

NOCALL News

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jeremy Sullivan

If my first few columns had a theme, it was basically 'Hey guys, come join my drum circle'. Today's theme is much more 'Get off my lawn!' I just had the good fortune of spending a day in person with our colleagues at the 2023 Spring Institute. Tremendous congratulations are due to Tony Pelczynski and the Spring Institute committee for a highly informative and thought-provoking day of programming.

As a reminder, the theme for the Institute was A.I. & Law Librarianship, and a good effort was made to get at the 'what does it all mean?' implications of introducing Artificial Intelligence into the practice of law. I was struck in particular by two moments. First, during the law librarian panel session, Suzanne Mawhinney of USF made reference to the ongoing challenges of teaching law students that they can't find everything on Google, a battle academics and other law librarians have been fighting for the better part of two decades. Now, Suzanne went on, add to that the challenges posed by the arrival of AI tools for legal research and writing. We find ourselves tasked with tempering enthusiasm about tools that purportedly make things even easier, and articulating the drawbacks that come along with the advantages. I hate the idea of law librarianship as a series of wet blanket conversations, constantly admonishing each new generation of law students or associates that the shiny new thing they've been reading about isn't the be-all/end-all solution, but that's where we find ourselves. With each new technological advance, the onus is on us to look under the hood to fully understand the pluses and minuses and then articulate them to a generation whose response may amount to 'who cares, look how fast I found the answer.'

The second moment that gave me pause was during the presentation given by Casetext's Pablo Arredondo. Pablo's enthusiasm for infusing AI into the legal process was infectious, but with a little pushback from our colleagues in the room, it started to devolve into some of the startup utopianism that we've all become very familiar with. If tools like Casetext aren't targeting the pro se community, what is the chance that real and necessary change will be effected in the legal system? Pablo's sense was that a lawyer whose time spent writing briefs or contracts was reduced by a factor of 10 or 20 would use that 'extra' time to set about changing law, improving access to justice, etc. But will they? Or will that attorney use the newfound time to do what's easier and more lucrative – namely writing more briefs and contracts?

None of this is to cast any aspersions on the Spring Institute itself, which again was 10 out of 10, no notes. It's just that as members of a profession that continually grapples with existential questions, we once again appear to be faced with a new round of such questions.



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HEADNOTES FROM HOLLY

Holly Riccio

NOCALL NETWORKING... First things first—kudos to the NOCALL Spring Institute committee for putting on and pulling off a great event recently. It was wonderful to be at a NOCALL event in person again, too. I have had the opportunity to be at a few in person professional educational events in the last few months, and one thing I have noticed is that being with so many people for so long is not as easy as it used to be. Perhaps this is a lingering effect of the pandemic and working remotely, but I definitely felt it and I know anecdotally that I am not alone. I suspect those that plan on attending the AALL Annual Meeting in Boston this summer may need more down time and disco naps than in years past—at least I know I will.

THE MUSIC (WO)MAN... I continue to explore ways in which to bring joy back into my life (since Lee Anne's passing almost one year ago now), and one way I am trying to accomplish this is through music. I started taking weekly voice lessons with my initial goal being perhaps joining a local choir or group, and also trying my hand at songwriting. As is the case with many endeavors we take on, there are additional benefits on top of the intended results, and this exercise is a perfect example of that. One of the unintended outcomes is that the whole process—lessons, practice, journaling—has brought some much-welcomed structure and regularity to my life. The other unintended outcome is that I might even stretch myself beyond my initial goal and attempt an open mic performance someday—time will tell if that pans out or not. Let this be a reminder to remain open to all of the outcomes from taking on new endeavors, both the intended and the unintended ones.

MEETING TAKEAWAYS... I recently attended a planning meeting for a law librarian professional development event where the outside speaker was going to be setting the tone for some very deep and vulnerable conversation amongst attendees. I have heard many speakers set the confidential tone for a meeting in many ways over the years, and the one I usually use for smaller or one-on-one

meetings is that we have "...invoked the cone of silence." However, I now have a new—and even alliterative—one to add to my arsenal, especially for larger groups. It is this: What's learned here leaves here, and what's said here stays here.

