

## public relations

# Have Librarian, Will Travel

*A mentoring docu-drama hits the road for public relations*

by Charlotte Graesser Henderson

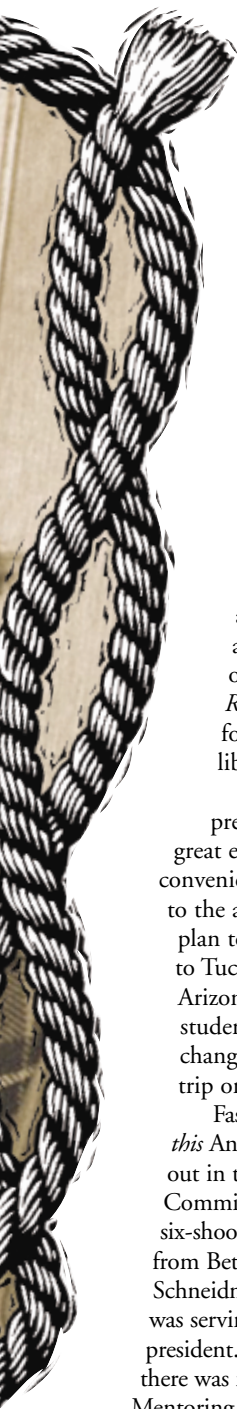
*At a young age, Charlotte Graesser Henderson knew that she could learn much from her favorite Westerns. The best advice—carry a business card, and don't be afraid to travel.*



Those of us who are part of the demographic of librarians due to retire in the next 10 years will remember many of the Westerns of the 50s and 60s, including a show called “Have Gun, Will Travel” that played from 1957-1963. The program featured a gravel-voiced hero named Paladin, played by Richard Boone. He was the hero dressed all in black, a gunfighter-for-hire righting the wrongs of the innocent victims of the wild and ruthless West. He also carried a business card that simply read: “HAVE GUN, WILL TRAVEL.” If you remember nothing else about that show, you will remember the business card; he whipped that card out in every episode.

So, what does Paladin and a law library association mentoring committee have in common? The answer is a terrific public relations opportunity that can be used in several different venues.

In 1998, Joe C. Morris and Rhea Ballard-Thrower wrote a short legal bibliography presentation, titled “Throw the Book at Them,” for the Georgia Commission of Media Organizations (COMO). COMO consists of four separate organizations: the Georgia Library Association, Georgia Library Media Association, Georgia Association for Instructional Technology, and the Georgia Association of Media and Educational Representatives (GAMER). The



presentation was also published in the fall 1998 issue *Legal References Services Quarterly* and quickly caught my eye.

### The Seeds of a Program

I had been looking for a different training program for the Arizona Association of Law Libraries (AzALL) that would work for the association's annual Legal Research Institute. I quickly adapted the play to Arizona resources (with permission), and, along with two association colleagues, went on the road to present *Legal Resources Can Be Murder* for paralegals and non-law librarians.

The play and online presentation were received with great enthusiasm, partly because we conveniently took the presentation to the audience. We soon hatched a plan to take the presentation down to Tucson and the University of Arizona for the advanced library students, but obstacles, such as job changes and mergers, put our road trip on the back burner.

Fast-forward to 2003 where *this* Annie Oakley was quietly hiding out in the AzALL Mentoring Committee, polishing dust off her six-shooter when she received a call from Beth Schneider, of Plattner Schneidman and Schneider, who was serving a second term as AzALL president. With Schneider in town, there was no more hiding out on the Mentoring Committee. With her

encouragement and the support of the AzALL Board, we could take the committee to the next level. AzALL member Jan Wolter, reference librarian II at Maricopa County Law Library, joined me in putting together a revised program. In January 2004, the committee hit the road for Tucson to present a program at the January association meeting.

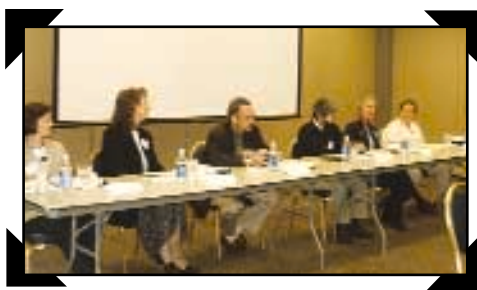
"Legal Resources Can Be Murder: Unlocking the World of Legal Information" was a three-part, half-day program completely sponsored by our generous friends at Thomson West. The program was designed for advanced students at the University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science. The learning objectives of the program were three-fold:

- 1) identify and explain basic legal resources to students in a library science program;
- 2) present a forum for understanding the various types of law library settings and how they work together and differently to support various patron environments; and
- 3) identify core competencies in law librarianship and how to obtain them in the academic or work environment.

At that time I had not planned on a fourth objective, which would present itself in the long run.

### Neither Rain, nor Sleet, nor Presidential Traffic Jam

As unique as living in the Wild West is, nothing could prepare us for the torrential rain during a seven-year drought, accompanied by the traditional secret service halt of traffic in all directions during a visit by the president of the United States. But our spirits weren't dampened, only our handouts. The first part of the program was a presentation of the murder mystery play, *Legal Resources Can Be Murder!* Players were drawn from our unsuspecting audience: our Westlaw librarian relations representative and one of our local Westlaw account managers. Totally unrehearsed, the play went on, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Or was that the torrential rainfall?



*The third part of the program featured a panel discussion with AzALL members from various segments of the law library community fielding questions and discussing similarities and differences in their various law library settings.*

Part two of our program showcased the online version of the play's legal resources, as found on Westlaw, and was presented by Gretchen Carlson from Thomson West. West also put together a packet of basic Westlaw research guides, including its

Westlaw research pyramid and breakdown of the digest system to guide students through some basic legal mysteries.

The third part featured a panel discussion with AzALL members from various segments of the law library



*The Arizona Association of Law Libraries Mentoring Committee traveled to Tucson to present "Legal Resources Can Be Murder: Unlocking the World of Legal Information." The three-part, half-day program was designed for advanced students at the University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science. The first part of the program was a presentation of the murder mystery play, Legal Resources Can Be Murder!*

community fielding questions and discussing similarities and differences in their various law library settings. Panel members were selected by their individual longevity in the field, their wit and wisdom, and their willingness to be subjected to the grueling Q&A segment. Representative panel members were from dot-coms, dot-edus, and dot-govs. This segment proved to be especially interesting for law librarians and students alike. AALL headquarters was more than generous and provided additional handouts for the students regarding roles of law librarians, frequently asked questions about AALL membership, core competencies, and more.

The morning concluded with a Westlaw-sponsored luncheon and the sun shining in the Western sky. An unexpected outcome of the program, and probably the most exciting aspect, was the opening of the door between the library school and the law library association. The school expressed interest in additional programs and forums to share information with the generations of future librarians.

As I drove off into the sunset later that day, I thought perhaps it was time to change my business card to "Have Librarian, Will Travel." But then again, I shed my Annie Oakley duds a long time ago, partner. ■

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