

# NOCALL NEWS

Northern California Association of Law Libraries  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello fellow NOCALLers! It may be hard to believe but summer is almost over. Many of us in legal education are already a few weeks into the Fall semester and those of us in legal practice, or government, are wrapping up our summer travel plans and getting ready for some cooler weather. It has been an exciting summer for NOCALL! We were well represented at this year's AALL Annual Meeting in Baltimore. You may have seen our "John Waters"-inspired sunglasses circulating around, or connected with your colleagues at our well-attended Joint Reception. A number of NOCALL members presented at this year's meeting, including Berkeley's own Marci Hoffman, where she discussed how to measure research impact. Michele Finerty also presented the Robert L. Oakley Advocacy Award and the Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award to recipients at the Public Policy Update.

We had some exciting news in our ongoing effort to confront the funding crisis faced by our state's public law libraries. As you know, this year's Spring Institute was focused on advocacy with particular attention on how NOCALL can assist our colleagues working in California's struggling public law libraries. These libraries serve a vital interest in providing the public access to the law and justice and yet are faced with an increasingly dire financial situation as they subsist entirely on chronically insufficient court filing fees. We were very pleased to hear that the state will be adding a one-time line item to this year's state budget to assist this essential component of our justice system. While this is far from a permanent solution, it does appear there is some progress to celebrate.

As we enter the Fall, NOCALL is continuing to look at how we can reduce our administrative costs and increase the value we provide to our membership. We are exploring how, as a professional organization, we can effectuate collaboration among our members and provide practical, and timely, educational events and opportunities for professional development. As always, we rely entirely on the support and contributions made by our members. If you have a desire to serve on a committee, conduct a webinar, or simply have ideas on how NOCALL can provide increased value to our members please let us know!



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**MUSINGS FROM MARK****Mark Mackler**

**HELLO, AND GOODBYE...** 24 years ago, in September of 1994, I wrote my first “Musings from Mark” column for *NOCALL News*. Todd Bennett from Thelen Marrin (Thelen is gone but not forgotten) was President, and Marlene Harmon from Boalt Law (now Berkeley Law) was Editor. My purpose for writing “Musings” was “to say what (was) on my mind about the state of our profession, focusing mostly on the local scene.” I invited you to write or call me with your comments and observations. Some of you did, and you gave me quite an earful. I wrote about the good things and the bad things about our profession. I shared stories about my experiences, and I hope my “Musings” encouraged you to think about your role in the profession. What made you happy and fulfilled, and what frustrated and angered you? What did you enjoy about working with your attorneys and judges and professors and students, and what did you tolerate or even hate? But now, in the words of Al Gore: My friends, it’s time for me to go.

My thanks to *NOCALL News* Editor Mary Pinard Johnson. I hope one of you will contact her about producing a column. It’s time for someone else to step up to the plate.

I’ve looked forward to writing each and every one of these articles. It’s been a terrific “ride through the stacks” and I thank you for riding along with me. You are very special people in a very special profession.

**Editor’s Note:**

During my years as editor of the *NOCALL News*, I have always looked forward to receiving Mark’s column. I know I am not alone in saying I will miss his lighthearted take on serious current issues affecting our profession and our communities, and the

glimpses into our past that he offers in his column. I would like to extend my thanks to Mark for his many years of work on this column, and his contributions to the *NOCALL News*.

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**E-READER LIBRARIAN  
DIGITAL BOOK REVIEWS**
**Elisabeth McKechnie, U.C. Davis Law Library**

In celebration of Halloween, my favorite holiday, this month’s column will review spooky books appropriate to the season.

\*Book prices will be listed where available; All prices are accurate as of writing date and may have changed by the time this column goes to press. Books are sourced from Amazon.com unless otherwise noted.

