THE VICTORIAN-ERA LAW OFFICE: HOW TO FURNISH YOUR WORKPLACE FOR UNDER $100

Mark W. Podvia

While purusing the offerings at a local public library used book sale, I recently happened upon three very interesting mail-order catalogue reprints. The books that I found—the 1895 Montgomery Ward & Company Catalogue, the 1897 Sears, Roebuck & Company Catalogue, and the 1902 Sears, Roebuck & Company Catalogue—contain an assortment of products not seen in today's catalogues. While examining these reprinted relics from a bygone age, I realized that a late nineteenth or early twentieth century lawyer could have—and most probably did—equip his or her law office using the various items advertised in these three volumes.

The 1897 law office was a far cry from the ultra-modern facilities occupied by many of today's law firms. Devices such as the photocopier or the IBM electric typewriter—the latter now seen as outdated technology—were decades in the future. The microcomputer, with instant access to on-line legal databases such as LEXIS and Westlaw, could not have been imagined by the lawyer of 1897. Even something as basic as the ballpoint pen would have been a source of amazement.

However, by 1897 several important non-legal developments allowed the profession to take its first steps towards the modern law office. Christopher Sholes invented the first practical commercial typewriter in 1867; gunsmith Philo

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LH & RB ROUNDTABLE TO FEATURE DR. MORRIS COHEN

Dr. Morris L. Cohen, Yale University Emeritus Professor of Law and Law Librarian, will speak at the Legal History and Rare Books SIS Roundtable at the Annual Meeting in Boston. The Roundtable is scheduled for Sunday, July 11th at 4:15. The Roundtable is open to all AALL members.

Dr. Cohen's topic will be "Joseph Story and the Encyclopedia Americana." Francis Lieber settled in America in 1827, after fleeing his native Germany as a political exile. In 1829, he began publication of the Encyclopedia Americana, our first substantial scholarly encyclopedia.

While living in Boston, Lieber had become acquainted with many intellectual and political leaders of that society, including John Quincy Adams and Joseph Story. Story was then both an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court and a professor of law at the Harvard Law School. Lieber asked Story to write several articles on law for his new encyclopedia and Story agreed, ultimately writing sixteen articles, totally one hundred twenty closely printed, doubled columned pages, which appeared beginning in volume 3 of the encyclopedia's first edition.

That volume appeared in the same year as Story's great three volume treatise, Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States. The collaboration of Lieber and Story, two intellectual giants, and the fruit of that collaboration constitute an interesting, but little known episode of American legal history.

Seating for the Roundtable is limited.
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LH&RB Welcomes New Officers

Our new Vice Chair/Chair Elect is Laura Ray:

Laura E. Ray has been at the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Library (at Cleveland State University) since 1989, where she currently serves as the Educational Programming Librarian, and was previously the Media/Reference Librarian. From 1980 until 1989 she was the librarian at the Northeast Ohio Multipurpose Arthritis Center.

Laura received her MLS from Case Western Reserve University and her MA in History and BA from Cleveland State University. She is currently working on her PhD in History, concentrating on Antebellum slave health care. Laura has been a member of the American Association of Law Libraries since 1990. She currently serves as the Secretary/Treasurer of LHRB-SIS. She has twice chaired the Micrographics/Audiovisual SIS, as well as continues to serve as Education Coordinator for the Micrographics/Audiovisual SIS (since 2000) and LHRB-SIS (since 2002). She has been a member of the Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries since 1990, currently serving on its Internet Committee. She has been a member of the Special Libraries Association since 1983 (except for 1999-2002), and served as the 1992-3 President of the SLA Cleveland Chapter. In addition, Laura is Chair of the Ohio Council of Arthritis Foundation Chapters (an advocacy coalition of the four Arthritis Foundation Chapters in Ohio), and a long-time active member of the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals, currently serving on its Web Enhancement Task Force. Her continued commitment to education and advocacy in rheumatology earned her the 2001 ARHP Addie Thomas Service Award. Laura has presented numerous workshops and lectures at national and regional medical and library conferences since 1982, addressing a myriad of topics on the WorldWideWeb and Internet, legislative advocacy, audiovisual enhancement of learning, educational design and learning styles, as well as legal, medical, and information research.

