



American Association of
Law Libraries

February 6, 2013

Hon. Randall T. Shepard
Chief Justice Indiana Supreme Court (Ret.)
Chair
ABA Task Force on the Future of Legal Education

Mr. Art Garwin
Deputy Director
American Bar Association
Center for Professional Responsibility

RE: American Bar Association's Task Force on Legal Education Request
for Comment on the Future of Legal Education

Dear Honorable Randall T. Shepard and Mr. Garwin:

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the ABA Task Force on the Future of Legal Education. Our comments address several of the themes put forth by the Subcommittee on Cost and Economics and the Subcommittee on the Delivery of Legal Education. We also respectfully request that AALL be included as a core constituency "that should be kept in mind in terms of input, impact and/or notifications regarding the Subcommittee's work." (Minutes, ABA Task Force on the Future of Legal Education, Subcommittee on Costs and Economics, Dec. 4, 2012.)

AALL is the national association of law librarians. AALL members already:

- Have the skill set to help law schools educate students who are ready to transition to practice;
- Have experience with innovative teaching methods based on adult education theory;
- Are familiar with the intricacies of outcomes assessment;
- Have the technological skills to innovate in connection with distance learning and the coming technological changes in law firm practice; and
- Collaborate with faculty, clinics and institutes.

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In some law schools, the skills that law librarians possess are already being utilized; in other law schools, law librarians are advocating for the opportunity to use those skills. In every law school, law librarians are willing and able to be responsive to the challenges that changes in the economy and the job market pose. There is no cost for taking advantage of the skills that law librarians positioned in law schools already possess.

Education of Law Students for Practice

Legal research is a mainstay of legal practice. Law librarians have studied legal research and legal research instruction as a distinct discipline. Law librarians are the experts on legal research at their institutions, and they are the primary source of legal research instruction in the legal academy. Whether through stand-alone 1L legal research courses, advanced legal research courses, or the delivery of targeted research training in seminar courses, law librarians train law students to be effective legal researchers. Many law librarians also speak on legal research and other practice-oriented topics as Continuing Legal Education (CLE) instructors for bar associations. Moreover, AALL has developed objective standards for the measurement of legal research skill, the [*AALL Legal Research Competencies and Standards for Law Student Information Literacy*](#).

Collaboration Skills

One of legal education's core goals should be educating law students to develop metacognitive skills in solving legal problems. This is particularly important since the old paradigm of employers training new lawyers in their early years of practice has eroded. Law librarians, like clinical faculty, teach experiential courses that model problem-solving and move law students towards metacognition. Law librarians can and do collaborate with clinical faculty, research associates and institutes, and doctrinal faculty to include aspects of experiential learning throughout the academy.

Innovative Teaching Methods

Law librarians have been studying learning theory, course design and information delivery for decades. In every library school, librarians are taught about information literacy and how best to teach students to do research. Law librarians have always been on the forefront of trying new and innovative teaching methods. Today, academic law librarians are employing techniques like flipped classrooms, collaborative learning models, online content delivery, problem-based teaching and more. Law librarians are well positioned to help move legal education forward through the adoption and development of innovative teaching techniques.

Information and Technology Skills

Law librarians possess the information and technology skills to prepare law students for the future. Lawyers historically have been slow to adapt and apply new technologies to the practice of law. This is changing, but many students often graduate without a practical understanding of new technology and information systems or of how to adapt to and evaluate new systems, such as Knowledge Management and Competitive Intelligence, as they are developed. Librarians have technology skills and the ability to learn new skills and teach them to students. Librarians also teach students the principles behind information and technology to enable them to adapt to future changes.

Outcomes Assessment

Law librarians are familiar with teaching practices that start with desired learning outcomes and use both formative and summative assessment to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved. As law schools focus more on measurable outcomes, law librarians are existing partners who can help faculty implement outcomes assessment for doctrinal classes.

Law librarians have historically kept statistics regarding outcomes. Those statistics have included circulation and reference desk use, patron entry, cataloging counts and surveys of patron satisfaction. Law librarians have developed methodologies for collecting the numbers and analyzing the results. Thus, law librarians are poised to be the leaders in law schools for gathering and assessing law school statistical numbers in all departments.

Law Librarians as Mentors

Law librarians support and assist law students in obtaining employment both during and following law school. Law librarians play a unique role in the education of law students and thus have the opportunity to provide mentoring and assistance in locating jobs. Whether teaching legal research, employing law students in the law library or staffing the reference desk in the law library, law librarians are approachable and accessible to law students. As a result, many law students are more comfortable asking career questions of law librarians. In addition, many law school librarians practiced law before becoming law librarians and thus know not only how to obtain an entry level position but also what skills are needed for those positions. Law librarians have the information that law students need about finding jobs as well as access to law students to share that knowledge. Law librarians also have the experience and knowledge to write detailed recommendations concerning students' abilities in a core skill, legal research.

Thank you very much for your consideration. AALL and its members are the recognized authority in all aspects of legal information. We look forward to working with the ABA task force in developing recommendations for the delivery of legal services and the provision of legal education.

Sincerely,



Jean M. Wenger
President



Kate Hagan
Executive Director

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) was founded in 1906 to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information. Today, with over 5,000 members, the Association represents law librarians and related professionals who are affiliated with a wide range of institutions: law firms; law schools; corporate legal departments; courts; and local, state and federal government agencies.

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