TACKLING LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

CREATING BEST PRACTICES

f "Best Practices" are generally accepted standards we follow to produce the best results, what do we do when, for whatever reason, there doesn't appear to be a generally accepted best practice? If you are like me, one of the things you will do is try to find out what your colleagues are doing.

One of my summer projects is to start building a new class I'll be teaching in spring 2019 on law practice technology. The class is not just new to me, but to my law school as well. I'm not feeling super-confident in my ability to teach this class, but I made the decision to do so because I think this is a critical area for students to learn.

As of May 14, 2018, 31 states have adopted an ethical duty of technology competency. Florida is requiring technology-specific continuing legal education credits. The North Carolina Bar Association has recommended a similar require-ment to the state supreme court. We can't let this issue go unaddressed.

There don't appear to be widely accepted best practices for teaching legal technology. What should be covered? What kind of readings and exercises should be assigned? What is the right answer to the debate over whether we should be teaching law students to code? Luckily, as The Beatles sang, "I get by with a little help from my friends." A small number of law librarians have been teaching a similar class for quite some time, and recently, more and more are taking up the task. I've attended conference sessions, read arti-cles and books, looked at bar association materi-als, and overwhelmed colleagues with questions about what they are doing. The American Bar Association has a Legal Technology Resource Center (bit.ly/JA18ABAtech), and John Mayer, of CALI (The Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction) fame, has started a Teaching Legal Technology to Law Students Special Interest Group and is hosting a fabulous clearinghouse for legal technology course materials and other related resources. (Learn more at bit.ly/JA18LegalTech.) These are just a few of the helpful resources available.

I have also enlisted the help of a wonderful co-teacher from the State Bar of Georgia to help me generate ideas. However, we are in the early stages of developing best practices in this area. People are innovating and developing creative techniques, but we don't seem to have reached a consensus on the best way to teach legal technology. In order to assess our progress and develop benchmarks, we need to study the efficacy of different techniques and assess which ones produce the best outcomes for our students and future attorneys.

As you read this issue of *AALL Spectrum,* think about an issue that you and your institution has that could benefit from some yet-to-be-developed best practices. How are you going to determine your approach and measure the results? In this issue, there are some great ideas on bottom-up goal setting, communicating the value of Technical Services, techniques for first-time authors, and using technology to instigate change. This issue also includes profiles of the winners of the AALL Andrews, Gallagher, and Hall of Fame awards, highlighting people who have been helping shape best practices in our profession and challenging us to innovate when needed.

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