester. Thanks for all of your efforts within ALL-SIS; we have done some great things! //

2024 ALL-SIS AWARDS AND GRANTS

The Awards & Grants Season is Upon Us—Consider Applying or Nominating! Over the coming weeks, please consider nominating yourself or a colleague to be recognized by ALL-SIS. There are awards for achievements in service, excellence in professional writing, and several grants to attend the AALL Leadership Academy, CONELL and the Annual Meeting. The Awards Committee hopes you will browse through the full list and brave the relatively painless administrative steps to apply.

Please see the specific criteria and application requirements on the Apply or Nominate page. All submissions must be received by Friday March 15, 2024, with the exception of an earlier deadline of February 9, 2024 for the AALL Leadership Academy grant.

Recognition of Service
- Frederick Charles Hicks Award – Recognizes an individual or group who has made significant contributions to law librarianship; preference given to ALL-SIS members.
- Outstanding Service Award – Recognizes an ALL-SIS member for notable service to ALL-SIS.

Recognition of Publications
- Book Award – Recognizes a textual contribution to academic law librarianship or legal research published April 1, 2023 to March 15, 2024.

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AWARDS AND GRANTS

• Digital Publication Award – Recognizes a (born and remains) digital publication that contributes to law librarianship or legal research published April 1, 2023 to March 15, 2024.

• Outstanding Article: Long Form – Recognizes an article of at least 5,000 words on a topic of law librarianship or legal research published April 1, 2023 to March 15, 2024 in a publication other than Law Library Journal or Spectrum.

• Outstanding Article: Short Form - Recognizes articles of less than 5,000 words on a topic of law librarianship or legal research published April 1, 2023 to March 15, 2024 in a publication other than Law Library Journal or Spectrum.

Grants for AALL Meeting Costs

• AALL Leadership Academy Grant (applications due February 9, 2024) – Two grants of $1,250 each for ALL-SIS librarians accepted into the Leadership Academy.

• CONELL Grant – Two grants of $500 each to ALL-SIS librarians attending the Conference of Newer Law Librarians.

• Active Member Stimulus Grant – Up to $1,000 to attend the AALL Annual Meeting for an ALL-SIS member with demonstrated service to ALL-SIS and financial need.

• Regular Member Stimulus Grant – Up to $1,000 to attend the AALL Annual Meeting for an ALL-SIS member with demonstrated financial need.

Please direct questions to the Awards Committee Chair, Deanna Barmakian, dbarmakian@law.harvard.edu Members of the Awards Committee are Sarah Kammer (Vice Chair); Iain Barksdale; Shaun Esposito; Heidi Frostestad; Greg Ivy; Maureen Moran; Tawnya Plumb; and Daniel Radthorne. //

THE ABUNDANT UNIVERSITY
BOOK REVIEW

This is the first in a series of columns on books about higher education. I am reviewing Michael D. Smith’s The Abundant University: Remaking Higher Education for a Digital World. Smith is a Carnegie Mellon University business professor whose area of expertise is how new technologies transform industries, with a particular focus on the entertainment sector. In the book, he uses his expertise to draw parallels between what he believes will happen in higher education and what has occurred in the entertainment industry.

The book begins by describing Joyce Carol Oates’ yearly creative writing seminar at Princeton. Access is limited. For starters, you need to be someone with the credentials and money to attend Princeton. Then, you must choose Princeton over other options. And even if you are a Princeton student, demand for the ten seats in this class is far greater than the supply.

