

## BLENDING THE LIBRARY & THE LAW

As Ross Geller taught us in that famous *Friends* episode, sometimes in life, and when moving couches, we need to pivot. In 2020, I took Ross' advice and pivoted professionally, so to speak, and it was a great decision. For over 12 years prior, I had served as a staff attorney in a state trial court. In this role I was a political appointee, and after three election cycles, I knew it was time for a change.



In January 2020, I accepted a position as a public services law librarian at the University of Mississippi School of Law. While I had been in the practice of law since 2003, I began my academic career without an advanced library degree. This was professionally scary. The learning curve on circulation, collection development, and organic library functions has been steep, to say the least; however, with the help of my dual degreed director and colleagues, I have found my proverbial home in the law library.

Librarians with a juris doctorate (JD) within our program teach legal research to first-year students. In the last year, my colleague and I were given the unique opportunity to revamp the first-year legal research curriculum to provide hands-on practical experience while maintaining the foundational bibliographical methodology. I found myself leaning into my previous experience supervising interns and law clerks in creating a course that blends the nuts and bolts of legal research with real-world application. For example, the curriculum has maintained the traditional subjects of hierarchy of authority, secondary sources, and primary sources, but we incorporated an individual student research assessment, which gives students an opportunity to verbally present research outcomes. This individual meeting allows students to practice presenting research findings verbally, like they would in a law firm or clerkship.

While working back to full in-person programming, I am also focused on intermixing traditional library resources with practical applications. This includes guest class lectures demonstrating HeinOnline, the *Index to Legal Periodicals and Books*, and Bloomberg to students writing academic legal papers and workshops on research tools in specific jurisdictions.

Initially I considered my career path outside the library as a liability, nonetheless, now I view it as an asset. After two and a half years, I can say that law libraries at an academic institution should be a place of blending the academic and legal world. Embracing this concept has led me to a place of professional growth and happiness which, in turn, has enriched my learning environment.

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