

LEXIS-NEXIS Librarians Assist in Mini-TRIAL Program

As AALL has recently been debating the issue of broadening our membership base and including publisher representatives, here is a timely report of the kind of value that publisher representatives often bring to our organization.

Teaching Research in Academic Law Libraries (TRIAL), a one-day program held July 28, 1999, at George Mason University, marked the beginning of teacher education for many of its attendees. While we as law librarians are well trained in our profession, many of us are not trained teachers. But almost all law librarians teach. In law firms, librarians teach summer associates and new attorneys. State, court, and county law librarians teach clerks and other court personnel. Academic law librarians teach students and professors. Despite the title of this program, much of the information provided was applicable to a variety of teaching situations, not just those in law libraries.

Gail Partin (Dickinson School of Law Library), Jane Thompson (University of Colorado Law Library), and Suzanne Bailey and Corrin Gee-Alvaredo (LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group) described and modeled various techniques for effective teaching. These presenters began by reminding us always to inform students of "WIFM—what's in it for me?" What benefits can learning the material bring to the student? Reminding a law student or summer law clerk that no librarian will be available on those weekends that the managing partner expects answers to research questions might inspire that person to spend more time learning to use the legal research sources independently.

Successful Curriculum Design

Gail Partin, who teaches legal research to first year students at the Dickinson School of Law, discussed "Steps to Successful Curriculum Design." Her handout, which followed her presentation exactly (a recommended technique), was clear and easy to follow. The handout describes seven steps to course or session planning. We were taught to: assess user needs; define goals; organize content; select teaching methods; design criteria to evaluate student performance; implement the plan; and evaluate the program.

Partin also recommended reviewing "Legal Education and Professional Development—An Educational Continuum," an ABA report originally issued in July 1992. This document, also known as

the MacCrate report, suggests that law schools and attorneys work together "to impart to future lawyers the skills and values required for the competent and responsible practice of law." Legal analysis and reasoning, and legal research are considered fundamental lawyering skills.

Additionally, core legal research competencies presented by the AALL Research Instruction Caucus in 1997 include the ability to locate case law, statutes, administrative materials, ethical rules, uniform laws, model acts, and law digests. These core research competencies (see www.aallnet.org/sis/ripssis/core.html for a complete list), although currently under revision because they predate Keycite and many Internet sources, can act as a foundation upon which to build a legal research course. These competencies could help all of us to better articulate our legal instruction course goals.

Partin recommended that instructors list goals in the course syllabus so that students know what they are expected to learn. Course objectives must be clear, specific, measurable, and results-oriented. As course planning progresses, objectives can be redefined if necessary.

Content should be organized to fulfill goals and objectives. Partin reminded us that unlearning might be a necessary first step. Despite prevalent rumors among entering law students, not all legal information is available on the Web. Course materials and presentations must be tailored to the audience's level of expertise, and we should sequence concepts from the simple to the increasingly complex. Partin emphasized the necessity of retaining a sense of humor. No matter who the student or what the setting, only so much information can be absorbed at one time.

Partin also indicated the need to sequence teaching methods. As students gain knowledge, we should give them opportunities to use it. While class may begin with the teacher lecturing, the focus should gradually shift to the students. Perhaps students could benefit by teaching each other, or by participating in role-playing exercises.

Teaching Legal Research to Faculty

Jane Thompson (Head of Faculty Services and a Senior Instructor at the University of Colorado Law Library) discussed the implications of teaching legal research to faculty. Thompson stated that, while faculty members may know how information is organized in their field, they may not know the best way to find what they need, or how best to use that

information to help others learn. Thompson recommended showing faculty the value students find in particular resources.

Thompson reminded us of characteristics that faculty members share with other adult learners. The readiness to learn is directly affected by a need to know or to do something. Practically speaking, this may mean that a librarian's only opportunity to train a faculty member in the use of an electronic resource may come during a panicked phone call, as the instructor is preparing for class or trying to meet a publication deadline. The instructor needs to know how to do something immediately, but this may not be the best "teachable moment." In every teaching encounter with faculty, we should be sensitive to their time constraints.