PROFESSIONAL READING IN REVIEW

Elisabeth McKechnie, Kristin Brandt, Elisa Rodrigues, and Refugio Acker-Ramirez, U.C. Davis Law Library

"The Work of Women of Color Academic Librarians in Higher Education: Perspectives on Emotional and Invisible Labor," by Tamara Rhodes, Naomi Bishop, and Alanna Aiko Moore, *up//root publication* (February 13, 2023). Available at: <https://www.uproot.space/features/the-work-of-women-of-color>

In the Nov/Dec 2022 issue, we highlighted invisible labor in academic libraries. *The Work of Women of Color Academic Librarians in Higher Education* focuses on the invisible and emotional labor of Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color (BIWOC) in academic libraries. In an already undervalued environment, where the most privileged of library workers struggle to display value to stakeholders, BIWOC are often given the uncompensated task to navigate, address, and lead diversity efforts that ultimately should not disrupt the status quo. Three BIWOC academic librarians share their experiences on navigating racial impacts of world events (Covid-19 and 2020 Civil Unrest) and the expectations put upon BIWOC to represent their communities while working within the structure of the white dominated library profession.

"See You In Court,' The Fight Against Disinformation Turns to the Legal System," by Amy Affelt, *Online Searcher*, November/December 2022, pp 10-13.

"Speech is free, but lies you have to pay for." This quote from the Alex Jones case opens the article, explaining the premise behind a new wave of counter-disinformation lawsuits. As Jones can attest, courts are now proving an effective, if clunky, tool against those who lie for profit. The

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article sets forth the elements of a disinformation case, its basic vocabulary (i.e. key words) and, most important to librarians, how to research it. Calling librarians “foot soldiers” in the fight for truth, the author details how researchers can locate and compile existing cases in this area. Best of all, she uses tools likely to be part of a law librarian’s arsenal like Westlaw Practical Law, Factiva and Bloomberg Dockets. A librarian who wants to do intensive research into the area will find this an excellent introduction to the subject.

“Research is Messy: Teaching Students to Expect Non-linear Research,” by Gina Petersen and Jason Kruse, *College & Research Libraries News*, vol. 84, no. 2 (February 2023). Available at <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.84.2.59>

Librarians have a thorough understanding that the research process can be messy and is often nonlinear. Yet, despite this awareness, librarians often fail to convey this crucial point to students during instructional sessions, which could leave students feeling frustrated and unprepared when they dive into the research. To help remedy this issue, the authors piloted a workshop aimed at addressing the research pitfalls that often come up while also highlighting strategies that can help students navigate the nonlinear research process. The authors reported that participants found the workshop helpful. By highlighting the iterative research process in their instruction, librarians can help normalize the research struggles and better prepare students for their research assignments.

“Slow is Smooth, Smooth is Fast: How Slowing Down Can Make Us Better Researchers,” by Katharine Hanson, *Legal Reference Services Quarterly* (December 29, 2022).

Research librarians are busy, often required to do more with less. This pressure can lead to prioritizing speed and efficiency over taking the time to perform complex, more in-depth research that some projects require. The author discusses two separate systems operating in our brains, one more automatic, requiring very little conscious thought, and the other more effortful and deliberate. Studies show that we more readily use the first system without stopping to consider whether the second system would be more appropriate. The author urges us to avoid the temptation to quickly hit the send button and instead pause and give ourselves some space to think creatively and engage with questions on a deeper level.

REMEMBERING NINA PORCELLA

NOCALL Memorials Committee
Leslie Hesdorfer and Jane Metz

Nina Porcella, former Librarian at the San Francisco office of Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP, passed away on January 27, 2023. Nina’s family asked that donations in Nina’s memory be made to Saint Jude’s Hospital. NOCALL contributed to honor Nina and all that she meant to our community.