In contrast, almost anyone can take Joyce Carol Oates’ MasterClass. While the experience won’t equal her Princeton seminar, participants who apply themselves will learn a lot, and time and cost commitments are much lower. Smith bases his vision of higher education’s future on this model. He outlines four fundamental truths:

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First, our current system of higher education, despite its good intentions, is financially and morally unsustainable. Second, the problem is systemic, which means we’re unlikely to solve it from within our existing scarcity-based model of higher education. Third, digital technologies give us an opportunity to create new systems of education based on abundance rather than scarcity — a revolutionary shift. Fourth, to participate in this change, those of us who work in higher education must rediscover and embrace our core mission as educators.¹

Smith believes that higher education’s mission is to enable as many students as possible to discover and develop their unique talents, so they can make a positive impact on society. He contends that many of us working in higher education have confused our mission with our business model, and that model is at risk of being replaced by new technologies. Higher education’s business model uses control over three scarce resources to maintain the market dominance of colleges and universities: access, instruction, and credentials. In Smith’s view, digital technologies make these resources abundant rather than scarce.

Scarcity of Access

The concept of scarcity of access refers both to the limited number of seats in a traditional classroom and the exclusivity of higher education. Much of the information in this section was familiar, but some concepts surprised me. For example, I already knew of studies showing that elite colleges exacerbate inequality rather than alleviating it. Smith cites research showing that children born into the top 1 percent of the income distribution are now seventy-seven times more likely to attend a highly selective college than those born into the bottom 20 percent.² It is also well known that college rankings have problems. A good example is Georgia State University’s decision to deemphasize SAT scores. This approach was incredibly successful at increasing access, but it caused the university to drop in the rankings.³ Rankings have also traditionally rewarded spending. Smith quotes William Kirwan, a former chancellor of the University of Maryland system: “If you could deliver the same quality at a lower cost, you’d go down in the rankings.”⁴

Anyone who has worked in a billable hours system has experienced a similar dilemma; if one associate takes 10 hours to write a memo and another takes 20 hours to write the same memo, who is the “better” associate? I was surprised to learn that highly selective colleges spend much more on students than they receive in tuition. Smith cites statistics indicating that the most selective colleges spend $100,000 per student on student-oriented services, while the least selective colleges spend less than $5,000.⁵ Similarly, I hadn’t known that some elite colleges and universities appear to “recruit” applicants who are unlikely to be accepted to maintain a low acceptance rate.⁶

Smith proposes an open enrollment online education model to alleviate the scarcity of access. He believes that online classes can provide almost unlimited accessibility. A lecture hall can hold 100 students, but an unlimited number of students can access a video of the lecture given in that lecture hall.

Smith singles out Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) as an example of the possibilities. SNHU increased its enrollment from 3,000 in 1973 to 175,000 now.⁷ For undergraduate programs, students need only have a high school diploma or GED to enroll. Notably, between 2011 and 2021, online programs at SNHU did not raise tuition, while private four-year institutions increased tuition by 40 percent.⁸

¹ Micheal D. Smith, The Abundant University XXII (2023).
² See id. at 4-5.
³ See id. at 34-36.
⁴ Id. at 36.
⁵ See id. at 9-10.
⁶ See id. at 44-45.
⁷ See id. at 103.
⁸ See id. at 105-06.
BOOK REVIEW

Scarcity of Instruction

Three problems are associated with the scarcity of instruction: the limited ability to scale traditional classroom teaching, the incentive system for faculty, and the lack of individualized instruction. First, in-person education is largely immune to productivity gains from technology. Smith compares instructors to violinists. The economy is vastly different than it was in the 1800s, but violinists still produce about the same output.9

Second, faculty members are selected based on their reputation as researchers and not teachers. A closely related problem is that faculty research is highly specialized, but faculty often teach general courses, requiring them to explain material they don’t know well themselves. Additionally, traditional classroom instruction does not allow for individual attention. This is particularly problematic for larger classes where students have diverse backgrounds and abilities. I face this challenge teaching legal research to 1Ls. Some students have legal experience or strong research skills; however, others have extreme difficulties working with electronic databases and even the LMS.

