

## A New Legal Citation Manual

What Will It Mean  
for Law Librarians?

by Warren Rees

Once again the issue of citation format was on the agenda at AALL, this time in an educational program about the new citation manual produced by the Association of Legal Writing Directors (ALWD). Despite dissatisfaction with the *Bluebook*, the fundamental structure of legal citation has remain unchanged for some time. It appears that the *Bluebook* now faces its biggest challenge in the *ALWD Citation Manual*.

The program was designed to present the audience with the views of a representative of the new citation manual and a professional law librarian. Unfortunately, the law librarian was unable to attend, leaving attendees with only the views of the representative supporting the new manual. The comments of a librarian who has worked with the new format would have provided a nice balance to the program. Fortunately, since the program was limited to an hour, **Darby Dickerson** (Stetson College of Law) had the time to clearly present the background and key features of the *ALWD Manual*.

In general, the session was quite informative about the new proposed system of citation. Dickerson provided a good overview of the *ALWD Manual* as well as sufficient detail to satisfy the curiosity of those who had a basic familiarity with the new system. Her presentation was divided into several parts: background, key features, organization, and comparison with the *Bluebook*. Two major highlights from her presentation are particularly significant: the manual is the product of a professional association instead of students, and is a restatement of existing citation rules.

The new manual should receive more timely attention and be more responsive to requests made by librarians and legal writing instructors since it is produced by a professional organization. This includes the ability to send e-mails containing

suggestions to Dickerson and continual updating through the use of a Web site ([www.alwd.org](http://www.alwd.org)). This suggests, and Dickerson confirmed, that the manual should be more responsive to user input and changes accepted by the committee overseeing the project should be reflected on the Web page. On the other hand, this feature should also promote greater uniformity; changes in the rules will hopefully occur only when there compelling reasons. The second point, that it is a restatement of existing citation rules, suggests that it is not a radical shift but instead an attempt to take the existing rules and make relatively small changes designed to promote uniformity and make the rules as intuitive as possible. For example, the citation format for a journal article is the same regardless of whether it is found in a consecutively or a non-consecutively paginated journal.

Other features highlighted in the presentation and designed to make the new manual more useful include the greater use of examples, references to local citation rules, a more detailed index, and a two color layout that highlights significant information. Also helpful was discussion of the major differences between the *Bluebook* and the *ALWD Manual*.

The question and answer session clearly demonstrated that not everyone greets the results of this effort with open arms and there clearly are areas needing immediate improvement. However, Dickerson was receptive to and encouraged suggestions, criticisms, and corrections. Judging from the presentation and my own examination of the *ALWD Manual*, the commitment held by Dickerson and the committee to this project will assure its continual development. With adoption of the *ALWD Manual* by over 60 professors at various law schools and several law reviews, the *ALWD Manual* may challenge the long-standing hegemony of the *Bluebook*.

**Warren D. Rees** ([rees.2@nd.edu](mailto:rees.2@nd.edu)) is Research Librarian at the University of Notre Dame Law Library in Notre Dame, Indiana.

© 2000 Warren Rees



photos: Andrew K. Pinkham