Martin Korn, Sheppard Mullin:

Nina Porcella was a beloved member of my team for almost 15 years. I remember her having a biting wit and wonderful sense of humor. She had many long-time repeat patrons within Sheppard Mullin, especially in the San Francisco office where people saw her every day (and especially enjoyed the bowl of candy she kept on her counter). She did not easily suffer fools and proudly spoke her mind when she felt the need, a quality of hers I admired. I remember Nina fondly talking about the wonderful times she had while visiting her niece Isabella whenever she came down to Los Angeles for department meetings (and complaining that we didn’t hold them frequently enough). I can definitely say that our team during Nina’s tenure with Sheppard Mullin was fantastic and her contributions to it were key to making it work. She is missed.

Michael Stoler, former NOCALL member:

It made me very sad to hear of the passing of Nina Altagracia Porcella. For eight years, I sat a few feet from her as Assistant Librarian in the San Francisco office of Sheppard Mullin when she was Librarian. She was a person of strong likes and dislikes. She liked - loved - her cats; the food from the French restaurant downstairs from her apartment; flan and other specialties of the Dominican Republic, where she grew up; astrology; the office’s Super Bowl betting pool; and her boa made of a series of knitted balls strung together. She liked finding answers and giving presentations. She disliked - well, she used the expressions “Don’t get me started” and “unbelievable” a lot.

She spoke fluent, native Spanish which sounded beautiful coming from her office and helped me practice my comprehension. She was the first person I knew to have a smartphone. After I told her that my own cats liked bacon as a treat, she would set aside the bacon from her breakfast sandwiches and give it to me for them.

I am truly sorry she is no longer in this world.

Mark Mackler, California Department of Justice (retired):

When I first met Nina, she was the librarian at Laughlin, Falbo. I quickly learned that if I were stumped with a wretched reference question pertaining to workers' compensation or public agency defense, she would be the person to call. And if she did not know the answer, she would find out.

But there was more to Nina than Nina the Librarian. There was also Nina the Cat Person. Nina kept bragging to me that she had managed to potty-train her cat Monet. Of course, I did not believe her for a moment. But one day I visited her at her apartment on Pine Street and it happened! I actually saw Monet do her thing in the bathroom. On that day, I realized that doubting Nina was never a smart thing to do.

Diane Rodriguez, San Francisco Law Library:

Nina was a treasure, a fun and knowledgeable colleague and friend. She was warm and had a sharp sense of humor. She went out of her way to talk to newer members and because she'd been in NOCALL so long, she had the best stories! I will miss her.

LEGAL TECH RECAP

Kristie Chamorro, UC Berkeley Law Library

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools continue to dominate the legal tech news. In February, OpenAI introduced [GPT-4](#), its new AI model that vastly outperforms its predecessor, GPT-3.5. For example, while GPT-3.5 ranked in the 10th percentile on the bar exam, [GPT-4 ranked in the 90th](#) (and it leapfrogs human test takers by being able to finish the test within minutes). Microsoft's chatbot [Bing](#), powered by GPT-4, made headlines when it [professed its love](#) for a New York Times columnist. Google began a [cautious rollout](#) of its AI chatbot, [Bard](#), which it released to a limited number of users in late March (you can join the waitlist [here](#)). Other ChatGPT competitors made headlines, including [Ernie](#), China's first major rival to ChatGPT.

Rather than give a full rundown of the latest ChatGPT/generative AI news, I'm going to return to my usual format of legal tech updates. It's not surprising that many of these new products/features are harnessing generative

AI technology, including Casetext's groundbreaking launch of [CoCounsel](#).

BlackBoiler

[Blackboiler](#), AI contract review/negotiation software that instantaneously redlines contracts, recently released ContextAI. This new feature identifies the rules and reasoning behind its automated markup suggestions and shows examples of how others in the organization have edited similar language. Bob Ambrogi [interviewed](#) Blackboiler's co-founder and CEO and included a [Blackboiler profile](#) in his Legal Technology Directory.

Bloomberg Law

The February 23 [CRIV/ Bloomberg Law Semiannual](#) call covered improvements in accessibility of materials on Bloomberg Law, enhancements to docket information and discoverability, and additions to practical guidance materials.

Bloomberg's [recent product updates](#) include a new [Discovery Practice Page](#), which is described as "a one-stop resource providing comprehensive guidance to early-career associates through each aspect of fact discovery," and a new [In Focus: Artificial Intelligence page](#).