Our new Secretary/Treasurer is Katherine Topulos:

Katherine has been the Foreign and International Law Librarian at Duke Law School since 1994. She holds an MLS from Columbia, a JD from Boston College, and a BA in French from Wellesley College. Katherine was Chair of the Foreign, Comparative, and International Law Special Interest Section in 2000 and brings

FROM THE CHAIR/EDITOR

Mark W. Podvia

Welcome to our first electronic-edition of LH&RB! Like the Dudley Do-Right of the Mounties, this newsletter always seems to show up just in the nick of time.

Now that we have made to jump from paper to electronic format, I would like to increase the number of issues published each year from one or two lengthy issues to three or four shorter issues. In order to do this we need submissions from our members—articles, book reviews and exhibit and meeting announcements. If we do not receive material, you will be stuck reading such things as my Sears Catalogue article that is published in this issue. I would like to publish our next issue in September. Therefore I ask that all submissions be sent to me no later than Labor Day.

You will notice that a ten-year index to LH&RB is included in this issue. Past issues back to volume 5 are currently available at our website; the full run of past issues should be available shortly—special thanks to Dr. Joel Fishman who had a complete set.

Now I would like to take off my Editor's hat and put on my Chairman's hat. The Legal History & Rare Books SIS submitted four excellent program proposals for this year's meeting. The bad news is that three of the proposed programs were not approved. The good news is that the one that was approved—Creating and Maintaining Legal History Collections—promises to be an excellent program. You will want to save the time slot on Monday, July 12th, from 4:15 to 5:15 for this program. The LH&RB business meeting will follow immediately after the program, so be sure to stick around for it.

If you have ideas for programs for the 2005 Annual Meeting, now is the time to start working on your proposal. We will discuss possible program ideas at the business meeting. In addition, AALL will celebrate its Centennial in 2006. Our SIS has been asked to play a leadership role in the Centennial celebration. Deciding what this will entail is also on the agenda for the Business Meeting.

Dr. Morris Cohen will be our featured speaker at the LH&RB Roundtable on Sunday, July 11th at 4:15. A more complete description of his talk can be found on the front page of this issue.

Under the leadership of Michele Pope, a group of law school archivists will be gathering on Tuesday, July 13th at 7:30 PM in the lobby of the Sheraton Boston Hotel. It appears that we will soon have an Archivist Caucus as a part of the LH&RB SIS.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Boston!
Continued from Page 1

SEARS ROEBUCK

Remington manufactured his first manual typewriter seven years later, in 1874. The telephone was patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876 and 1877, although Pennsylvania inventor Daniel Drawbaugh had devised a working telephone several years earlier. Thomas Alva Edison developed the first practical incandescent lamp in 1879, and installed the first electric-light power plant in New York City in 1881-82.

The changes brought by these new inventions were recognized as being nothing short of revolutionary by the attorneys of the day. In 1901, Pennsylvania attorney C. Larue Munson delivered the following remarks to the County Bar Association in York, Pennsylvania:

"Let us consider for a moment how differently we do our work now, than we did in the seventies. Then, for example, our correspondence was done wholly with the pen. Now we call our stenographer or expert typewriter to our elbow and he—more frequently she, for the average lawyer is a man of good taste—relieves us of the physical labor of committing our correspondence to paper, requiring us only to append our names, often translatable only by the business card at the head of the sheet. Formerly we wrote out all our legal documents, a most laborious task, now we accomplish the work by dictation, and are able to deliver our clients legible copies of their agreements, with as many duplicates, by carbon, as may be desired."

William Penn Lloyd, an attorney from Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, agreed.

"The present rapid mail service, the telegraph, and the telephone have reduced the time required for transactions from weeks formerly, now often to the fraction of a day or even an hour."

In furnishing the "modern" law office, circa 1897, using the catalogues issued by Sears, Roebuck & Company or Montgomery Ward & Company, the practitioner would probably want to begin by ordering stationary, needed both for informal note-taking and for formal correspondence. The 1897 Sears Catalogue offered a wide variety of tablets "from the cheapest to the best" that ranged in price from $.40 per dozen to $1.40 per dozen (Sears 1897 at 349). "Excellent quality, fine paper for personal and commercial correspondence" was available for prices ranging from $.55 per ream to $1.85 per ream depending on the size of the paper (Sears 1897 at 350). Envelopes, "highest grade, best quality of paper," ranged in price from $.70 to $1.90 per 1000 (Sears 1897 at 350).

