

NOCALL News

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tony Pelczynski

Way back when, in my first NOCALL News column, I promised the membership that “[w]hen my time is up, and I hand off the NOCALL Presidency..., the organization will be neither stronger, nor weaker, than when I took over: it will remain solidly as-is.” Well, the end of my Presidency is near, and I lived up to my promise. Just barely.

Some lowlights: perhaps you were one of the many members who tried to join one of the online Business Meetings over which I presided, but were unable to, because I neglected to log in to Zoom and start the meeting (sorry!). Or maybe you were expecting up-to-date committee information on the NOCALL website, or any communications at all regarding committee assignments (sorry again!). As with many life endeavors, I wish had a do-over. I feel like I was finally beginning to hit my stride, just as my presidency began winding down. A few more months, and I might have approached something like a basic level of competency. Alas. Anyway, in the end – and my many, many blunders aside – NOCALL thankfully still stands.

Which leads me to the theme of my final column: why aren't you more involved in NOCALL? Yes, you – I'm talking to you (unless you're one of the ten or fifteen usual suspects who keep the proverbial NOCALL plates spinning – you know who you are). If you are at all NOCALL-curious, I would implore you to get involved: join a committee, or simply come and hang out at one of the many social gatherings the organization sponsors. Better yet, run for a position on the Executive Board. As a former member of the NOCALL Nominations Committee, I can attest that we are not exactly sifting through an unmanageable pile of primo potential candidates every year. Which is how you end up with a NOCALL President like me: a semi-competent slacker who almost certainly does not share your views in the librarian culture wars. To take just a couple of hot-button (albeit non-law librarian-specific) examples: I am mystified by the rigamarole over Drag Queen Story Hour, and I'm not sure I entirely agree that small children are clamoring for Trixie Mattel to read them picture books (the way its defenders carry on, you would think this is a timeworn tradition enshrined in the U.S. Constitution). And you know what else? I believe there are a number of books that SHOULD be banned in school libraries! Do you agree with me on these issues? Almost certainly not.

So, get involved, and don't let the angry, irrelevant curmudgeons of the world maintain their grip on the levers of power (oh, there's power in the NOCALL Presidency, baby!). Take some ownership in an organization that represents your interests, and shape it into something you would like it to be. You're paying your dues – why not get your money's worth? I was President for a year, and the place didn't burn down. But NOCALL deserves better leadership than “semi-competent.” It deserves someone like you!



Volume 44, Number 5
May-June 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message	1
Professional Reading in Review	2
NOCALL Survey on Generative AI Usage in Law Firms and Legal Employers.....	3
Spotlight on... Elena Smith	5

PROFESSIONAL READING IN REVIEW

Refugio Acker-Ramirez and Kristin Brandt
U.C. Davis Law Library

“Evaluation of Six News Aggregator Databases: A Comparison for Researchers and Librarians,” by Stacy Gilbert, Kyunghye Kim, Rebecca Kelley, Alyssa Wright & Alessia Zanin-Yost, *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship* (2024), vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 36-54.

In this study, members of an American College & Research Libraries committee compared six major news databases. Factors included scope of content, availability of major national and regional newspaper titles, and database features. The news databases were Newspaper Source Plus (EBSCO), Factiva, News (Gale OneFile), Nexis Uni, Access World News, and U.S. Newsstream (ProQuest). The researchers found that Factiva had the most top circulating U.S. newspapers (10/10) and most popular regional newspapers (24/25). U.S. Newsstream was second highest in popular U.S. newspapers (9/10), while Access World News placed second in regional coverage (20/25). Factiva also had the strongest advanced search options, including adverse, negative and positive search fields. However, some Factiva features, such as saving searches, varied by institutional license. The ProQuest, EBSCO, and Gale databases allowed significantly more downloads while Factiva only allowed for 100 articles and Access World News, 10 articles. The authors include a useful appendix allowing readers to compare database performance on a number of specific factors.

“Trust in Academic Libraries: How to Build Connections Between New Co-workers,” by Denise Brush, *College & Research Libraries News* (2024), vol. 85, no.4.