Casetext

On March 1, Casetext [announced](#) the launch of [CoCounsel](#), which it described as "the world's first AI legal assistant." Casetext recently [confirmed](#) that CoCounsel is powered by GPT-4.

Since its release, CoCounsel has received a great deal of media attention. Jean O'Grady reported on both the [launch of CoCounsel](#) and their [presentation at LegalWeek](#); Abrogi [featured the launch](#) and discussed a "new age in the practice of law" in the [March 21 episode](#) of his LawNext podcast, and CEO Jake Heller and CIO Pablo Arredondo appeared on [MSNBC's Morning Joe](#). Other coverage includes recent posts on ABA's [Legal Rebels](#) and [Above the Law](#).

Courtroom Insight

[Courtroom Insight](#) and [LexMachina announced](#) a collaboration that will allow mutual customers to access Lex Machina's API data directly from the Courtroom Insight platform.

Fastcase

Just as I was hitting send on this column, news came in that [Fastcase](#) and [vLex](#) are merging into a combined entity called vLex Group. The [April 4 press release](#) asserts that they will have the world's largest law firm subscriber base and over 1 billion documents from more than 100 countries. [Ambrogi reported](#) on the merger, with the prediction that it will "threaten the longstanding 'Wexis' legal research duopoly."

HeinOnline

HeinOnline's [March 2023 Content Release](#) includes new [Military Legal Resources](#) and [Labor and Employment: The American Worker](#) databases.

Ironclad

[Ironclad](#), a digital contract management platform, joined the list of companies that are harnessing OpenAI technology with the introduction of [AI Assist](#). This beta feature instantly redlines contracts based on a company's set of approved language and clauses.

LexisNexis

In late March, [LexisNexis Legal and Professional](#) published a [summary](#) of their survey results on the use of generative AI tools in the legal field. Ambrogi [covered the poll](#), pointing out that 68% of legal professionals had no plan to use generative AI tools in their work at this time.

vLex

In addition to the Fastcase merger, [vLex](#) also [announced](#) a partnership with the American Bar Association to offer access to ABA's Antitrust Law Section resources on vLex's AI-powered platform. Ambrogi [moderated a demo](#) of the new antitrust library in his [How It Works](#) series.

Wolters Kluwer

[Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory, U.S.](#) [announced](#) a suite of new and enhanced features in [Legisway](#), including AI-powered risk management tools.

In the wake of the recent bank failures, Wolters Kluwer also introduced the [Bank Failures Toolkit](#) (accessible on VitalLaw). Some of the toolkit resources are publicly available, including the [Due Diligence Checklist](#) and the [Guide to Bank Failures](#). For detailed coverage of the release, take a look at the [March 30 Dewey B Strategic](#) post.

Zuva

Zuva [announced](#) that it will offer a free version of its AI-powered contract review technology. Users can access the free version by uploading contracts to [Zuva's website](#). Ambrogi [explained](#) that there are limitations to the free version, including page and file size maximums.

Things You Should Check Out

[Legalweek 2023](#), one of the world's largest legal technology conferences, was held in New York in late March. For a summary of the highlights, check out these posts from the [Courtroom Insight Blog](#) and [LawSites](#).

The [ABA Techshow](#), the ABA's annual tech conference, was also held in March. Both the [AALL Legal Innovation & Technology SIS](#) and [LawSites](#) posted recaps of the conference.

Since I was recently moved off the Bard waitlist, I couldn't resist [asking it what it thinks about the legal tech developments since January](#) (Bard is able to retrieve current information, unlike ChatGPT 3.5, which is trained on data through September 2021). Bard's responses were generic and didn't mention any of the specific updates covered here (but it did generate a good packing list for an upcoming trip!)

ANDREA M. HUNT

Troutman Pepper

How did you choose law librarianship as a career?

