

## LEADER PROFILE

# PAYING IT FORWARD

Law librarianship isn't a career that comes to mind for most when they think about what they want to be when they grow up. Most who work in the field stumble upon it through guidance and encouragement from law librarians they meet during law school. That's exactly how Jocelyn Kennedy found herself turning away from a career as an attorney and looking toward a career in law librarianship.

**F**or Jocelyn Kennedy, having a career in higher education is her way of giving back to the librarians who served as a guiding force in her life as a law student. "The law librarians at Franklin Pierce Law Center (now University of New Hampshire School of Law) were such an active part of my law school community and I think of them very fondly," notes Kennedy. "They helped me so much while I was a law student that when I graduated, I wanted to pay that service forward, so I chose a career path in higher education."

While attending law school, the librarians encouraged Kennedy to think about a career in law librarianship. "I was in law school, so I wasn't going to be a librarian, I wanted to be a lawyer," notes Kennedy. "I kept thinking maybe when I'm fifty, I'll retire from law and I'll be a librarian." She graduated from law school in her early thirties and got a job clerking for the



New Hampshire Superior Court, where her days consisted of lots of writing and tons of research. “Working at the court, I saw the full spectrum of cases that end up before the courts one way or another, from divorce to murder cases. I realized then that I didn’t really want to practice law,” she said. Then she remembered law librarianship. “What drew me to the career was having worked in the law library during law school and really enjoying my experience there,” says Kennedy. She attended library school at the University of Washington. Her first job was at the University of Michigan,

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Jocelyn Kennedy

where she served as the faculty services librarian and then as head of circulation. From there she moved to the University of Connecticut (UCONN) where she served as director for library services, working with Darcy Kirk, former American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) president. She stayed in her position at UCONN for five years before taking her current position as executive director of the Harvard Law School Library, a position she has held since June 2016.

Kennedy has been a member of AALL since 2005, serving on a number of association groups, including the Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL), the Academic Law Libraries Special Interest Section (SIS), Social Responsibilities SIS, Council of SIS Chairs, and Research Instruction & Patron Services SIS, to name but a few. She has also attended 11 AALL Annual Meetings and serves on the Economic Status of Law Librarians Committee.

Here, she discusses changes in the field, what skills law librarians should have, and what the future of legal education will look like.

#### **JOCELYN KENNEDY**

- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- HARVARD LAW SCHOOL LIBRARY
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#### **What do you most enjoy about your job?**

The thing I love about working in the academic field that I may not have gotten if I worked in another area of law librarianship is being part of a community of active learners. We contribute to the future legal profession by engaging with students and helping them learn. I like being at the beginning of someone’s career and helping to push them along to become the best lawyers they can be.

#### **What’s a typical day at the office like?**

Most of my days are spent in meetings. There are 11 departments in the library, so I spend a lot of my time talking with people, working on projects, helping them problem solve, and asking lots of questions. I also spend a fair amount of my time engaged with other members of the law school administrative departments. I have a deeply entwined relationship with the Harvard Library, so I am frequently in meetings at that library as well. When the work day is over, I sit down and do the things that require me to pay attention to a screen, such as writing and budgeting. My average day is spent in communication with others, whether formally at meetings or informally while I walk through the library. The real magic of our library happens at the staff level, not at my level. The other thing I do is try not to be a bottleneck and instead let my staff do their jobs to make this one of the best libraries in the world.

#### **How do you stay abreast of changes in the field?**

I read AALL publications such as *AALL Spectrum* and *Law Library Journal*. I also read a variety of legal tech blogs, some that come out of the American Bar Association (ABA), as well as some others. I also read blogs designed for startups and creative fields. Finally, I read the newspaper. Mostly I talk to people. I see the head of our career planning office pretty regularly: he has a better sense of how things are changing in the legal field. I recently worked with a group at the University of Washington, helping to evaluate their law librarianship program and how to move it forward. I was given the opportunity to converse with recent library graduates and got the chance to learn what they are interested in and what their educational

## QUICK HITS WITH JOCELYN KENNEDY



### ebooks or print?

Print for nonfiction, ebooks for fiction

### iPhone or Android?

Android

### Words to live by?

Kindness is free.

### Favorite book to binge read?

Young adult fantasy books; I will read every series. I read five or six fiction books a week. Right now I'm reading the *Harry Potter* series again, but I

would also recommend *The Gathering of Shadows*; it's a three-book series by V.E. Schwab.

### Favorite travel destination?

Anywhere that's sunny and warm!

### Favorite type of takeout?

Pizza

### Guilty pleasure?

I try not to feel guilty about anything!

they get to college the assumption is made that they learned these skills in high school, so no one is teaching them when they are at the university level. By the time they get to us, they have never picked it up. Since there are so many access points for information now, and much of that information is not curated, it is becoming obvious that students aren't reading deeply. Did they learn this behavior because they are exposed to so much information that they can't possibly keep up? I don't think so. We are failing to teach information literacy to them in primary and secondary school. I have talked with teachers from primary and secondary school generally and they confirm that students aren't getting information literacy in the way they would have 20 years ago. I also have three people in my family between the ages of 17 and 22. All three of them will have finished high school without having learned information literacy. The question I pose to every law librarian out there is "What are we going to do about this?"

experience was like, so that was an interesting perspective to get.

