



LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH LIBRARIANS

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Chair's Column

by Susan Southworth, Connecticut
LRL Chair

How apt the Burns quotation: "No man can tether time or tide." Indianapolis seems more like two weeks than two months ago...and now our PDS in Sacramento is just around the corner!

Those of us able to attend Annual Meeting were kept busy with interesting programs reported on later in this issue. My personal thanks to Marian Rogers and Debbie Tavenner for answering my call for volunteers to head the roundtable. In a collegial and supportive atmosphere, we alternately shared information and revealed our ignorance - what a relief to know we are not alone! I wish more of us could have participated; we need to incorporate time for such discussions at the more heavily attended professional development seminars. Isn't this what networking is all about?

The LSCC Task Force on Promoting and Developing Professionalism is hoping to write an article for *State Legislatures* on "staff exchanges," to encourage legislative staff to utilize the expertise available within our own ranks. They have asked that we survey our staff sections for instances of such staff exchanges. These might be problem-solving site visits or just information sessions on policies or procedures in place or anticipated. Although I know they mean circumstances beyond a question posted on the listserv, I'd appreciate a broad interpretation that I can pare down, rather than the other way around. Please email or write me any experiences you've had tapping other states' legislative staff as resources. Please also see the article on [staff exchanges](#).

The legislative intent/history disk that LRL produced in 1996 needs extensive updates. An updated version could be added to

the LRL Web page. Is anyone out there interested in a new legislative history project? Please call me or [Rita Thaumert](#) at NCS if you want to help or if you have questions.

I'm looking forward to seeing **many** of you in October. Irene Stone, John Jewell and team have put together a terrific technology-oriented program in keeping with our joint meeting with [NALIT](#). Since librarians are, in my opinion, the most experienced and critical users of our respective information technology departments' products, this should be a great opportunity for the two groups to interact. Get those registration forms in right away!



Professional Development Seminar

October 14-16
Sacramento, California

Thursday, October 14

8:00 am-9:00 am Registration at the Hyatt

9:00 am-10:15 am Keynote Address: John C. Dvorak (joint with NALIT)

10:30 am-noon Tour of the Capitol

12 noon-1:15 pm Lunch with Bill Behnk
"The Digital Age in State Capitols"

1:30 pm-2:45 pm Tour of the California Data Center

3:00 pm-4:30 pm "Legislative Reference: Our History, Our Dream, Our Challenge"
Presenter: Dr. Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California

6:00 pm LRL Dutch Treat Dinner

Friday, October 15

8:30 am-9:45 am Tour of the California Historical Museum

10:30 am-12 noon Legislative Reference in a Digital Age
Presenters: Anne Lipow, CEO of
Library Solutions
Donna Scheeder, Congressional Research Service

12 noon Lunch Roundtable with NALIT

1:30 pm-3:15 pm Resources Beyond our Walls:
The Library of California and Similar State-wide Library Consortia
Presenter: Mark Parker
Technology Consultant
California State Library

3:30 pm-5:00 pm Building the Virtual Library:
The California Digital Library
Presenter: John Ober, Assistant Director Education and Communication California Digital Library University of California

5:00 pm-8:00 pm Dinner at the California
Railroad Museum

Saturday, October 16

9:00 am-11:30 am Continental Breakfast and LRL Business Meeting at the Hyatt

1:00 pm-5:00pm Bus Trip to Nevada City, including historical library.



Annual Meeting Indianapolis, Indiana July 24-28, 1999

Congress on the Web

Sunday, July 25

by Anne Rottmann, Missouri

Dynamic Donna Scheeder of the Congressional Research Service provided the audience with useful sources on the Web, designed to help us perform our jobs with greater efficiency and ease. Her presentation focused on tracking federal information. She recommended several Websites, and the following are just some of her recommendations and the useful information they contain.