Smith proposes various solutions to the problem of limited instruction. First, he views digital platforms as offering increased access to experts. Of course, in the post-pandemic era, this is common even in traditional classroom settings. For example, our law school’s Race and Equal Protection Under the Law course has had several experts present via Zoom. Similarly, I have used guest lectures via Zoom in my classes. Most of these guest lecturers would never have traveled to Carlise, Pennsylvania, to present in person. Smith also mentions mastery-based evaluation systems that do not rely on “seat time” and enhancing teaching with analytics as additional ways to eliminate scarcity in instruction.

Smith’s analysis fails to adequately account for the role of assessments in teaching. Giving students feedback and assigning grades pose significant problems for scaling up instruction unless all grading is reduced to computer-graded assessments like multiple-choice questions. The university-based online courses I’ve taken solve this problem by having “regular” faculty members record videos and (perhaps) help design classes, with facilitators providing pass/fail grading and feedback. The situation isn’t ideal, and it would be worse for classes where letter grades are assigned.

That said, I was intrigued by the book’s discussion of calibrated peer grading, which involves students grading their classmates’ assignments using a rubric. According to a study, grades given by this method were indistinguishable from those given by trained teaching assistants. Plus, students learned a lot from grading each other’s work.10 While that’s interesting, I don’t believe that students would accept the widespread use of this technique for assigning letter grades.

Scarcity of Credentials

Colleges and universities benefit from their role as gatekeepers of credentials that prepare students for successful careers. Even Smith concedes, “As long as a degree is needed to get a good job, the university system is safe from disruption.”11 Degrees matter because the job market operates on an asymmetric information basis; employers know very little about potential employees, especially those with limited work experience. According to Smith, asymmetrical information can lead to credentialism (degree), elitism (elite school), and GPA bias.

A college degree signifies to employers that you possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and motivation to succeed. That is why employers often hire people with degrees unrelated to their jobs. Of course, many college graduates have poor skills or character traits, and plenty of people without degrees have these assets. But if degree holders are more likely to possess favorable characteristics on average, the degree remains a credible signal.

Smith addresses the arguments made in Failure to Disrupt, a book I reviewed for the LIT-SIS blog. Failure to Disrupt examined Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and concluded that MOOCs and similar learning technologies are

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9 See id. at 15.
10 See id. at 120.
11 Id. at 159.
more likely to improve learning incrementally than to alter it fundamentally. Smith argues that Failure to Disrupt did not adequately emphasize that credentials are not yet as “abundant” as access and instruction have become. He believes this is beginning to change. He cites IBM as an example of a company that has eliminated degree requirements for many jobs.\[12\] (My state has done the same.) Similarly, Google has started offering low-cost certificates that may be equivalent to degrees in certain fields.

I am skeptical of Smith’s assertion that the four-year degree will face widespread devaluation. Unless there is a prolonged labor shortage, employers will continue using objective filters such as degrees to narrow candidate pools. Smith’s analysis does, however, highlight how heavily the current higher education business model relies on a four-year degree being the coin of the realm, so to speak.

Conclusion

As I mentioned at the beginning, Smith sees clear parallels between how technology has affected the entertainment industry and how it might impact higher education. According to Smith, entertainment and higher education industry leaders became overconfident, overpriced their products, and stuck to physical world business models. They dismissed new digital technologies because they believed their product had superior quality, people were willing to pay a high price for it, and market dominance would protect them. Still, new technologies can enter the marketplace and take over so much that consumers can’t imagine life without them. Smith believes this has already happened in entertainment, and in higher education, he thinks this is happening now.

Though I find the book interesting, I am not convinced by the author’s conclusions. Specifically, I don’t think that the tide has turned on the bachelor’s degree, or that it will anytime soon. And it is unclear what impact this would have on law schools, if any. Being a lawyer almost always requires a particular degree, and that won’t change. Fewer people pursuing bachelor’s degrees would reduce the pool of law school applicants. Perhaps combined with the coming demographic cliff, that could cause severe problems for law schools.

If you are interested in learning more, the author wrote a follow-up article for the Chronicle of Higher Education titled The Public is Giving Up on Higher Education. The Chronicle also published an essay that is critical of the book. //

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12 See id. at 80.