I graduated from Cal State Long Beach with a literal BA in English a couple of years after "Avenue Q", with its musical number "What Do You Do With A BA in English?", won the Tony Award for Best Musical. The question posed by the song was all too real for me. I did office administrative work while my husband finished his PhD and took that time to figure out what I truly wanted to be when I grew up. I knew pretty quickly that I wanted to go into library work of some kind - I love learning new things and sharing that knowledge with others. Meanwhile my aunt, who had been a law firm librarian for decades, suggested I connect with a filing service to get a feel for private law libraries. Soon after, I took a temporary technical services assignment at Morrison & Foerster, which became permanent, and I started on my MLIS the next fall. Working as a Research Assistant at MoFo while getting my MLIS was such a blessing. The team, led at the time by Kathy Skinner, were incredibly giving with their time and expertise. That spirit of collegiality is something I've found more broadly across our field and is one of the things I love best about the profession. Since then, I've shifted from a research focus to an operations/technology focus, but that core desire - to learn and to connect others with information they need - has stayed the same.

How do you, as a librarian of 12 of years, continue to keep yourself vital in this profession?

The short answer is: making friends! I love hearing what others in the field are working on - what challenges they're tackling and how. Law libraries, particularly now, sit at a crossroads where the humanities and technology collide, and I've also found it valuable to connect with other types of legal technologists - innovation teams, knowledge managers, etc. - to broaden my perspective.

If you were not working as a law librarian, what would you most likely be doing?

That BA in English had a focus in creative writing, which is something I've continued to pursue as a hobby. The fantasy of being a bestselling sci-fi/fantasy author, drowning in Hugo and Nebula Awards and writing my next manuscript in an idyllic garden surrounded by impossibly round cats is a strong one. But I love my work and the incredibly smart people I get to work with every day. And the fast-paced day-to-day work makes those moments of writing in a calm, energizing setting even more special.

Is there anything obscure that you know more than the average bear about?

I absorbed a lot of odd knowledge by osmosis when my husband was working on his PhD, which centered around the chemistry of subduction zones (areas where one tectonic plate slides under another) and the way such ambient conditions metamorphose the rock. I wrote a secondary-world fantasy story that used this concept, miniaturized by magical means, to create a host of technologies, including renewable batteries and encrypted information storage.

What is your favorite meal?

I'm not sure there's anything more perfect than noodles. In cooler months I tend toward riffs on Italian noodles - Alison Roman's cauliflower pasta is amazing - and in warmer months I'm all about pad see ew and somen.

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

"Hench" by Natalie Zina Walschots. It's the story of a woman who works for her local henchman temp agency doing office work for super villains, and what happens when she finally gets an engaging assignment that ends prematurely when a hero crashes her boss's compound and sends her to the hospital as collateral damage. Aside from being a witty and fun read, I was surprised how much the book examined serious themes of information privacy, systemic inequality, and corporate leadership styles.

applicable to my experience as a research and social sciences librarian, as students often expect answers from databases when in reality that's not necessarily how it works, research-wise. Another idea Professor Nevelow discussed that is applicable to my experience teaching is that the way in which you begin your search limits where you get to and can limit thinking of other possible ways to approach a problem. I found myself considering how I might integrate that information into my class sessions, so students can think critically about the research process. Overall, NOCALL spring institute was invaluable and I was exposed to new perspectives and ideas.

REPORT FROM THE NOCALL SPRING INSTITUTE

Essy Barroso-Ramirez

Research and Social Sciences Librarian at SJSU

I am a new faculty member of San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and my departments are Communication Studies, Political Science and Public Administration. Due to supporting political science students in my role, I decided to join NOCALL and attend the 2023 Spring Institute. I was able to attend thanks to support from the NOCALL Grants Committee, as I applied for and was awarded a grant. I hoped to gain insight on how to support students headed to law school. I greatly enjoyed all of the presentations and speakers, despite not being familiar with law librarianship.

A recurring topic throughout the conference that I found interesting to hear about from the law librarian perspective is ChatGPT. Professor Emeritus Susan Nevelow discussed her work and listening to her research caused me to consider how interfaces make things hard or easy. I was fascinated to learn that for legal research queries, ChatGPT fabricates cases and does not have access to information prior to 2021. Professor Nevelow emphasized that people do not get answers but rather help, from systems. This is directly

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