

History of RIPS-SIS

The AALL Reader Services Special Interest Section (RS-SIS) was established in 1979. The focus of the SIS was on services to patrons including circulation issues, legal research and bibliographic instruction. The SIS “reached out to librarians engaged in direct patron services from all types of libraries.” [Email to author from Joan Shear, dated June 21, 2011] Projects worked on by RS-SIS included a bibliography of legal materials for the blind, repositories of teaching materials, a project on research competencies and establishment of topical roundtables at the annual meetings. RS-SIS was also active in proposing and sponsoring programs for the AALL Annual Conferences, often in conjunction with other SIS and committees.

In 1992, the Research Instruction Caucus (RIC) was established by Ellen Callinan with the focus of exploring and improving legal research instruction and the legal research skills of law students and lawyers. According to Ms. Callinan, one of the reasons for the need of the caucus was a belief held by some RIC members that RS-SIS was very academic focused and there was a desire to have a group that would “represent the interests of all types of libraries.” [RIPS-SIS History Project Survey, Response by Ellen Callinan] RIC began the National Legal Research Teach-In and established a clearinghouse of instructional materials, as well as developing Core Legal Research Competencies in response to the MacCrate Report.

After RIC was established, there was considered to be an overlap between RIC and RS-SIS, since they had similar interests and projects. As noted in the RS Newsletter, “RS consciously decided to table its own efforts in [legal research]. Although the decision to do so may have been interpreted by some members of RIC as a lack of concern with the teaching of legal research skills, in reality, it was to avoid the duplication of effort.” [Dennis Sears, Has the Time Arrived for a Name Change, RSLN Newsletter, December 1995 at 4] The relationship between the two groups was seen by some as adversarial because RS-SIS may have felt that “its most interesting work was being taken away by RIC.” [Phone interview with Darcy Kirk, March 10, 2011] There were also concerns that the special interest sections were splintering and too many small groups with specific, but overlapping interests were being formed. [id]

According to AALL requirements, caucuses can exist for three years before having to become more formal divisions of the organization. Therefore, in 1995, it was necessary for RIC to determine its next stage. According to the Agenda for the 1995 RIC Annual Meeting, there were three options considered: merging with an existing SIS, with RS-SIS and PLL-SIS specifically suggested; applying for SIS status; or dispersing RIC assets among existing groups. According to an article in the September 1995 RSLN Newsletter, members of RS-SIS, including the incoming Chair, Darcy Kirk, attended the RIC meeting and stressed “that the SIS was prepared to be as flexible as possible, so Caucus members could feel welcome and it's (sic) invaluable work could continue uninterrupted.” [Lee Ryan, Research Instruction Caucus to Consider Merger with Reader Services SIS, RSLN Newsletter, September 1995 at 4] Merger with RS-SIS was considered a good fit because there were overlapping interests and committees in the SIS into which projects of RIC could be placed. The three options were sent to the membership of RIC in the fall of 1995 for a vote and the decision was made to merge with RS-SIS. Discussions for the actual merger took place between Ellen Callinan and Darcy Kirk and key RIC projects, such as the Legal Research Teach-In, were brought over and continued with the same leadership.

One of the concerns expressed by members of RIC at the initial merger discussions during the 1995 annual meeting was the name Reader Services. It was thought to be outdated and would not accurately reflect the RIC's interests if the decision was made to merge. There was concern, not just among members of RIC, but also among existing members of RS-SIS, that the term 'reader services' had "become misinterpreted by general AALL membership." [Message from the Chair, RSSL Newsletter, September 1996 at 2] A few of the Newsletter's Message from the Chair solicited suggestions for a new name for the SIS. Some of the suggestions included User Services and Instruction, Research Services and Readers' Services and Research Instruction. In the end, Research Instructions and Patron Services was chosen because it best reflected the focus of the group. As stated by Duane Strojny in the Message from the Chair, "the name change truly reflects what our goal is: as a varied membership representing all types of libraries, we gather to discuss and implement programs that deal with legal research instruction and all areas of patron services including, but not limited to reference, circulation, interlibrary loan and document delivery." [Message from the Chair, RSSL Newsletter, September 1996 at 2] "The addition of the very academic phrase 'Patron Services' reflected the orientation of the former Reader Services SIS RIPS was expected to replace." [RIPS-SIS History Project Survey, Response by Ellen Callinan] In addition, Research Instructions and Patron Services "flowed better when the full name was spoken and the resulting acronym was catchy." [RIPS-SIS History Project Survey, Response by Gail Partin]

Following the merger, the RIC projects and committees were made part of existing SIS committees or developed into newly-created committees. RS-SIS created the Teach-In Committee, with co-chairs Karen Brunner and Gail Partin, to continue the work of the National Legal Research Teach-In, at that point in its fourth year. The RIC Clearinghouse continued and its maintenance was incorporated into the new Teach-In Committee. The [National Legal Research Teach-In](#) is a program that allows law librarians "the opportunity to share materials and ideas for legal research instruction. Each year the Teach-In committee creates a set of materials that can be used to design and advertise programs and events." [A Teach-In Retrospective –Tenth Anniversary Celebration! Call for Contributions, RIPS Law Librarian, Fall 2001 at 7] As stated on the Teach-In website, "by sharing the excellent resources designed by individual librarians, [the Teach-In can] empower all librarians to implement high quality training programs." With materials distributed each year for National Library Week, the Teach-In continues to be an active and important project of RIPS-SIS.

When RIC merged with RS-SIS, the [Core Legal Research Competencies](#) project "was in its early draft stages. [The RIPS-SIS Research Instruction Committee] completed the draft and submitted it to the AALL Board for approval." [RIPS-SIS History Project Survey, Response by Gail Partin] The draft of the Competencies was posted on the RIPS website and RIPS proposed a program for the Anaheim AALL annual meeting on the Competencies. While RIPS tried to get the report published through the AALL Publications Committee, as reported by Darcy Kirk, Chair of the Research Instruction Committee at the 2001 RIPS Business Meeting, AALL determined that having the Competencies available on the web was sufficient.

RIPS-SIS continued to develop new projects, such as a Student Training Manual for Circulation Desk Attendants and the Briefs in Law Librarianship. Spearheaded by Bobbie Studwell, the Briefs in Law Librarianship "was created to give authors a chance to write about topics of practical interest all librarians." [Bobbie Studwell, Become a "RIPS Writer, RIPS Law Librarian, Fall 2003 at 13] The Briefs

are based on material gathered through surveys sent out to RIPS members or to AALL listservs, as well as from sample documents solicited from survey respondents. Briefs have been completed in such diverse topics as food and drink policies, electronic reserves, law library restructuring and library liaison programs. [For more information, check out the [Briefs](#) website]

In 2006, RIPS produced its first annotated bibliography of legal research texts. Written by Lynn Murray, Marc Silverman and Christopher Vallandingham, the bibliography reviewed eleven legal research texts for factors such as intended audience, currency and unique features, as well as price and length. The purpose of the reviews was to help “instructors facing the task of selecting an appropriate legal research text for first years or upper-class students” and to “obviate the need to start from scratch in surveying and evaluating options.” [Research Text bibliography is Up!, RIPS Law Librarian, Spring 2006 at 9]. A revised and updated version of the bibliography was created in 2011, with reviews written by a number of different law librarians. To read all the book reviews, visit the [RIPS-SIS Legal Research Text Review](#) page.