Thomas (thomas.loc.gov) is the best first stop for information on federal legislation. Thomas hotlinks to all documents that are related to legislation. It is archived back to 1990. Thomas also provides hotlinks to several federal government agencies such as GPO, GAO, and CBO.

GPO Access (www.access.gpo.gov) is recommended for text of bills. They are usually the first to put up the full text. GPO Access also provides histories of bills back to 1983.

If you are looking for the status of current nominations or treaties, the U.S. Senate pages will give you that information (www.senate.gov/legislative/legis_act.html). The Senate homepage and House homepage (www.house.gov) will provide you with links to the hearing schedules of House and Senate Committees. Each committee maintains its own hearing schedule. All 535 members of Congress have Webpages, and they are also accessible from the Senate and House homepage. Frequently these member homepages will provide links to their state sources on the Web. Leadership pages, also accessible from the Senate and House homepages, provide party information. Voting records are attainable through Vote Smart (www.votesmart.com).

Cspan maintains a searchable site called Capitol Questions (www.cspan.org/questions) that has questions and answers about Congress. You can email a question to them and they will answer you.

For information about former members who have died and where they are buried, Donna showed us the Political Graveyard (www.politicalgraveyard.com) which not only provides information about where the member is buried, but where they were born, a little about their families and lists of members who died in various wars.

To find out about campaign contribution information, visit Vote Smart or the Federal Elections Commission's Websites. (www.fec.gov)

For those of us who are always looking for Congressional Research Service reports, Donna pointed us to Gary Price's site (www.qwis2.circ.qwu.edu/~gprice/crs.htm). He maintains links to all reports that are available on the Net.

Thanks Donna, your programs are always informative.





LRL in the Indiana capitol Senate chamber



Legal Research on the Internet

Monday, July 26

by Marilyn Guttromson Johnson, North Dakota

Back by special request. Genie Tyburski, Research Librarian for the Philadelphia law firm of Ballard spahr Andres & Ingersoll, LLP, manages the *Virtual Chase: A Research Site for Legal Professionals* (<http://www.virtualchase.com/>). Genie's presentation at the LRL Professional Development Seminar in Harrisburg generated so much enthusiasm, she was invited to present at the Annual Meeting. Her program, Legal Research on the Internet, drew a parallel between research techniques in the paper world and on the Web. Techniques valid on both planets include catalogs. One Web catalog is *Infomine*, which provides government-based Websites for annotations to high-quality resources. Research guides such as *Virtual Chase* annotate links to legal sources like *Prairienet* for access to full text state statutes, constitutions and sessions laws. Asking an expert is another research technique. *Findlaw LegalMinds* opens the door to a list of law discussion groups. Browsing the Web also qualifies as a research technique.

In discussing research using the Internet, Genie discounted common myths:

1. All information exists on the Internet. Historical data, particularly, may not always be available on the Web. A careful researcher understands the role of interest groups in the Internet.
2. You do not have to pay for anything on the Internet. Fee-based sites are a growing reality. In many cases, they work better as information sources than the free sites.
3. Searching the Web, you find all or most of the data available on a subject. Studies show that is not true, and over the years is becoming less true. Search engines cannot collect the data as fast as it is provided; search engines cannot encounter data that is secure. Search engines are not indexes, they are databases. In the category of "next generation" search engines, Genie recommended [Google](http://www.google.com) as one the best.

In using data from the Internet, researchers must consider objectivity, accuracy, authenticity, verification and timeliness/expediency. Genie reminded users to view the Web with a healthy skepticism, remembering that anyone can publish on the Internet and that technology facilitates trickery. Checking dates and sources before relying on Internet resources is crucial to reliable research.

Immediately following the presentation on legal research, Genie talked about the Web specifically to school teachers from Project Citizen. Her analysis on the quality of information accuracy and authenticity drove home the point again that users must review the data they select. Though information is on a computer screen, it may not necessarily be complete, true or up to date.



LRL Business Meeting

Tuesday, July 27

by Johanne Greer, Maryland

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m., Indiana time.

