



## member to member

### What do you do with old law books?

“When the Robert Crown Law Library trimmed its holdings by a few volumes (36,711 to be exact!), we were fortunate to find the Facultad Libre de Derecho de Monterrey, a new law school in Mexico. It was eager to take our discarded law reviews and reporters, and we were delighted that the books would have a happy home. Before we parted with all the volumes of

reporters, we captured the one piece of information missing from the online resources—the judges’ memorials. We examined each volume and photocopied every obituary and memorial we could find. Everyone participated, from student

workers to directors, finishing a dusty job in record time. The remaining challenges—creating an accurate (to the volume) list of titles and working with the moving crew, who boxed and removed the volumes—seemed tiny in comparison. And the space left by all the journals and reporters? Well used by treatises and other resources not (yet) available online.”



Stanford University Robert Crown Law Library staff gather around the last cart of 36,711 trimmed holdings, which were sent to a new law school in Mexico.

— **Kathy M. Winzer, catalog librarian at Stanford University Robert Crown Law Library in Stanford, California**

“One of the primary answers to this query should be a recommendation that members check with the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA) ([www.aallnet.org/committee/lipa](http://www.aallnet.org/committee/lipa)) to see if the material they are about to discard is needed either for scanning by Law Library Microform Consortium or preserving in the book storage program being developed by LIPA.”

— **Kent McKeever, director of the Diamond Law Library, Columbia University, New York**

“(1) Our county auctions surplus property, including withdrawn law books. We make a couple of hundred dollars a year on withdrawn books.

“(2) Books that failed to sell at auction go on a freebie shelf; attorneys and members of the public take some home.

“(3) We pull covers off total rejects and recycle the inside pages.

“(4) See picture of lamp above right. I’ve had one or two people who tried to replicate this, but it’s not used up many books.”

— **Nancy M. Weiss, law librarian at Washington County Law Library in Washington, Pennsylvania**

“Like many libraries, the Drake University Law Library has been shedding many unwanted

volumes recently. We first attempt to dispose of the books by offering them to other libraries through needs-and-offers lists. When that is unsuccessful, we then try to get the books to others who might want the content, e.g., putting them out for students in a high-traffic area under a ‘free books’ sign and advertising ‘free books’ in the state bar magazine. We have



A lamp made out of old law books.

also gifted the books to people who want them for alternative purposes. For example, some have gone to a local purse-maker ([www.novelpurses.com/models.htm](http://www.novelpurses.com/models.htm)), many to an area high school art teacher for an altered books unit, and a few to someone who was going to make them into a lamp. We looked into a program called Better World Books, but they did not want the specific volumes we had available. Our final solution is that we now recycle the books, putting them into a dumpster-sized recycling bin located right outside our loading dock. This has allowed us to help protect the environment at the same time we are protecting the integrity of our collection.”

— **Karen L. Wallace, circulation/reference librarian at Drake University Law Library in Des Moines, Iowa**

“When we reduced our collection of regional reporters, we were able to donate the books to a local university theater department. As props, the books are glued together and have everything except the front face removed, making the materials much easier to move around than stacks of books. When a theater company, film crew, or television crew needs to have law books as a background, the books have an opportunity for their 15 minutes of fame.”

— **David Rogers, public services librarian at Sidley Austin LLP in Chicago**

“What to *do* with old law books is quite the question!  
What *does* one toss and in what/whose direction?  
In years now gone by, I’ve done this harsh deed,  
and here’s what I did as I tackled the weed.

“The Reporters, God bless them, were the first ones to perish,  
No Prisons, No Bars, who would nourish and cherish.  
The recycling bin was our very last choice,  
But we heard not an utter from ***not one*** outraged voice!

“Tomes were taken away to line someone’s wall.  
Some were taken as props...to use at the mall!  
There once were non-profits that years-ago took -  
but of more recent vintage they’d rather no book.

“Law Reviews were among the honorable deceased,  
as shelf space was rare and the costs had increased.  
Our Firm, as the oldest, has books dating back,  
to Colonial Times...but those I’ll not pack!

“As we stowe, even burn, the books that had worth,  
I think of those worms who were put on this earth.  
As they wiggle away—no more a contender,  
Will they live? Will they die? Will they thrive...  
or surrender?”

— **Rissa J. Peckar, library director at Cadwalader,  
Wickersham & Taft LLP in New York**