How does loss of trust occur in libraries? When trust is lost, how can it be restored? According to the author, who has worked in a number of library settings, lack of trust can grow when departments are siloed, or the work of individual librarians or departments is not visible to the rest of the library. Employee turnover can also erode trust. The author encourages libraries to offer opportunities for employees to get to know each other through social events or online collaborations. New employee orientation programs can help teach new staff what librarians and staff in other departments do. Librarians also need to make their work more visible to the rest of the library. An example of how this can be done is sharing schedules in Outlook calendars, so staff can see that librarians are teaching, in meetings, or consulting with students.

“Legal Research in the NextGen Era,” by Alyson Drake & Amanda Watson, *U of Houston Law Center Forthcoming, Buffalo Law Review Forthcoming*, (2024). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4819702>

The article discusses the importance of incorporating critical analysis and strategy into legal research instruction to prepare students for the NextGen Bar exam, which will include a legal research component for the first time. The authors propose a curriculum centered around four foundations: structure, sources, skills, and strategy. They introduce the "Four-Step Legal Research Process" as an example of a structure that explicitly emphasizes analysis at every stage. The authors argue that traditionally, legal research instruction has focused too heavily on finding sources and navigating databases, leaving the analytical and strategic aspects of research invisible to students. They stress the need to teach students how to engage in critical thinking, evaluate sources, choose appropriate research strategies, and transfer their knowledge to new contexts.

“Democratizing Law Librarianship: Reducing Barriers to Entry through Alternative Pathways to the Profession and Increased Support to Students. A Call to Action,” by Teresa M. Miguel-Stearns & Casandra Laskowski (2024), *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, pp. 1-32

The article discusses the challenges faced by the law librarianship profession in terms of diversity and recruitment of qualified candidates. It highlights the efforts made by the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and individual law libraries to address these issues over the past few decades, but notes that progress has been slow. The authors describe innovative solutions being implemented at the University of Arizona to create alternative pathways into the profession, reduce barriers to entry, and increase diversity. These include new degree programs such as a Bachelor of Arts in Law with an accelerated Master's in Library and Information Science, dual degrees combining legal studies and library science, a legal information certificate, and an enhanced Law Library Fellows Program. The article also emphasizes the importance of developing pipelines and mentorship opportunities, particularly targeting students from underrepresented communities. The authors invite other law libraries to collaborate with the University of Arizona's initiatives and suggest ways for AALL to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts more effectively.

NOCALL SURVEY ON GENERATIVE AI USAGE IN LAW FIRMS AND LEGAL EMPLOYERS

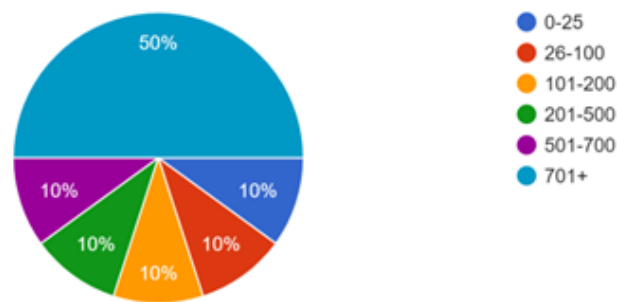
Kristin Brandt & Refugio Acker-Ramirez, UC Davis Law Library

In late February to early March of this year, we conducted a NOCALL survey to find out how employers were using Generative AI tools in the workplace. We sent the survey to prepare for a training session at our law school for students on generative AI in legal practice. We promised to share results if we received enough responses. Here are some highlights from the responses we received.

Responses by organization type and firm size

We received 15 responses to our survey. Sixty percent, or 9, were from law firms, followed by government employers/agencies other than courts with 4. We received 1 response from a court and 1 response from a county law library. Of the law firm respondents, fifty percent, or 5, were from firms with over 701 attorneys, with three respondents from firms with 101-200 attorneys and two respondents with 100 or fewer attorneys.

