

How has the current economy changed the demands of your job?

"I'm expected to maintain levels of service when my book budget has been cut by nearly half in the last five years and my staff has been cut by two-thirds. You bet I'm angry—not at the legislature, which must make the cuts, but at all those who embraced the unregulated, devil-take-the-hindmost, trust-big-business 'free market' economics that we're all now being brutalized by. I get to preside over the reduction of a once-magnificent collection. It's terribly disheartening."

— **Paul J. Donovan**,
law librarian at the Vermont Department of Libraries



Paul J. Donovan

"So far, the state and local fiscal crises haven't directly impacted our law library. Our bread and butter is the local civil filing fee income, and I am not aware of the latest trend but hopefully, it's positive. There has been talk in the past of having county law libraries go toward some kind of state-managed situation, i.e., through the Administrative Office of the Courts. In light of the current state budget crisis, however, now would not be a good time to do this. In addition to filing fees, we receive minor income from our conference room rentals, which have done well, plus we earn small change from renting out Continuing Legal Education materials and offering public copiers.

"We have seen some uptick in poverty law, bankruptcy, and foreclosure questions during the last year or so. I don't think we've quantified this; it's just subjective observation. I haven't noticed an increase in book theft. (And let us hope that continues!)"

"At a time when so many governmental institutions are struggling, we seem to be holding up rather well for now. The little increase in the health premiums for staff, which has been a terrible budget-buster in recent years,

has helped the library. That situation is fluid and could be affected by a move to single-payer health care that may or may not impact the library. If the overall level of poverty increases, we may suffer a decrease in

filing fee income due to poorer persons being exempted from paying initial filing fees *in forma pauperis*. That would hurt us, as it has before. We also have to watch price increases from our legal publishers. The latest downturn in the economy has slowed their inflationary prices, but I still see we're up about four percent from a year ago. Finally, the staff received an annual cost of living

adjustment in July of about two to three percent."

— **Greg Fite**, *technical services librarian at Bernard E. Witkin Alameda County Law Library*

"We have had a lot more books being stolen in the last year. We continue to monitor our security procedures, but multiple-volume Continuing Education of the Bar works have 'walked', which does not normally happen here. There is a book on California foreclosure written for the layperson (\$v Popular works), which went missing immediately. We have not only replaced that work (and put it on reserve), but acquired additional works on the subject of foreclosure. Isn't that a sad reflection on our economy when thefts are up as well as foreclosures?"

— **Melody Lembke**, *director, collection management services at LA Law Library*



Greg Fite

"I have relocated from the United States to the northern mountains of Israel where I live in a home owned by my partner, thus eliminating monthly rent and mortgage

costs. In addition, I have been able to transition my responsibilities as a full-time contract legal reference librarian for the Law Library of Congress as an employee of the Library Associates Companies to part-time work in which I answer reference questions received from all over the world on QuestionPoint. I take advantage of the seven hours I am ahead of Washington, D.C. time to answer questions to which I can respond with limited access to online databases before the Law Librarians at the Library of Congress have even woken up.

"Of course, one of my pensions has begun so I have a monthly stipend to count on. In addition, as a new Israeli citizen on Aliyah [a major Jewish tenet that Jews have a legal right to move to Israel and become citizens automatically], I receive a small financial assistance basket, my Sal Klita [financial assistance intended to help with initial adjustment period in Israel], and my arrival flight was subsidized by Nefesh B'Nefesh [a service that assists Jews returning to Israel]. I delight in responding in a timely and helpful fashion to the varied legal questions that arrive electronically at the Law Library of Congress through QuestionPoint and I hope to continue to do so for some time. The questions cover a myriad of American, foreign and international law

subjects. My contractual arrangement with the Library of Congress includes the possibility of working full-time at the Law Library in the summer months so I can visit my sons and other family and friends in the states."

— **Frank Alan Herch**, *legal reference librarian at the Law Library of Congress, Public Services Division*



Melody Lembke