Welcome

A warm welcome was extended to all of the Legislative Research Librarians who were able to attend Annual Meeting. Thanks to the West Group for sponsoring the wonderful lunch.

Congratulations

The 1999 Legislative Staff Achievement Awards were acknowledged. Marilyn Guttromson Johnson, North Dakota, received the award for outstanding support for an individual. Lynda Davis accepted the award for Maryland Library and Information Services for outstanding institution.

Donna Scheeder

Congressional Research Service

Donna, who is active in the International Federation of Library Associations spoke to the group about IFLA. She told us the 2001 annual meeting will be in Boston and invited us all to participate. She emphasized the importance of networking with international colleagues.

1999 Notable Documents Awards

Dale Steele accepted the Notable Documents Award for the *Arizona Blue Book*, and Karen Johnson, NCSL, accepted on behalf of the South Carolina Legislative Information Systems for their URL. The awards committee members, Deb Priest, New York, chair; Nancy Hays, Texas; Anne Craig, Illinois; and Cathy Griffin, Arizona, did an excellent job of judging the entries.

Core Collection Committee

The new Core Collection list will be available to the Professional Development Seminar. Thanks to the committee, Johnetta Douglas, Iowa, chair; David Harrell, Oregon; Beth Furbush, Montana; Dale Steele, Arizona; and Marilyn Guttromson Johnson, North Dakota.

Host State Guide

A copy of the Host State Guide, prepared by Anne Rottmann, was sent to Irene Stone in California and Joyce Grimes in South Carolina.

Professional Development Seminar

Irene Stone discussed the preliminary agenda for PDS in Sacramento. It sounds great. This year's theme will be Legislative Reference in a Digital Age.

Nominating Committee Report

The committee, who's members include Jonetta Douglas, Iowa; Marilyn Guttromson Johnson, North Dakota; and Tracy Kimball, New Mexico; nominated Nan Bowers, Nevada, to be the LRL's incoming secretary. She graciously accepted.

Other Business

Susan Southworth took over as chair of the LRL staff section for 1999-2000. Her first duty was to present a certificate to Anne Rottmann, in honor of her outstanding work as chair. It was noted that Irene Stone, California, was one of the original founders of the LRL staff section. Nancy Quesada is leaving her position at the Texas Legislative Reference Library to become a school librarian. John Phelps, Florida, NCSL staff chair, and Diane Bolender, Iowa, NCSL staff vice chair, came to the meeting and spoke briefly about their visions for the future of NCSL and legislatures as a whole.



LRL Annual Meeting bridal shower guests

LRL Roundtable Discussion

Wednesday, July 28

by Susan Southworth

After moving the tables previously set for a crowd of 75 into a more congenial arrangement, 10 hardy and dedicated souls contributed to the roundtable, during the very **last** time slot of Annual Meeting. Now that's commitment!

Marian Rogers, Wisconsin, opened a discussion on state documents depository program impact on legislative libraries. Conversation ranged from space considerations (partial vs. full? retention schedules?) to the omnipresent question of how to identify and claim renegade items, and enforce compliance by uninterested state agencies. Wisconsin sends a letter to invoke the depository law, Connecticut incorporates the statutory requirement as boiler plate language in specific legislation.

Of course, space issues spawned conversation on archiving materials onto compact disc. Jonetta Douglas, Iowa, has had positive results working with a Canofile scanner. As usual, they have no additional staff for the project, so are scanning as time permits. Jane Peterson, Utah, has had an imaging system in place since 1985 (definitely a pioneer, along with Texas).

Debbie Tavenner, Ohio, coordinated the second major topic, library catalogs on the Internet. Ohio uses InMagic (with MARC records, no less!) but not yet in a Web environment. After a lengthy and informative debate over definitions, we determined that several of us have LAN or intranet catalogs for our users, but few are actually available on the Internet yet. Most of us had only modest experience in this realm, so the discussion helped us formulate the questions as many times as it answered them. Debbie suggested a couple of good articles: "Web based OPACs: Between tradition and innovation," Information Technology and Libraries, June 1999 p.68-; "Web based catalogs," Online, June-July 1998, p. 98-.

