



Teaching Legal Research Can Be Fun!

by Kelly Browne

The Career Development Task Force, which coordinates the Desktop Learning Opportunity Series, encourages members to explore professional development offerings and opportunities at the local, regional and national levels. We welcome your comments and article suggestions. Please contact Phyllis Marion at 619/525-1429 or pmarion@cwsf.edu.



When I was asked to write an article on how “teaching legal research can be fun,” I thought, “Well, it’s always fun for me, but that’s not really the point, is it?” It’s supposed to be, if not fun, tolerable for the students. Studies over time have revealed the pedagogical benefits of humor in the classroom: students learn better when they are actively engaged in the learning process.¹ But then, I did a little more research and found out that “the teacher’s attitude, enthusiasm, and passion are main ingredients of an effective teaching and learning environment.”² So go ahead, don’t feel guilty . . . what’s fun for you is probably going to be fun (and good) for the students, too.

I’ve personally been enamored of the idea of using game shows to teach legal research since the first Annual Meeting I ever attended, in Boston. Frank Houdek and James Duggan of Southern Illinois University Law Library staged “The Price Is Mutually Agreeable,” a take-off on “The Price Is Right,” and not only was I rolling in the aisles with laughter but for the first time the cost of various legal materials stuck in my mind. The 1993 show was pretty low-tech, but I would still love to play that game in an Advanced Legal Research class someday.

My favorite game show, however, is “Jeopardy.” I first learned about a free PowerPoint Jeopardy template at the 2001 Southeastern Regional Research and Writing Conference at Stetson University College of Law in a program called, “Ten-Minute Tips for New Teachers.” Christine Coughlin of Wake Forest University discussed “How to Use Game Shows to Enliven Your Class,” and told us how to download the template from the Kentucky Department of

Education Web site. She had played “Appellate Rules Jeopardy,” or something like that in her class. Being the Jeopardy freak that I am, the first thing I did when I got home was to download the game. The template is no longer available from the Kentucky Department of Higher Education, but you can find numerous versions on the Internet. Try: http://www.meadowthorpe.fcps.net/powerpoint_jeopardy_template.htm. If that doesn’t suit you, just search Google for “Jeopardy Template,” and you’re bound to find one that works. There’s even a version available for purchase (\$400) at: <http://www.educationalinsights.com/classroomjeopardy/index.html> that includes music, wireless remote control buzzers, and everything.

After you download a free template, however, you have to fill-in the blanks. There are five blue cubes for the names of categories at the top of the first slide. You can change the categories to whatever you want just by editing the first page of the PowerPoint presentation. The second slide is for the 5-point first category “answer.” The third slide is for the 5-point first category “question.” There is a home icon in the bottom right corner of each “question” slide; if you mouse over the icon while the slide show is playing, you will go back to the first screen with the categories and point allocations. Pretty cool, huh!

AALL Professional Development Program Competencies of Law Librarianship

- 1 Core Competencies
- Specialized Competencies
- 2 Library Management
- 3 Reference, Research and Client Services
- 4 Information Technology
- 5 Collection Care and Management
- 6 **Teaching**

This article addresses the AALL Specialized Competencies on Reference, Research and Client Services and Information Technology. The complete AALL statement of Competencies of Law Librarianship is online at <http://www.aallnet.org/prodev/competencies.asp>.

Anyway, you continue filling in your answers and questions; the first 5 slides (actually slides #2 through #11) are in the first category, worth 5 through 25 points respectively, the second 5 slides (#12 through 21) are in the second category, and so on. There are 25 answers all together. To play, run the show: click on the category and number of points that the contestant picks:

"I'll take 'legal directories' for 25, please, Kelly," and the answer will appear. After the student has made a guess, hit "return" and the correct question will appear. Mouse over the Home icon to return to the main screen.

The first Jeopardy game I made up was for a law library staff meeting. The categories were "Who Does?," "Where Is?," "When Is?," "What Is?," and "Why?" The "questions" were things like: "Westlaw and Lexis Contact," "Water Fountains," "Reference Hours," "A Headnote," and "Don't we give legal advice." The "answers" were things like "Who is Kelly Browne?," "Where is next to the restrooms on each floor," etc. The point of the game was to make sure everyone who worked in the library could answer, or at least knew who to contact to answer, some basic questions. Plus it was my first Jeopardy game and my own co-workers wouldn't be so cruel, if it were a flop. This "edition" of Jeopardy might be a good game for a firm library to play with new or summer associates. If anyone wants a copy, I would be glad to share.

