AALL COMPETENCIES OF LAW LIBRARIANSHIP

Please note the Body of Knowledge replaced the Competencies of Law Librarianship at the Executive Board Meeting, July 15, 2022, Tab 9.

Revised by the Executive Board April 2010, Tab 17

The American Association of Law Libraries seeks to define the profession of law librarianship and its value to the legal field, today and in the future, by identifying, verifying, and actively promoting competencies of law librarianship. Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics that help distinguish superior performance. [1] These competencies may be acquired through higher education such as library and information science graduate programs [2], through continuing education, and through experience. The first section, "Core Competencies", includes those that apply to all law librarians, and will be acquired early in one's career. The subsequent sections are related to specific areas of practice. Some law librarians (for example, solo librarians or librarians in smaller institutions) may have multiple responsibilities and need to be proficient in more than one of the "Specialized Competencies." Other law librarians may specialize in just one area or in a subset of one area. Individual librarians may use the AALL Competencies for coordinating their continuing education as they identify areas for professional growth. Employers may use the Competencies to make hiring, evaluation and promotion decisions, and to make recommendations for professional development. The American Association of Law Libraries uses the Competencies as a framework within which to structure professional development programs. This framework provides guidance to ensure that the programs offered will assist law librarians in attaining and maintaining the skills or knowledge necessary for their current and future work.

1 CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Competencies apply to all law librarians.

1.1 Demonstrates excellent service to users and evidences a strong commitment to continual service improvement by participating in regular training and by collecting, evaluating, and responding to user satisfaction data.

1.2 Recognizes and addresses the diverse nature of the library's users and community.

1.3 Understands, supports, and contributes positively to the evolution of the culture and context of the library and its parent institutions.

1.4 Demonstrates knowledge of the legal system and the legal profession.

1.5 Understands the social, political, economic, and technological context in which the legal system exists.

1.6 Demonstrates knowledge of library and information science theory and the creation, organization, and delivery of information within its technological context.

1.7 Adheres to the Ethical Principles of the American Association of Law Libraries and supports the shared values of librarianship. [3]

1.8 Exhibits leadership skills including critical thinking, risk taking, creativity, negotiation, collaboration, and change management.

1.9 Demonstrates commitment to working with others to achieve common goals.

1.10 Acts within the organization to implement the principles of information management.

1.11 Exhibits an understanding of the importance of a multidisciplinary and cross-functional approach to programs and projects within the organization.

1.12 Shares knowledge and expertise with users and colleagues.

1.13 Displays excellent communication skills and is able to promote the library and advocate for its needs.

1.14 Communicates effectively with publishers and other information providers to advance the interests of the library.

1.15 Recognizes the value of professional networking and actively participates in professional associations and online communities.

1.16 Actively pursues personal and professional growth through continuing education.

SPECIALIZED COMPETENCIES

Specialized Competencies relate to specific areas of practice.

2 LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

2.1 Engages in a continual process of long-range planning.

2.2 Manages all financial resources, including planning and implementing budgets.

2.3 Selects, supervises, and evaluates library personnel, and provides for their training and development.

2.4 Understands the principles of project management and organizes people and resources to accomplish complex tasks.

2.5 Determines and articulates the applicable criteria for delivery of library services, and measures and evaluates the quality of those services.

2.6 Ensures the optimal use of library facilities to accommodate the evolving needs of users and staff.

2.7 Provides leadership, including negotiation and collaboration with relevant members of the organization, to ensure that the library is vital to the parent organization.

2.8 Maintains an understanding of trends, developments, new tools, and emerging technologies in publishing and the information industry.

2.9 Tracks, anticipates, and influences changes in policy and legislation that impact the library and the profession.

2.10 Promotes and markets the library's services and collections in ways consistent with the needs and mission of the organization.

3 REFERENCE, RESEARCH, AND CLIENT SERVICES

3.1 Provides skilled and customized reference services, including specialized subject services on legal and non-legal topics.

3.2 Evaluates the quality, authenticity, accuracy, and cost of information resources in a variety of formats best suited to the user's needs and conveys the importance of these to the user.

3.3 Assists users with legal research using information resources in a variety of formats best suited to the user's needs.

3.4 Consistent with applicable codes assists non-lawyers in accessing the law.

3.5 Aggregates content from a variety of sources and synthesizes information to create customized products for users.

3.6 Creates research and bibliographic tools on legal and related topics in a variety of media.

3.7 Monitors trends in specific areas of the law.

3.8 Monitors and participates in trends in library resource sharing.

4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

4.1 Understands the practical application of creating, accessing, and managing information including databases, integrated library systems, client-server applications, hardware, software, web applications, mobile applications, networks, and electronic information resources.

4.2 Evaluates the need for new and emerging technologies and implements required changes.

4.3 Conducts long-range planning and policy formulation for technology services and training needs.

4.4 Evaluates, purchases, implements, and tests software and hardware necessary for accessing electronic information.

4.5 Assists and educates users and colleagues in the use of the library's information systems, both internal and external.

4.6 Diagnoses and resolves library hardware, software, local area network, website and Internet connectivity problems.

4.7 Develops, creates, and maintains the library's online presence.

4.8 Determines technology training needs of users through observation, discussion, and the use of needs assessment tools, and provides training to meet those needs.

4.9 Understands the importance of information technology standards and prefers standards-compliant information technologies

5 COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Creates collection development policies intended to meet the needs of users and to the overall mission of the parent organization.

5.2 Makes selection decisions in consideration of all relevant factors, including the library's collection development policy, differences among formats, costs of purchase, upkeep, licensing, and copyright.

5.3 Evaluates information resources in all formats, integrates them to meet the needs of users, and discards or archives them as appropriate.

5.4 Understands the acquisition and management of a diverse collection of legal and non-legal resources. Understands the principles of copyright, licensing, purchasing, and accounting, and creates procedures respecting these issues consistent with the procedures of the parent organization.

5.5 Applies appropriate preservation practices to the library's collection.

6 CATALOGING

6.1 Ensures the optimal arrangement of and access to the library's resources to meet the needs of users.

6.2 Improves the power and scope of library services through resource sharing.

6.3 Selects and implements an appropriate level of descriptive cataloging, classification, and subject analysis to meet the needs of the institution and the nature of its legal materials.

6.4 Creates, selects, and manages catalog records according to national standards and accepted practices.

6.5 Selects, implements, and continually improves an integrated library system appropriate to the needs of the institution's users.

7 TEACHING

7.1 Determines the educational needs of users through observation, discussion, and needs assessment tools.

7.2 Effectively teaches library users and colleagues with differing needs and technological skill levels.

7.3 Knows and applies the principles of adult learning.

7.4 Designs curricula and teaches to meet the educational needs of users and evaluates the educational process for effectiveness.

7.5 Educates users in cost-effective and efficient methods of legal research.

7.6 Provides training and guidance on the organization and use of legal resources in various formats.

7.7 Trains users in commercial research databases, coordinating with vendors where appropriate.

7.8 Promotes the effective use of new resources and technologies for the retrieval of information.

7.9 Prepares and packages materials such as bibliographies, pathfinders, training scripts, podcasts, webinars, and handouts.

[1] Kenneth H. Pritchaerd, CCP. Society for Human Resource Management White Paper, August 1997, reviewed April 1999.

[2] See "AALL Guidelines for Graduate Programs", November 1988; AALL Professional Development Policy, July 1996

[3] American Association of Law Libraries Ethical Principles, 1999