If you selected law firm, what size is your firm?
10 responses

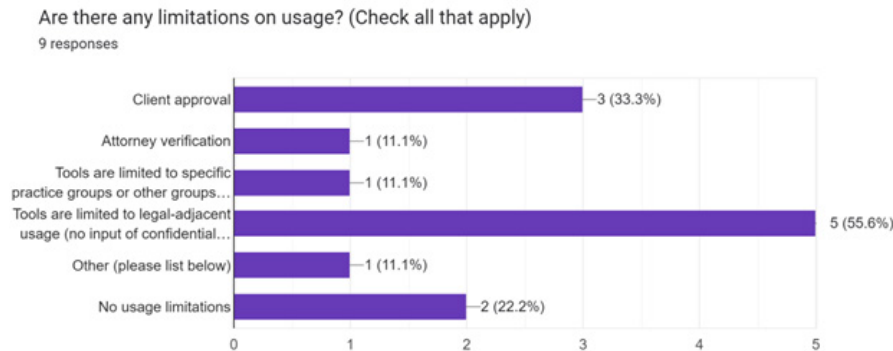


Generative AI usage policies

Just under half of respondents, or 46.7%, stated that their organization had a Generative AI usage policy. Forty percent responded that their organization had no policy and 13.3% were unknown. We asked respondents who responded “yes” to briefly describe their organization’s policy. The responses focused on preserving confidential client information, security, vetting Generative AI-produced information for accuracy, and usage agreements.

Briefly describe your firm or organization’s Generative AI usage policy
We can use the firm’s secure version of ChatGPT. Any other Gen AI tools must first be vetted by the firm’s security team. Any information obtained from a GenAI tool must be vetted by the user for accuracy.
No confidential client or firm information should be inputted into a gen AI system. All outputs should be checked for accuracy. Gen AI cannot be used for legal research. Gen AI use must comply with ethical rules, copyright laws, etc.
It’s limited to Research staff only, for now.
Main sites are blocked on firm network (chatGPT, Gemini, etc), and people are redirected to a substitute product with guardrails, usage policy agreement, etc.
Essentially, do not use Gen-AI outside the databases of WestLaw / Lexis. Never input client-identifying information
Only products approved by the firm

We also asked what limitations employers are placing on usage. The top limitations included legal-adjacent usage with 5 responses, followed by client approval with 3 responses. Legal-adjacent uses were defined as uses not requiring the input of confidential client information. One respondent submitted a comment stating that usage required verification by director-level staff.



What tools are organizations using?

What Generative AI tools are attorneys and staff using? Westlaw Precision AI, Practical Law AI, and Lexis+ AI were the most identified tools, with 5 mentions each. Three respondents responded that their organizations are using proprietary firm tools. General AI tools and more specialized tools such as Casetext Co-Counsel, Kira, and Harvey also received mentions.



We also asked what groups are primary users of Generative AI tools. Of those who responded, just over half, or 55.6% stated that both attorneys and staff were primary users. A third stated that primary users were staff only, and 11.1% stated attorneys only.

Closing thoughts

The sampling survey, although small and informal, was very informative in gauging how legal employers are assessing and integrating generative AI. We truly appreciate everyone who contributed to the survey.



ELENA SMITH

Witkin State Law Library

How did you choose law librarianship as a career?

I have spent my entire professional career in libraries! I joke that I decided to be a librarian as a teen after discovering that I faint at the sight of blood (not a good trait in a wannabe veterinarian). My interest in law librarianship developed more slowly. While working in public libraries I found that many of the more challenging reference questions I handled were related in some way to legal issues. While working for as a reference librarian in the California History Section of the California State Library, I noticed the same thing. Many of the most interesting questions I was handling were legally adjacent, be it old court cases or even questions about historic property rights. The more I worked with these questions, the more interested I became. Eventually, the opportunity to lateral into law librarianship came up in the form of an opening at the Witkin State Law Library and I jumped at the chance.

How do you, as a librarian of 10 years, continue to keep yourself vital in this profession?

I prioritize attending at least one conference or institute (such as the recent NOCALL Spring Institute!) a year. In addition to helping me keep abreast of new technological developments, this habit helps me stay on top of the challenges that the profession is dealing with and get ideas about ways to respond to those challenges from librarians working in different contexts.

