

NOCALL News

Northern California Association of Law Libraries
A chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries

So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, good night...

Delia L. Montesinos, Ropes & Gray

This is it, my last column. By the time you read it, Jeremy Sullivan will be NOCALL's new President and I will have become Past President.

I did not accomplish everything on my to-do list (hello, wiki reorg, I'm still looking at you) but the most important item was implemented earlier this year: members now have the option of adding personal pronouns to their NOCALL profile—this is a continuation of Sarah's DE&I efforts and something I hope will be built upon by future NOCALL presidents.

I take away two big lessons from my presidency. First and most importantly, DELEGATE! Being a successful leader means you should 1000% leverage the strengths of the team to achieve your goals. I was not very good at this. I was rather bad, actually. Especially since everyone on the Board kept offering to help me. For that, I apologize. I truly wish I had taken advantage of your kind offers—Jeremy: don't be me.

Second, the reason NOCALL is great can be attributed to the amazing support our committees provide to the Board and membership. They are the ones driving many of the things you experience as a member: events, advocacy, job announcements, member recruitment, nominations, handing out awards and grants, as well as managing the technology and the funds that make it all happen. I am forever grateful to those who served with me this term and to those on whose shoulders we stood. Your commitment to furthering our profession is what makes NOCALL not only one of the largest, most recognizable AALL chapters but one that truly shines. Thank you.

I close this column with some thoughts from my [first one](#): I still don't know how I landed this job but to the mysterious person who nominated me for the role: you're the best. It has been an amazing experience which I would have never sought on my own. Especially since I used to be, like many of you, a "stealth mode" NOCALLer. So don't be me. Engage fully with NOCALL: join a committee, throw your hat in the ring during the next election cycle, attend events, and seek out members near you. I'm at Embarcadero 3 and would love to buy you a cup of Philz' iced Turkish coffee. Let's meet up.



Volume 42, Number 5
May - June 2022

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HEADNOTES FROM HOLLY

Holly Riccio

MY YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING... Anyone that is familiar with Joan Didion's book will realize that this is a clue to why I skipped my column in the last NOCALL News issue. I have experienced the most devastating of losses recently and am in the process of navigating and understanding the grief process. My partner of almost 20 years, and the one true love of my life, Lee Anne, passed away last month after being diagnosed with late-stage cancer only a few months prior. I have found myself embracing my librarian mindset as I root through boxes and drawers, unearthing the many keepsakes she had and taking all of them in—and then, of course, reorganizing them in a way that makes more sense. It is amazing how even the smallest or most innocuous of objects can represent so much and bring up so many feelings and emotions. Tiny seashells, old coin purses, matches, expired driver's licenses—she kept them all. I am grateful for all of the things I have to surround myself with as physical reminders and representations of what I know is her spiritual presence that is most definitely still here with me, and always will be. I look forward to continuing to play archaeologist and archivist with this most precious collection of all.

THE ART OF STORYTELLING... I am a huge proponent of storytelling and believe it is an essential leadership skill that everyone should understand and practice. While storytelling in the professional or work realm is different in content than personal stories, it is the same in structure, so telling stories to your friends and family strengthens

your storytelling skills for when you have to have that elevator pitch ready to justify a new library purchase or initiative. I have told the story of Lee Anne's last few months many times, and while it is obviously hard to tell, since it lacks a happy ending, telling it has also reminded me that stories are hardly ever one note. We are all multifaceted, so our stories are reflective of that. Amongst my particular tragedy, there were moments of tenderness, hope, and even hilarity. The best stories take the listener on a journey, complete with highs and lows, twists and turns, eventually depositing them at a satisfying ending. I look forward to weaving my memories into stories and honing my storytelling skills along the way, all while keeping Lee Anne alive through words.

AUTHENTIC SELF... I had a conversation with a fellow law librarian recently about authenticity, and specifically how and when to show your authentic self in the work environment, and I thought this was a very intriguing question. I have trouble not being my authentic self in any environment, but I can also remember a time earlier in my career where this was not the case. There is a delicate balance of how much of ourselves we bring to—and reveal at—our jobs, but when done right, our authentic selves can really bring out the best in others and lead to the best results. This concept is also an interesting one to think about in the context of interviewing for a job. How much of your personality do you show to your potential employer? If done right, maybe it is the difference between you and another candidate. And, when we are authentically ourselves, and things work out the way we hoped, the results feel that much better and more satisfying.

Professional Reading in Review

Elisabeth McKechnie and Kristin Brandt,
U.C. Davis Law Library

“The Librarians Are Not Okay,” by Anne Helen Petersen, May 1, 2022. Available at: <https://annehelen.substack.com/p/the-librarians-are-not-okay>

This important article was delivered by Anne Helen Petersen as a keynote at the Conference on Academic Library Management in April. Petersen describes the burnout and exhaustion experienced by library workers and names what has led to it. Librarians are undervalued. We work “passion” jobs, which are easy to exploit. We just worked through—and are still working through—not only a pandemic, but also multiple climate crises, a reckoning with racial injustice and systemic racism, ... the list goes on. And during all this, many of our jobs have only expanded. What do we do about it? Petersen, who has been writing about burnout since 2019, has ideas, from the industry to the personal level. This article should help start discussions—in professional organizations, institutions, workplaces, and teams—to stop the downward spiral and move toward positive change.

“Practical Technology: Getting Around Barriers to Access, Tools Everyday Librarians Can Apply,” by Jessamyn West, *Information Today*, April 2022, vol. 42, no. 3 pp 12-14.