Adult learners also have a reservoir of experience and knowledge. A librarian can, for instance, use faculty members' knowledge of print sources to make electronic resources relevant to them, and to demonstrate their similarities. Faculty members, as adult learners, expect instructors to be knowledgeable, to present material clearly and confidently, to emphasize the relevance of material presented, to motivate them, to be enthusiastic and humorous, and to show concern for student learning.

As librarians, we respect each faculty member's subject expertise. However, Thompson feels it is a mistake to be overly deferential. Faculty members and librarians are all part of academia. We all want students to be able to learn. But librarians often react to perceived differences between faculty culture and instructional librarian culture. Faculty members operate in a culture where they are valued for their theoretical knowledge. They view one another as colleagues, defer to each other as specialists, have a high degree of professional autonomy, are concerned with efficiency due to lack of time, have a tendency to resist change, and tend to focus only on their own disciplines. Instructional librarians subscribe to a managerial culture that values knowledge that is applied, tend to communicate with and learn from other librarians, usually work within hierarchical systems, are less assertive intellectually, lack time but remain idealistic, and favor an interdisciplinary approach. To bridge this gap, Thompson recommends that librarians attend faculty programs, introduce faculty members to colleagues who can help them, and respond to faculty e-mails that are of interest to the librarian. She believes that building relationships with faculty members is as important as the information we teach them. She also believes that

librarians and faculty members can learn from each other. (For further information, please see Jane Thompson, "Teaching Research to Faculty: Accommodating Cultural and Learning-style Differences, *Law Library Journal*. 1996.)

Presentation Skills

After a lunchtime game of legal research jeopardy, we viewed a video on presentation skills by Spring Asher. We learned that the ideal is to connect with the audience by using that real part of ourselves, the part that talks in a relaxed manner to good friends. We saw that 55% of the impression we make on a listener is our physicality; 38% is in the energy in our voices; and 7% is content. The video made suggestions for improvement in the first two of these areas. We should stand with feet about one foot apart, balance on the balls of the feet, keep hands at the sides unless gesturing, and lead from the chest. Hand gestures should be fit to the size of the room; a larger room requires bigger gestures. Furthermore, we should limit the number of gestures we use, since unnecessary flailing distracts the audience. The way we speak was also stressed as an important factor. Asher

recommended using pauses. She suggested that we make the audience wait, counting to four to give them time to focus on us. Reading aloud for two minutes everyday is good practice for this technique. She also mentioned that smiling while speaking puts energy into the voice.

Content and Its Arrangement

Presentations by Suzanne Bailey and Corrin Gee-Alvaredo of LEXIS-NEXIS addressed the importance of content and its arrangement. For example, we were cautioned about the possible pitfalls of using jokes to begin presentations. Our students, whoever they may be, do not come to us *tabula rasa*. Particular backgrounds or even recent group history can make certain jokes not only inappropriate, but also actually harmful to the educational atmosphere. In short, if you want to tell a joke, be sure it will be funny to your audience.

Organizing individual presentations into only three major points, with as many subtopics as necessary, was suggested as a good strategy. Having only three major points helps us to remember where we are in our presentation. Then, if the audience

indicates they are familiar with point two, we can skip easily to point three. Though there is nothing wrong with having 20 major points, it is much more difficult to re-orient after being interrupted at point seven of a 20-point presentation than after point two of a three-point presentation.

Although this report merely skims the surface of the material presented, it is a credit to the presenters that they managed to convey such a large amount of material in so short a time. This was a practical, enjoyable program. Thanks are due to LEXIS-NEXIS for sponsoring this program, providing the extensive materials, and for providing such highly competent presenters. This is a clear indication of how the legal publishing community can contribute to the betterment of our profession. Thanks also to George Mason University for hosting the event, and to Gail Partin and Jane Thompson for their considerable time and expertise.

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