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

As a new law librarian, that's an easy question to answer! First off, Garrett of the Witkin State Law Library, has had a huge impact. In addition to providing my initial training, he has been very generous with his time and knowledge about the law generally with me and is an incredible mentor who is always available for brainstorming sessions. Angelica, of the Witkin State Law Library, and Michael, of the California State Library's Government Publications Section, have also been wonderful. They've offered spot training as needed and graciously answered my many questions. Finally, Amreet, of the Sacramento County Public Law Library, has been an amazing guide to the overall profession. She has introduced me to the wider network of law librarians in the Northern California area, let me know about professional development opportunities, and even passed along tips about outreach events. I don't know where I'd be without these four people!

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

I participated in 4-H as a kid which means that I have forgotten more trivia about rabbits than most people will ever learn. These days, one of my main hobbies is historical fencing so I now happily geek out over parries, reposts, footwork, feints, and disengages. However, should we meet in-person, I promise to not discuss either of these topics in detail unless you ask!

What is your favorite legal book and why?

Again, being new to law librarianship makes this an easy one to answer! Locating the Law, put out by SCALL has been my bible over the past several months. Though older, the *Accidental Law Librarian* by Anthony Aycock is also fantastic.

2023-2024 NOCALL Officers and Committees

OFFICE	NAME	EMAIL
President	Tony Pelczynski, UC Law San Francisco	president@nocall.org
VP/President Elect	Bianca Randall, Baker McKenzie	vicepresident@nocall.org
Secretary	Holly Herndon, UC Law San Francisco	secretary@nocall.org
Treasurer	Pete Rooney, Sacramento County Public Law Library	treasurer@nocall.org
Past President	Jeremy Sullivan, DLA Piper	pastpresident@nocall.org
Member at Large	Courtney Nguyen, San Francisco Law Library	memberatlarge@nocall.org
Member at Large	Laura Moorer, D.C. Court of Appeals	memberatlarge@nocall.org
COMMITTEE CLUSTERS		
ADMINISTRATION		
AALL Liaison	Holly Riccio, California Judicial Center Library	aallliaison@nocall.org
Archives	Stanford Law Library – SEEKING A NEW CHAIR	archives@nocall.org
Audit and Budget	Tina Dumas, Nossaman LLP	auditandbudget@nocall.org
Constitution & Bylaws	David McFadden, Southwestern Law School	constitutionbylaws@nocall.org
Nominations	April Eudy, Orrick	nominations@nocall.org
COMMUNICATION		
Newsletter	Mary Pinard Johnson, Sacramento County Public Law Library	newsletter@nocall.org
Web Admin	Tracy Lee, NOCALL Student Trustee/MLIS Candidate	webmaster@nocall.org
Wiki	Alyssa Thurston, UC Davis School of Law	wiki@nocall.org
Technology	David Holt, UC Davis School of Law	technology@nocall.org
Listserv Admin	Ramona Collins, UC Berkeley School of Law	listservadmin@nocall.org
EDUCATION		
Education	Kristin Brandt, UC Davis School of Law	education@nocall.org
Networking	Julie Horst, Ninth Circuit Library	networking@nocall.org
Spring Institute	Bianca Randall, Baker McKenzie	springinstitute@nocall.org
MEMBERSHIP		
Academic Relations	Kristina Chamorro, UC Berkeley School of Law	academicrelations@nocall.org
Membership	Jessica Brasch, California Judicial Center Library	membership@nocall.org
Placement	Robyn M. Moltzen, Sacramento County Public Law Library	placement@nocall.org
OUTREACH		
Government Relations	Diane Rodriguez, San Francisco Law Library	govrelations@nocall.org
Access to Legal Information	SEEKING A NEW CHAIR	access@nocall.org
Public Relations	SEEKING A NEW CHAIR	publicrelations@nocall.org
RECOGNITION		
Awards	Jeremy Sullivan, DLA Piper	awards@nocall.org
Grants	SEEKING A NEW CHAIR	grants@nocall.org
Memorials	Leslie Hesdorfer, Kirkland & Ellis LLP Jane Metz, Nixon Peabody LLP	memorials@nocall.org