Again, my sincere thanks to our roundtable moderators for all their work, and for providing a wonderful program.



1999 Notable Document Awards

Arizona Blue Book

Arizona Secretary of State

Dilemma in the Millennium

Capital Needs of the World's Capital City
Comptroller of the City of New York

Insurance Discrimination

Against Victims of Domestic Violence
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence and
Women's Law Project

Serial Award

Perspectives
New York State Assembly Committee on Ways and Means

URL Award

<http://www.leginfo.state.sc.us>
South Carolina Legislative Information Systems

Special Award for Consistently Outstanding and Comprehensive Quality of Publications:

Montana Environmental Quality Council
Texas Legislative Budget Board



Request for Information on Staff Exchanges and Legislator Exchanges

NCSL's Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee has endorsed a project to collect information on legislator and legislative staff exchanges. Steve Klein, Fiscal Officer for the Vermont General Assembly, and Ron Snell of NCSL are staffing this project, and are asking for assistance from legislative staff in all the states, as follows:

A number of state legislatures have made use of legislators and staff from surrounding states. These exchanges typically center

on a particular issue or legislative activity. In an effort to see how widespread this phenomenon is and develop an article for *State Legislatures* magazine, we ask that you let us know of any staff or legislator exchanges that have occurred in your state.

Some examples of staff exchanges are:

- Vermont has sent executive staff to Montana to look at a finance and management information system and legislative clerk's office staff have utilized Louisiana clerk's assistance on a change over of a word processing system.
- North Carolina and Toronto, Canada, exchanged legislative staff to compare procedures, operations and legislative services generally. North Carolina is sending staff to Louisiana to look at electronic voting systems.
- The Clerk of the Virginia Senate is considering bringing in staff of nearby states to observe and comment on procedures.
- Alabama's legislative staff visited Mississippi and Alabama to look at chamber automation.

Legislator exchanges are numerous, often to testify on a piece of legislation. We have also seen them used in other ways. Vermont brought in a legislator from Michigan to help with committee chair training. Again, we would be interested in examples of interstate exchanges among legislators.

Please respond to Ron Snell at the NCSL Denver office -- ron.snell@ncsl.org - with any examples of such exchanges in your states.



What's New?

Congratulations to Marilyn Guttromson, North Dakota, who in June, became Mrs. Eldo Johnson. New e-mail address is marjohns@state.nd.us Annual Meeting attendees held a small bridal shower in Indianapolis for Marilyn and Eldo, a fine opportunity to express LRL's appreciation for her participation over many years.



The bride and groom

LRL welcomes Tracy Bobo from Mississippi's Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review Committee.



NCSL Publications

Copies of all NCSL publications listed here are available from the Marketing Department at 303/364-7700, unless otherwise noted.

Books

HIV/AIDS Facts to Consider

International Fuel Tax Agreement Legislation and State Constitutional Provisions Project Final Report

Substance Abuse Treatment Coverage in State Medical Programs

The Ethics Process in State Legislatures: Disciplining Members in a Public Forum

Legislative Staff Services: 50 State Profiles 1998

LegisBriefs

- Remote Voting in Legislatures, Vol.7, No.31
- Initiative, Referendum and Recall: The Process, Vol.7, No.32
- Healthy School Environment, Vol.7, No.33
- New Developments in Environmental Justice, Vol.7, No.34
- Strengthening Protection Orders, Vol.7, No.35
- Reducing Child Support for Extended Visitation, Vol.7, No.36

Thanks to all of the staff section members who submitted columns and information for this issue. Your ideas and submissions are always welcome. *Newsline* is published four times annually by NCSL's Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section and is edited and formatted by Rita Thaemert.



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