**Strange Practice (A Dr. Greta Helsing Novel), by**

Vivian Shaw

Price: \$2.99

Format: Kindle

Source Note: Amazon, I also found it on Overdrive

The author of this adventure-suspense novel surely knows her vampires from her vampyres. Greta Helsing (they dropped the ‘van’ when they immigrated to the UK) is the physician daughter of Dr. Helsing, continuing his medical practice to the uncanny and inhuman of the London area. Specialists of this kind being rare, she makes a house call when a local vampyre, Sir Francis Varney, is attacked by a group of monks armed with a cross-shaped spike and plenty of garlic. Greta teams with another human, a vampyre, a vampire and a former demon to try to save the city, both arcane and mundane, from the mad monks. Greta is a thoroughly human heroine with no kick-ass

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about her at all, but she's a dedicated doctor whether she's treating mummies or infant ghouls and she's smart. This was a fun novel to read, full of references to classic horror.

**Twenty Years' Experience as a Ghost Hunter**, by Elliott O'Donnell

Price: Free

Formats: Kindle, EPUB, Plain Text

Source Note: Project Gutenberg

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/50775>

While this book is older (1916), it is very well-written in a crisp, humorous and modern style. In his autobiographical account, O'Donnell describes how, despite having the usual education, he became an unemployed ne'er-do-well with a paranormal hobby. His ghost hunting runs from the United Kingdom to Europe and across the United States where he either elicits ghost stories from his acquaintances or recounts his own adventures. This includes experiences in San Francisco, Denver and a comment on Sacramento: too hot in summer, too cold in winter, but he bought a great pair of suspenders there, best fifty cents he ever spent! He is a non-sceptic, true believer and very entertaining with it. Good for late night or campfire reading.

**Horrorstör: a Novel**, by Grady Hendrix

Price: \$1.99

Formats: Kindle

Source Note: Amazon

We've all been trapped in Ikea, the store that entices with cheap, yet stylish furniture with unpronounceable names, yet won't let you go until you've been through every.single.showcase.room. Orsk, an Ikea clone afflicted with a cheerfully overwhelming culture of brainwashed employees (the trainees wear red shirts), begins to have unexplained breakages after the store closes for the night. A group of underperforming workers 'volunteer' for the graveyard shift to find out just what is happening to wreak havoc among the Kjerring bookshelves,

shattered Glans water goblets, and smashed Liripip wardrobes. "We never stop. We never sleep. And now we're in your home." Also includes Orsk catalog illustrations and store coupons.

**Demonic Dolls, True Tales of Terrible Toys**, by John Harker

Price: \$2.99, free with Kindle Unlimited

Formats: Kindle

Source Note: Amazon

Haunted dolls support some of the creepiest plotlines in moviedom (Annabelle, anyone?) Who knew that 'haunted' dolls actually exist? This short but entertaining book tells the story of the real Annabelle, a haunted Raggedy Anne Doll that has allegedly killed two people and tried to kill a priest. Other infamous toys are described as well, like Robert, a Florida boy's doll that wrecked his marriage; Letta, a gypsy doll that turns his head to look at you; and Joliet, a cursed doll. Many of these dolls have been seen on television or written about previously but there are some that I'd never heard of before. The \$2.99 is pricey for a short book (119 Kindle pages), but I found it entertaining and accurate, i.e. the tales told are consistent with what I'd read elsewhere about these toys. It also has color pictures of the dolls, a generous bibliography and a set of hotlinks to various related web pages. And a nice chapter about the haunted doll trade; yes there is one!

## PROFESSIONAL READING IN REVIEW

Elisabeth McKechnie, U.C. Davis Law Library

**“What Doctoral Student Motivation Tells Us about the Future of LIS Education,”** by Africa S. Hands, *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2018, pp. 17-25.

Very few LIS doctoral students go on to academic careers. The author studied first year LIS doctoral students to determine what their motivations were in attaining Ph.D.'s in LIS, expecting her findings to affect student recruitment, and help in the development of doctoral programs in this area. The top five student motivators included research interests, prior experience in academe, appeal of the scholarly environment, preparation for the future, and encouragement from others. She found that while the participants shared an interest in research, they didn't display as much for an academic career in teaching. She suggests that more encouragement be offered at this level, lest there be a future shortage of faculty to staff library schools.

**“Fake News Alerts: Teaching news literacy skills in a meme world,”** by Sonnet Ireland, *The Reference Librarian*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2018, pp. 122-128.

