

*Technology for Everyone . . . **

A Learning Experience**

Diane Murley***

Ms. Murley reviews what she has learned from researching and writing her previous columns and encourages readers to keep learning about technological tools that can help improve library services.

¶1 Earlier this year, I decided to return to the practice of law. Because I no longer had access to the many research resources I enjoyed as an academic law librarian, and I didn't want to run up my firm's online research bill, I was looking for a topic for this column that wouldn't require much research. As a way to wrap up my three years of columns, it was suggested that I write about what I had learned in those three years.

¶2 My goal in writing this column has been to make technology more accessible to law librarians who are not in a position to keep up with every technological innovation that comes along. Because of the time that elapsed between when I wrote a column and when it appeared in print, I didn't try to write about cutting-edge ideas that might not even be around by the time the article was published. Instead I tried to write generally about broad topics that would still be useful months later. I also hoped to encourage law librarians to try new technological tools they might not otherwise have considered.

Learning from Each Article

¶3 Most obviously, writing has helped me acquire knowledge about each topic I wrote about. When conducting the research for each column, I gathered more information from a wider variety of perspectives than I would have if I were only learning to use the tool myself. I also learned from the process of writing. Having to organize and explain each topic in writing helped me to learn it better, just as teaching somebody to do something can help you to learn it better yourself.

¶4 During the first year of writing this column, I focused on incorporating media into a variety of aspects of law librarianship. I learned to use mind-mapping software

* *Editor's Note:* "Technology for Everyone" is a regular feature of *Law Library Journal*. In each article, author Diane Murley reviews a tool that can help law librarians do their jobs even better.

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to organize complex information for presentations, research and writing, brainstorming, and project management.¹ I then explored ways to use a more familiar application, PowerPoint, to make presentations better by making them more visual.² Next I added audio and video to my toolkit with podcasts³ and video tutorials.⁴

¶5 The second year I concentrated on web sites and Web 2.0 applications, beginning with the concept of Library 2.0 and how its ideas can be employed in law libraries.⁵ I then turned to a topic that has long been my passion, web site accessibility, pointing out the legal and practical reasons for making web sites accessible.⁶ I next felt compelled to recommend Wikipedia as a research and teaching tool to counter the negative reviews it sometimes receives from law librarians.⁷ Finally, I explored what Second Life and other virtual worlds have to offer law libraries.⁸

¶6 My third and final year writing this column I have focused on new and old technologies. RSS feeds have been around for years, but they are still wonderful, if underappreciated, tools for receiving and distributing information.⁹ I learned about cloud computing, which is sometimes called Software as a Service or SaaS.¹⁰ Cloud computing includes online applications and data storage that offer potential benefits for law libraries.¹¹ My research allowed me to compile a list of business and ethical concerns that should be considered before adopting SaaS applications.¹² Finally, I explored some of the technological issues that law librarians have addressed in the past and how technology has been adopted to better serve library users.¹³ When technology seems overwhelming, it is good to recognize that many of the tools we take for granted today were once considered new technology.

¶7 As I was learning about these subjects, I also learned about learning styles and how technology can help law librarians better serve researchers with different learning styles. Mind mapping was developed by learning researchers in the 1960s¹⁴ and can help teachers accommodate different learning styles.¹⁵ Adding visuals, audio, and video to teaching materials can make the subject matter more accessible to students with different learning styles.¹⁶ I learned that it was also important to

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1. Diane Murley, *Mind Mapping Complex Information*, 99 LAW LIBR. J. 175, 2007 LAW LIBR. J. 11.
 2. Diane Murley, *Making Presentations Visual*, 99 LAW LIBR. J. 451, 2007 LAW LIBR. J. 27.
 3. Diane Murley, *Podcasts and Podcasting for Law Librarians*, 99 LAW LIBR. J. 675, 2007 LAW LIBR. J. 40.
 4. Diane Murley, *Tools for Creating Video Tutorials*, 99 LAW LIBR. J. 857, 2007 LAW LIBR. J. 53.
 5. Diane Murley, *What Is All the Fuss about Library 2.0?*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 197, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 10.
 6. Diane Murley, *Web Site Accessibility*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 401, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 21.
 7. Diane Murley, *In Defense of Wikipedia*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 593, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 29.
 8. Diane Murley, *What Second Life Taught Me about Learning*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 787, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 46.
 9. Diane Murley, *The Power of RSS Feeds*, 101 LAW LIBR. J. 127, 2009 LAW LIBR. J. 8.
 10. Diane Murley, *Law Libraries in the Cloud*, 101 LAW LIBR. J. 249, 251, 2009 LAW LIBR. J. 15, ¶ 7.
 11. *Id.* at 253–54, ¶¶ 17–20.
 12. *Id.* at 252–53, ¶¶ 11–16.
 13. Diane Murley, *A Selective History of Technology in Law Libraries*, 101 LAW LIBR. J. 415, 2009 LAW LIBR. J. 23.
 14. Murley, *supra* note 1, at 175, ¶ 2.
 15. *Id.* at 178, ¶ 14.
 16. See Diane Murley, *Innovative Instructional Methods*, LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q., 2007, no.

consider my own learning styles, in addition to those of my students and other researchers.¹⁷

Other Lessons

¶8 Besides learning about the topics I covered in the columns, I learned a few other lessons. Writing about technology taught me how to advocate for the use of technology to create or improve library services. There are librarians who do not like change for any reason, but most law librarians I have known will consider a new idea if it is presented in a thoughtful manner and supported by authorities. Researching and writing on a topic prepared me to make an effective presentation.

¶9 I also learned the value of consulting a variety of resources when researching these topics. I have learned a great deal from other law librarians, but I could not always find what I needed in the law library literature. I found the writings of other librarians and lawyers to be particularly helpful when I was looking for insight on practical uses for technology.

¶10 Finally, I learned the value of a good editor. I consider myself very fortunate to have had Frank Houdek and Janet Sinder as editors during my tenure as columnist for *Law Library Journal*.¹⁸ Their editing made my columns much better than they would have been without their assistance. I also learned the value of having a friend or colleague read what I had written before I sent it to the editor. Not everyone is good at providing helpful feedback, but my writing benefitted tremendously from the insights of a few people who were very good.¹⁹ If you have enjoyed my columns, it is due to the efforts of many people.

More to Learn

¶11 Writing this column for *Law Library Journal* has been a great opportunity for me. I hope you have learned something about the topics covered in my columns and have had the courage to try some of the ideas I suggested. There are many more topics I didn't have a chance to cover. And there are many bright young (and not so young) law librarians who are writing about them. I encourage you to seek out their articles and read their ideas.

¶12 If you hear about something new that could improve library services to your patrons, give it a try. Even if it is not a complete success, you will learn something on which you can build in the future. Maybe you will learn something you can share with other law librarians. Writing about it would be a great learning experience.

¶13 What have you got to learn?

1/2, at 171, 173–74, published simultaneously as PUBLIC SERVICES IN LAW LIBRARIES: EVOLUTION AND INNOVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY 171, 173–74 (Barbara Bintliff & Lee F. Peoples eds., 2007).

17. Murley, *supra* note 8, at 788, ¶ 3.

18. Lee Peoples and Barbara Bintliff also provided me with invaluable assistance when I wrote an article for *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*. See Murley, *supra* note 16.

19. James Duggan, with whom I worked at Southern Illinois University, and Amy Levine, at Arizona State University, were especially helpful.