Blank books, which would have been suitable for law office record keeping, were available from the Montgomery Ward Catalogue for prices ranging from $.18 to $5.60 depending on the size and quality of the book (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 40). Letter files such as the "Boss" file, precursors to the modern filing cabinet, sold for $5.40 per dozen; the cheaper "Chicago" file sold for $2.75 per dozen (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 40).

Fountain pens, pencils, ink, erasers, paper fasteners and rubber bands were all available through the mail-order catalogues. These ranged in price from the Correspondent Fountain Pen, "absolutely perfect, guaranteed non-leakable" for $1.10 (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 266) to Faber's Comet Eraser, $.95 per dozen (Sears 1897 at 354).

One piece of office equipment not included in the 1897 Sears Roebuck Catalogue was the typewriter. However, typewriters could be found in the 1895 Montgomery Ward Catalogue. The Edison Mimeograph Typewriter, "a practical working machine" with steel type and a heavy manifold was available for $22.00 (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 224). Other typewriters, such as the American Typewriter, "a serviceable machine at a price far below other makes," were available as cheaply as $5.70 (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 40). The catalogue also featured such items as typewriter oil, type cleaning brushes, typewriter ribbons and carbon paper. Typewriters did appear in the 1902 Sears Catalogue, including the $22.50 Visible Writing Machine, "perfection, perfectly perfected, but simplicity, simply simplified" (Sears 1902 at 273).

Along with the typewriter came the typewriter cabinet, saving the typewriter from "being
constantly tipped over and so getting out of order.” The cabinet, “well made of solid oak, and highly hand-polished” cost $16.25 (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 609).

Polished oak office desks, tables and bookcases were also available, ranging in price from $7.50 to $23.00 (Sears 1897 at 652-4). A flat oak desk, five feet long and two feet six inches wide cost $11.70; the same sized roll-top desk, “perfect in every respect,” cost $25.00 (Montgomery Ward at 609).

One necessary office fixture was a steel safe. “You must want a safe,” decreed the 1897 Sears Catalogue. “Farmers, merchants and all business men require safes.” The largest safe in the Catalogue the number nine fireproof safe, “made of the best material” and “handsomely decorated,” which weighed 2100 pounds and stood forty-six and one-half inches high, thirty-two inches wide and twenty-nine and one-half inches deep (Sears 1897 at 97). It was available at a cost of $82.50, plus shipping. Smaller safes, such as the number two and three-quarters, which weighed 300 pounds and stood twenty-four inches high, were available for $13.25.

The 1897 Sears Catalogue noted that “the demand for telephones has so largely increased of late that we have been induced to give the matter special attention with a view to selecting a ‘phone which is strictly up-to-date, and at the same time one which can be furnished at a moderate cost” (Sears 1897 at 472). Telephones offered ranged from the Improved Long Distance Battery Telephone for $13.50 to the Desk Phone with Magneto Call Bells for $16.50.

None of the mail-order catalogues being discussed listed law books, however, several of the books included in these catalogues would have been of great value to the practicing lawyer. A complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica, “a complete library in itself,” could be purchased for $19.95 (Sears 1897 at 337). A twelve-volume set of the Universal Encyclopedia, “pre-eminently the encyclopedia for the businessman,” was available for $9.98 (Sears 1902 at 248). Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, which included an index of patents, cost $3.25 (Sears 1997 at 337). Sears’ mail-order competitor, Montgomery Ward, was selling Caskell’s Compendium of Business Forms, “educational, social legal and commercial,” for $2.80 plus $.48 for postage and Parson’s Laws of Business, “for all the States and Territories of the Union and the Dominion of Canada, with forms and directions for all transactions,” for $2.30 plus $.30 postage (Montgomery Ward 1895 at 43).

No Guilded-Age lawyer could go into court without wearing suitable attire. “Professional Mens Suits for Ministers, Doctors and Lawyers made in either the single breasted Prince Albert style or the standing collar clerical style” were available for prices ranging from $18.00 to $23.00 (Sears 1897 at 171). Men’s derby, “very nobby in appearance,” were an “extragood value” at $.98 each (Sears 1897 at 212).

