

# TRICALL Addresses Changing Needs of Patrons

by Rita Kaiser

So what do line dancing, kitchen utensils, yo-yos, beanbags and jacks have to do with teaching legal research? They were all part of the first-ever Teaching Research in Court and Agency Law Libraries conference July 12 in Minneapolis, aimed at effective patron instruction in court and agency settings.

Just prior to the 2001 AALL Annual Meeting and Conference, 30 participants, selected from agency and court libraries throughout the United States, spent two days learning about user-needs assessment, legal-research needs, adult-learning styles, program-content design, presentation skills, marketing and evaluation. The TRICALL Advisory Council emphasized that training patrons in court and agency environments is an ongoing and constantly evolving circle.

Sponsored by the Librarian Relations Group at LexisNexis in conjunction with the AALL Professional Development Committee, the TRICALL conference covered a lot of ground in two days. The council and participants began by discussing how reference services and teaching legal research have changed for all libraries over the last few years, and how

librarians and patrons must learn to adapt to online methods of electronic research. Participants then engaged in a spirited discussion, led by Judy Meadows, examining how they could address the dramatically changing needs of their library patrons. Following this discussion, Cindy Spohr introduced the interactive model attendees would use for the next two days. All of this before 10 a.m.

Through a variety of participatory and problem-solving sessions, attendees examined how to

design and evaluate courses for training patrons. Participants learned how to seize teachable moments, establish connections, that one hour of classroom instruction takes an average of 40 hours to prepare, to question patrons to get to their real needs, to train our reference staff to serve these needs and more.

The adult-learning styles session had participants mimicking standard learning styles, from auditory and visual learners to the tactile learners who wanted something to touch.

Learning a Greek dance and a line dance satisfied some of them, although a few people asked for footstep diagrams on the floor. The

yo-yos, jacks, cards and other games used in the last exercise of the conference made tactile learners happy. And the chefs in the group enjoyed first trying to determine what the kitchen utensil given to their group was and then how to successfully

market it. Our group decided that our JarKey should use the tag line "Get it ajar" and the best group to market it to would be the aging baby boomers who have lost the ability to unscrew a jar lid.

**Mike Jousan** of Clear Communication Company spent the second morning of the conference teaching the art of presenting your message. "The best way you and I will ever communicate is one-on-one," but we can still connect with the audience using our own natural energy and style, he said. "Even in a large group you can have a series of one-on-one conversations." Jousan endorsed the following communication methods:

Establish eye contact for a minimum of four seconds, or



Valerie Railey teaches everyone how to line dance as part of the patron-instruction exercise.



Karla Gedell, Connie Von Der Heide, Mary Unruh, David Lockwood, Chris Swan and Kay Newman demonstrate to participants that it is "all in the wrist" when learning to use a yo-yo.

Training needs change quickly, and law librarians must learn to address these changing needs, the council said. The advisory council, which developed the two-day curriculum for the conference, consisted of **Jean Holcomb** of King County Law Library; **Judy Meadows** of the State Law Library of Montana; **Valerie Railey** of the 9th Circuit U.S. Courts Library in San Diego; **Regina Smith** of the Jenkins Law Library; **Georgiana Wellford** of the Office of the Attorney General in Richmond, Va.; and **Cindy Spohr, Jenny Kanji** and **Karen Bentley** of LexisNexis™.



The first TRICALL Advisory Council. From left: Valerie Railey, Cindy Spohr, Jenny Kanji, Judy Meadows, Jean Holcomb, Regina Smith, Georgiana Wellford and Karen Bentley.

“one thought to one person,” he said. Use your voice and body language to sound and look like you mean what you are saying. Step away from a podium, if possible, and use gestures deliberately. Don’t stand up there waving your arms in a windshield-wiper effect. “Move as if you are standing still, so we can follow you and when you get to your punch line, stop,” Jousan explained.

Jousan’s presentation style made each member of the audience feel that he or she was part of the message he delivered. “We are judged by the perception of the audience, so don’t let them shoot you,” he said.

The last exercise had everyone laughing. Participants had to put their newly



Mike Jousan of Clear Communication demonstrates to the TRICALL participants how to control their gestures while still connecting with their audience.

acquired patron-instruction knowledge to the test by designing, marketing, teaching and evaluating a course centered on how to use a certain game or toy. The yo-yo group was lucky. They had a real yo-yo expert in David Lockwood, the deputy circuit librarian at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington,

D.C. He had a knack for explaining the intricacies of using a yo-yo. The “Card Sharks” — who thought they had rigged their card game of 31 so Candace Cooper of the U.S. Courts Library would win — were surprised when Kathy Marrero of LexisNexis won instead.

And as the TRICALL Council line danced their way out the door (as part of their patron-instruction exercise to develop and teach a course in line dancing), everyone knew that this had been an experience they would gladly repeat. All the participants took home many new and innovative methods of patron instruction from the two-day conference.



The “Card Sharks” prepare their final lesson for TRICALL.

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