### Have you noticed any educational trends in recent years?

I don't actually think that the way we educate lawyers has changed significantly. We're certainly seeing more uptick in experiential learning as required by the ABA. More schools are trying to figure out what experiential learning is past the clinic experience, and every law school is struggling to figure out how to meet that standard. At all three institutions I have worked at, I have noticed students are coming to law school with less experience with critical analysis and critical thinking, which is impacting their ability to do legal research. That's an interesting trend for how our students are showing up in the classroom. But fundamentally, I don't see the core of legal education changing.

### Why do you think students are showing up without some of these fundamental skills?

I've thought a lot about this, and I think that changes in primary and secondary education and the de-emphasis on using and funding school libraries is impacting students who make their way to law school. As you de-fund public and school libraries, kids aren't exposed to those critical thinking skills, particularly related to information and information literacy. When

### What skills are in high demand in law librarianship?

We are still doing very traditional library tasks. From the academic librarianship perspective, we are looking for people who are creative problem solvers and who are interested in moving across job categories. They need to possess soft skills and have an interest in learning different aspects of librarianship. They should also have the ability to code in some way, or at least have an understanding of what code is and how to use it, along with the ability to manipulate information.

We anticipate many of our users will be working with big data in meaningful ways, so we need to be able to understand what they're doing and work with them. It would also be helpful to know how to create and work with metadata. Having the skill set to understand and work with metadata and the ability to apply categorization and taxonomies to electronic information will become increasingly more important.

### How do you anticipate legal education will change in the next few years?

I think there will be fewer law schools. We have already seen a few law schools close and I think there is going to be a recalibration of what it means to teach law and what it means to be a law school. This will probably affect smaller schools first and then trickle up to the bigger

schools. The experiential aspect of legal education has been the biggest trend and this will continue. The next trend would be the use of technology. The legal profession—for lawyers, not librarians—is behind the curve in terms of fully utilizing technology, and you're going to see that coming into law schools and then out into the law firms increasingly over time.

Two law schools in Minnesota, Hamline and William Mitchell, merged back in 2015 in order to stay open and I think we will be seeing more of that. The fact is, there are too many law schools and not enough people attending. The numbers are starting to shift, but it's also very expensive to run a school. Many independent law schools are struggling to get candidates and law schools that are part of universities aren't generating enough income. Unfortunately, higher education financial woes are universal, so these factors all come into play.

### **How has participation in AALL impacted your career or leadership capabilities?**

I met all of my librarian friends through AALL. My peer group, people I socialize with that are in my profession and who I call when I need help, are all people I met through the Association. I also found all my jobs through the Career Center at AALL, so that's had a direct impact on my career. In terms of leadership, I attended the AALL Management Institute, which was a great opportunity for me to learn some leadership skills. I also joined CONELL pretty soon after entering the profession and ended up serving as the chair for two years in a row within the first five years of my librarianship career. I was on CONELL for a total of five years, so I automatically had a 500-person network. I also served as chair of the Academic Law Libraries SIS; leading an SIS was amazing and I never would have done something like that before my membership with AALL.

### **What career advice would you give to newer law librarians?**

Law librarianship is changing. In general, this is a constantly evolving career path. Advice I would give to those entering the profession is that they need to be flexible and have a willingness and ability to learn new things and pivot very quickly. Just looking back over the past five years you can see rapid changes in how we acquire information, how catalogs work on the public end, and the kinds of services our

patrons are demanding, and you have to be willing, able, and ready to shift your mind-set and change how you do your work at any time. I don't know that we all have that ability. Don't enter this profession if you think it's going to be the same job for the next 30 years—if it ever was like that, those days are long gone.

I was at a talk recently with an urban landscape professor who said that he no longer assigns readings. His students weren't reading, so he now requires them to go out and talk to people as a way to learn. The thing he was most horrified to learn was that his students were afraid to make a phone call to set up interviews, and he discovered it was because they were afraid the person was going to say no. It's easier to get a 'no' through email than over the phone. This was really eye-opening to hear about, but I think it's true. This younger generation needs to learn how to communicate with the public and their peers, especially in law librarianship, where the majority of what we do is interact and communicate with others.

### **What basic skills should attorneys possess today?**

They need basic office skills, as anyone in a law firm setting will tell you. They need to be able to make a phone call, they need to talk to clients and sit across the table from them, and they need to know how to supervise someone. They may not have a paralegal they directly supervise, but they will have people working under them and they need to be able to understand what that relationship is like and how to manage it. Additionally, the ability to find, manage, and use information in the most effective way and not stop at the surface, which I fear is what some people are doing, is critical. The ABA placed such an emphasis on experiential learning in the hope that part of what law students learn is not just good advocacy, but also the business of law—the day-to-day aspects of being a lawyer. At the academic level, we teach students what they need to know to be good attorneys and how to think like lawyers, but it's the rest of the work they still need to learn. I would love to be able to say new attorneys need to understand technology and how to manipulate artificial intelligence—and all of that is coming faster than we may anticipate—but none of those skills will do them any good if they can't, for example, make a phone call. ■