MEMBER NEWS

Trina Robinson is the new Assistant Director for Resource Management Services at the George Washington University Law School, Jacob Burns Law Library. Trina previously served in lead positions in the Law Library’s acquisitions & continuing resources operations; prior to joining GW Law, Trina held academic law library positions in acquisitions, serials, and reference. Thanks to Leslie Lee for this news.

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Michelle Rodenburg has joined the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law’s Kathrine R. Everett Law Library in a new position as the Law and Technology Librarian. Michelle came to UNC in August from private practice, where she worked in estate planning and probate. As the Law and Technology Librarian, Michelle co-teaches Law Practice Technologies and assists in managing the law library’s electronic resources. Prior to coming to UNC, Michelle earned her law degree from the University of Minnesota, her M.I.S. from Florida State University, and her B.A. in anthropology from Florida Gulf Coast University. Thank you, Stacey Rowland, for the news.

The Goodson Law Library at Duke University welcomed Neal Fricks in December 2023 as our new Acquisitions Librarian. Neal most recently worked as the Content & Discovery Librarian at the Duke Medical Center Library & Archives, and previously held staff positions at the Goodson Law Library as well as the Fuqua School of Business’s Ford Library. Neal received an MILS from UNC-Greensboro in December 2022. Also effective in December 2023, former Acquisitions Librarian Shyama Agrawal transitions to a new part-time role as Scholarly Services Librarian, focusing on various initiatives related to faculty and student scholarship at Duke Law. Thanks to Jennifer Behrens for this news.

Tamara L. Rogers is now Research and Instructional Services Librarian at Ruth Lilly Law Library at Robert H. McKinney School of Law, Indiana University. Tamara was previously managing partner of Rogers Elder Law Firm. She is currently earning her Master of Library Sciences degree at Indiana University’s Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering, and was recently awarded the Wilma Gibbs Moore Scholarship.

Steven A. Mitchell is now a Research and Instructional Librarian at the Lillian Goldman Law Library of Yale Law School. He was previously a Research and Instruction Librarian at the Kresge Law Library of Notre Dame Law School. In addition to research and instruction responsibilities, he is developing the library’s foreign and international law collection.

The Thurgood Marshall Law Library at the Francis King Carey School of Law welcomes Sharon Beth Bronheim! Formerly she served as the Access Services/Reference Librarian at the University of the District of Columbia Law School where she established “Take a Break with the Library.” Sharon Beth began a new position in January 2024 as the Content Acquisitions Librarian at the Thurgood Marshall Law Library. After 20 years as an attorney in the criminal law and policy realm, Sharon Beth made a pivot to her dream job of librarian. She graduated with an MSLIS from Catholic University in January 2023 and earned a JD from the Yeshiva University - Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, and an AB in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University.

On its new website, the Oxford English Dictionary lists hundreds of contributors. The only one who is singled out for particular acknowledgement is Fred Shapiro, Associate Director for Collections and Special Projects at the Yale Law Library. The OED states: “Fred Shapiro of the Yale Law School deserves a special mention among our contributors of quotations; he was a pioneer in the use of databases for linguistic research, and the OED has been benefiting from his prolific contributions, especially of antedatings, since the late 1970s.”
ALL-SIS was established in 1979 to promote interest in and to address issues of common concern to those employed in academic law libraries. The SIS serves as the umbrella organization for all interests—administration, collection development, consortia, directors, fees for service, interlibrary loan, public services, technical services, middle management, etc. ALL-SIS provides opportunities for all librarians to contribute to the overall betterment of the entire academic law community. ALL-SIS has grown to approximately 1,200 members and is the largest SIS in AALL. Our members come from all aspects of academic law librarianship. Because of the SIS’s broad coverage and subtopic focus, all those working in academic law libraries can benefit from membership and are encouraged to join.