“Fake news” today is, unfortunately, indistinguishable from the real by a large segment of the public. Teaching information literacy has become a vital task for librarians, both public and legal. The author discusses the evolution of internet memes and the need for librarians to find ways to counteract the hypnotic effect of visual fake news. She discusses how to define and identify fake news, what was formerly called “yellow journalism,” and best of all, offers sources for visually catchy images and handouts to educate the public. On the flip side, she talks about how to identify reliable news sources, assessing sources used by the journalist, and how to address bias and logical fallacies. Then ultimately, how a librarian can determine when news is “shareworthy” in itself, so that she herself no longer contributes to the problem by spreading dicey memes.

**“Bloomberg’s Points of Law: Can they compete with headnotes?”** by Jill Sturgeon, University of Colorado Law School, *The Colorado Lawyer*, August/September 2018.

Bloomberg rolled out its answer to headnotes in 2017 when it introduced Points of Law, winning a new product award from AALL in 2018. The article author compares the three “headnote” features among Lexis, Westlaw and Bloomberg. She notes that Westlaw’s headnotes are shorter and prepared by human editors, Lexis’ are wordier and machine-produced. The Bloomberg Points of Law are not actual headnotes and are apparently AI-produced. Points of Law appear within a case as highlighted bits of text when identical words and phrases have been repeated at least five times by other cases. This resulted in similar responses in all three systems when she brought up the *Palsgraf* case. The content highlighted was similar in each case as well. However when she looked at *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, Lexis and West both had headnotes but Bloomberg had no Points of Law at all for the case. *Masterpiece Cakeshop* was so new that it didn’t reach the threshold number of cases citing similar language to trigger the application. While *Masterpiece Cakeshop* will undoubtedly spawn multiple highlights over the years, it cannot be depended on by a user looking for current law until the algorithms get better at understanding law and context. Until then, we are left with the human brain.

## Spotlight on...

### Nancy McEnroe

#### **How did you choose law librarianship as a career?**

Way back in time, at the rosy dawn of the electronic research age, I was hired for my first professional position by the Travelers Insurance Companies as a reference librarian. The Travelers was unusual in that there was one in-house library for both the legal and the business collections. My first job had me straddling the aisles between business and legal resources.

The library's legal collection was substantial. The Travelers, at the time, was one of the largest insurance companies in the U.S. The company employed hundreds of in-house attorneys - in the law department and within the departments handling the various lines of insurance. The number of company lawyers easily made up one of the largest "law firms" in the state. The Travelers library, because of its size, budget, and central location to the law department and executive suites presented an amazing opportunity to explore working as a legal researcher. While I was there, the technology for early computer assisted legal research arrived on the 8th floor. I can still recall the piercing squeal you needed to hear through the telephone receiver before you placed it into the couplers to establish the connection with the computer.

The legal professionals back then needed, just as modern lawyers still need, well-organized information collections for a successful practice. Lawyers, usually fairly smart, greatly appreciated librarians who could grasp onto emerging technology and figure out how it might best serve information needs. It was a professional group that I thought was worth serving.

#### **What was the last book you read that you really enjoyed and why?**

I am that kind of reader who always has a large pile of books on the nightstand. I pick up and put down titles depending on whether I feel the need for knowledge or an emotional pick-me-up. It might be history, biography, light or serious literature. So, what I am reading on any day? Just depends. Jane Austen is always within easy reach to lull me back to sleep with her satisfactory endings when a bout of insomnia surfaces in the dead of night. Today's national political situation causes anxiety for many of us. "What's next" is a common thought and might the change help restore some sanity to our democratic processes?

A book that I found hard not to finish once started was *Circe* by Madeline Miller. It is the author's retelling of the story of a goddess/witch, a character who appears in *The Odyssey*. It is a wonderful tale of a magical, primitive world, told with simple, elegant writing that fits with simpler times. The setting of *Circe* is a society when men or male gods dominated and warred against one another. Ms. Miller shows the events from the perspective of a female caught in the required passive role as those times demanded of her— though it is the story of a very special female.

With none of the anxiety-producing uncertainty of our modern 24-hour news cycles, it allowed me to escape to a different time into the company of obvious monsters and heroes, as well as, non self-manufactured gods.



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