In this short article, Jessamyn discusses the various barriers librarians run into, whether it’s a paywall or regional restriction. Many things that are perfectly legal for libraries to access are hard to get because of artificial barriers. For example, she discusses how to get around a paywall or access an article when you’ve used your limit. She discusses a variety of software tools like vpn’s, Calibre and free plugins that will expand access for the user. This was a useful and informative article.

“How Law Firm Librarians are Reinventing Themselves,” by Jenna Greene, *Reuters*, February 18, 2022. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/how-law-firm-librarians-are-reinventing-themselves-2022-02-18/>

While the global pandemic has caused disruption in legal corners, it has also opened opportunities for law libraries and their staff at large law firms. Once easily pigeonholed within a print library,

librarians have been operating virtually for years. The pandemic only broke down more barriers, increasing visibility of the Librarians’ various talents. During the lockdown, some firm librarians had an opportunity to be included in important meetings, increasing the library profile and educating attorneys about the library’s value as a resource. Make sure that you get into the room! the article advises.

“U.S. News Rankings Get it Right on Law Libraries,” by Amanda Runyon, Leslie A. Street and Amanda Watson, *TaxProf Blog*, Available at https://taxprof.typepad.com/taxprof_blog/2022/03/us-news-rankings-get-it-right-on-law-libraries.html

U.S. News has released the 2023 Best Law School rankings. For the second year in a row, the standards by which academic law libraries are judged have changed. After the 2022 methodology changes, a variety of groups protested that the new metrics were inaccurate and didn’t represent the true value that the library has for a law school. The new ranking method illustrates suggestions presented by AALL and the Society of Academic Law Library Directors among others. The biggest change is the elimination of title counts, which penalizes younger and newer libraries with smaller collections while ignoring increasing use of online resources. The metric focuses on whether the law library is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the student population. It also measures expenditures, including law library funding.

“As Professional Conferences Went Virtual, More Women Attended,” by Cheryl Winokur Munk, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 2022. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/virtual-conferences-increase-women-attendance-11652452541>

Researchers in two studies found a notable change when the pandemic forced conferences to go virtual: more women showed up. In an analysis of three major STEM conferences, women’s attendance grew by as much as 253%, compared to an increase among men by as high as 121%. Another study examined 12,000 economics seminars and found that the shift to virtual changed the composition of seminar speakers to include more women. These studies suggest that while in-person conferences offer more networking opportunities, hybrid and virtual conferences may be a better option for attracting women speakers and attendees, as well as increasing attendance overall.

Christine Sellers Sullivan

Littler Mendelson, P.C.

How did you choose law librarianship as a career?

I decided to go to law school because I was working for a law firm and it seemed like a good idea even though all of the attorneys were like NOOOOOO...which might not be the best basis for a life decision but I think it worked out okay! My first day of law school, I had my first legal research class. The professor introduced herself by saying she had a law degree and a library science degree and I was hooked since I've always loved research and books. I went straight from law school at the University of South Carolina into their library science school. After graduation, I got a job at a local law firm purely by chance – I was at my favorite local Thai restaurant and starting chatting with a customer waiting for takeout who turned out to be a partner that saw the possibilities in a dual degreed law firm librarian. So that's how I mostly ended up in law firms!

Who or what has had the greatest impact on your law librarian career?

I definitely think getting laid off during the Great Recession in 2009 has had the biggest impact on my career. I didn't take it personally and knew it was purely a business decision. My firm did what they could for me. At the time, so many people were getting laid off. The ABA and ALA created resource centers for their affected members. AALL didn't really have anything in the works so I started a blog called Law Librarians of Leisure. I tried to post articles of interest and all the job openings I could find, along with running surveys of the status of the profession. I ended up at the Law Library of Congress after about six months, where I used my blogging and social media experience to help start [In Custodia Legis](#). I also gained a life long love of legislative research, which has definitely influenced the positions I've had since. But people still remember that blog and it gets mentioned to me about once a year and I always love hearing that it helped people.

Can you tell us about your Scottish Fold cat Fred?

I had two of the best cats for 16 years – Pemberley and Mr. Darcy. After they passed, it was hard to picture even getting another cat until I fell in love with an Instagram account of a random Scottish Fold. Their ears were so cute! I did some research and it turned out there was a local breeder in South Carolina. She eventually had a kitten on offer with the grumpiest face that just made me smile. I named him Captain Frederick Wentworth (yes there is a theme to my cats' names) but he just goes by Fred. He's a little bit grumpy just like his face and wants nothing more in the world than for you to give him treats. He does have Instagram account ([@foldedfred](#)), though I've been slack about posting since Mina came along so I've sent along a bonus picture. We also have two other cats named Griffin and Bernie whose names are not Austen inspired because they were named by my stepdaughters.



Please describe your idea of a perfect meal.

Ohhh I love a good meal! One of my favorite things to do is to host a dinner party, though this was mostly before Covid and before baby. I love developing a theme and finding a complicated recipe to cook and looking for matching cocktails. It's all a bit of a scramble until you sit down around the table and just enjoy fabulous conversations with friends. I can't say there's one particular recipe that is best (though [bo ssam](#) is always a hit, as is this [dijon and cognac beef stew](#)). For me, it is all about making something delicious and enjoying it with people.

What was the last book you read that you really enjoyed? Why?

Oof, this one is tough. I have not had a lot of time for reading lately since having a baby in October! The last book I read was pre-baby: *All Systems Red, The Murderbot Diaries #1* by Martha Wells. It's the first novella in a sci-fi series set in the future starring a security android that has hacked its own government module and call itself Murderbot. It is laugh out loud funny and I recommend it to anyone contemplating what makes us human.

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