The Jeopardy template also works well for a review after a lecture. I used it after a lecture I gave in Advanced Legal Research on the Internet. I did sort of a "30 Sites in 30 Minutes" thing, and then we played Jeopardy for a half-hour. The "questions" were items like "The best coverage of Supreme Court cases." The students played individually and the person with the most points got an automatic 100 per cent on her or his homework for that week.

The third time I used the Jeopardy template was for the game: "Legal Reference Book Jeopardy." I gave a lecture in Advanced Legal Research on my top 25 reference books, holding them up in class and passing them around like I usually do. But this time we played Jeopardy afterward, so I hope it sank in more than it usually does. Maybe the scanned images of the books next to their names will help the visual learners, anyway.

Since I've gotten into using Jeopardy as a teaching tool, I've learned about a lot of games you can download from the Internet and adapt to learning legal research. There's "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" at: http://www.websterschools.org/classrooms/mr_arcuri/, and you can make up your own crossword puzzles at EclipseCrossword.com: <http://www.greeneclipsesoftware.com/eclipsecrossword/>.

An excellent source for game ideas and other ways to make teaching legal research fun is the "National Legal Research Teach-In Training Resource Kit," compiled and edited for the past several years by Gail Partin of the Dickinson School of Law Library and Kristin Gerdy of Brigham Young University's Howard W. Hunter Law Library. The kit is published annually by the Research Instruction and Patron Services Special Interest Section. The Eleventh edition, published in 2003, contains a Legal Research Crossword Puzzle by the reference librarians at the Gallagher Law Library, University of Washington, and a Legal Research Word Search and Crossword by Susan Boland from the Northern Illinois University College of Law Library. The tenth edition contains a crossword puzzle by Colleen Manning and Gigi Panagotoc from Florida Coastal School of Law Library. The ninth edition contains "Who Wants to be a Dollionaire," by Corrin Gee, then a Librarian Relations Consultant with LEXIS-NEXIS. Take a look at the RIPS-SIS Web site (http://www.aallnet.org/sis/ripsis/teach_in.html) for the kits' tables of contents and to order past Teach-In Kits.

RIPS member Joan Shear of Boston College always comes up with creative ways to teach legal research. Look for "Acronym Bingo" on the RIPS Web site soon! RIPS is not the only Special Interest Section source for game shows and puzzles. Foreign, International, and Comparative Law has "U.N.derstanding" and "So You Want to Pay Off Your Law School Loans" posted on its "Teaching Resources" page: <http://brkl.brooklaw.edu/screens/fcilsis.html>.

Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing is also a great place to look for ideas on how to teach with humor. Volume 11, No. 3, for example (Spring 2003), contains two wonderful articles: Sheila Simon, "Top 10 Ways to Use Humor in Teaching Legal Writing," and James R. Fox, "Eine Kleine Legalresearchmusik." I love the idea of associating particular songs with legal research concepts—what a great way to help the students remember!

Finally, Pamela Melton of the University of South Carolina and Corrin Gee of Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering have proposed a program for the Annual Meeting in Boston called "Let Me 'Edutain' You: Game Shows and other Unconventional Teaching Techniques in Legal Research Classrooms." It is based

on the very popular program they presented at CALI in Durham last summer. I can't wait for this program. Maybe I'll see you there!

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Endnotes

- 1 Charles C. Bonwell & James A. Eison, "Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom," 1 (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1, 1991).
- 2 Gerry Hess, "Heads and Hearts: The Teaching and Learning Environment in the Law School," 52 J. Legal Educ. 75, 104 (2002).

memorials

Nancy Crossed, the cataloging/reference librarian at the American University, Washington College of Law Library (WCL), Washington, D.C., recently passed away. Ms. Crossed had worked at WCL for the past seven years. She graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.S. degree in paralegal studies and received her master of library science degree from Catholic University. Ms. Crossed served as corresponding secretary of the Law Librarians' Society of Washington (LLSDC) and as president of the Academic SIS of LLSDC.

Jeannine Mobley Irwin, the Dallas office librarian of Fulbright & Jaworski L.L.P., died August 17 at the age of 51. Jeannine grew up and spent all but a few years of her life in north Texas. She went to grade school in Grand Prairie and to college at the University of Texas, at both Arlington and Austin, and received a Masters of Library Science at University of North Texas. Professionally, she worked for the Dallas Public Library, Jackson Walker law firm, and most recently for the law firm of Fulbright & Jaworski. She was president of the Dallas Association of Law Librarians for the 2001–2002 year.