There were, as Mr. Munson’s remarks quoted earlier indicate, relatively few women engaged in the practice of law in 1897. However, those who had entered the field could also obtain suitable courtroom attire through any one of the three catalogues. A “Very Stylish Ladies’ Suit, Bolero style, made of blue or black cheviot, newest sleeves, outer jacket trimmed all around with black mohair and silk, mixed gimp and lined with changeable silk” was available for $8.50 (Sears 1897 at 279). Ladies Minerva Undressed Suede Mousquetaire Gloves, “the finest gloves of the kind ever brought to this country,” cost $1.88 per pair (Sears 1897 at 230).

As amazing as many of these prices look to us today—particularly the prices for the solid oak furniture—it is necessary to place them in the proper context. The average annual income for a non-salaried lawyer in 1929 was $5,534.10 Salary figures for lawyers are not available for 1897, however based on the Composite Consumer Price Index the value of the American dollar more than doubled between 1897 and 1929.11 Assuming that salaries kept pace with the Price Index, the average yearly lawyer’s salary in 1897 would have been less than $2,700.

Despite the low catalogue prices for goods offered by Sears and Montgomery Ward, our 1897
lawyer would still have needed to watch his or her pennies!

NOTES

* Associate Law Librarian, University Libraries, The Dickinson School of Law of the Pennsylvania State University, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Because this is primarily a non-legal article citations are in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style.


6. The Supreme Court of the United States, in a four to three decision with two justices abstaining, upheld Bell's patents. The Telephone Cases, 126 U.S. 1 (1888).


ARCHIVISTS TO GATHER

ATTENTION ALL LAW SCHOOL ARCHIVISTS: Those persons interested in law school archives are invited to meet on Tuesday, July 13th at 7:30 PM. The group will gather near the front desk in the lobby of the Sheraton Boston Hotel (the headquarter hotel) on 39 Dalton St.

This meeting is part of an effort to organize an Archivist Caucus within the Legal History and Rare Books SIS. A variety of issues will be discussed at the meeting.

Anyone who cannot attend the meeting but who is interested in law school archives can contact Michele Pope at m pope@loyno.edu.
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*Compiled by Mark W. Podvia*

EXHIBIT AT BOSTON COLLEGE

The Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book Room at the Boston College Law Library is featuring an exhibit highlighting the Robert E. Brooker III Collection of American Legal and Land Use Documents: 1716-1930, which was recently donated to the school by Robert E. Brooker, III.

The collection contains approximately 2,500 documents and manuscripts. Focused primarily on Boston and the New England area and spanning two centuries, the Brooker Collection provides abundant opportunity for the study of early American land use and transfers, law and legal systems, town governance, family matters and daily life.

Documents include deeds of land and other property, contracts for goods and services, legal documents such as complaints, deposition testimony and wills, business papers such as invoices and receipts, and evidence of everyday life as glimpsed in letters and estate inventories. The exhibit features items from all of these categories and is loosely organized by themes: The Land, The Law, Commerce and Contracts, The Community, Living and Dying, and Odds and Ends. Highlights from the exhibit can be viewed at http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/about/rarebook/exhibitions/brooker/

The exhibit will remain on view through mid-July so those attending the AALL Annual Meeting will have a chance to see it.

HARVARD OPEN HOUSE

The Harvard Law School Library staff welcome you to join them for open-house style tours of the Law Library on the Tuesday afternoon of the AALL Annual Meeting, July 13, 2004. They will be offering tours lasting forty-five minutes to an hour, departing on the half-hour, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Designed for those unable to make the official Harvard Law School Library tour, these relaxed tours will include a viewing of both public and technical services work areas as well as an opportunity for questions and answers. For those who remember Langdell Hall from before the 1997 renovation, and for those who have not seen it at all, the short trip to Cambridge will be well worth your while. The spectacular Reading Room, nearly two football fields in length and several stories high, is considered by many to be the heart of the Law School.

There is no pre-registration necessary, but those wishing to attend should plan their own transportation to and from Harvard. Luckily,
Harvard University is easily accessible by subway (also known as the T). To get to Harvard University from the Hynes Convention Center T station, take the Green Line subway inbound to the Park Street Station (four stops). From there, change to a Red Line train (note the Red Line train to Harvard is marked Alewife), and take the train to the Harvard Square stop (four stops). The Law School is a ten-minute walk from the station.

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SEE YOU THERE!