
PRO SE NEWSLETTER

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2007/08 OFFICERS:

PRESIDENT - Lynn Fullshire
Supreme Court Library Suffolk County - lfullshi@courts.state.ny.us

1st VICE-PRESIDENT/PRESIDENT ELECT - Jean-Paul Vivian
Supreme Court Library Chemung County - jvivian@courts.state.ny.us

2nd VICE-PRESIDENT/1ST VICE-PRESIDENT ELECT - Deanna Morse
Supreme Court Library Jefferson County - dmorse@courts.state.ny.us

TREASURER - Cindy Kesler
Syracuse Law Library - ckesler@courts.state.ny.us

SECRETARY - Terrie Stewart
Ernest Warren Supreme Court Library - tstewart@courts.state.ny.us

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Website Jacqueline Cantwell

Membership Cynthia Kesler

Title Standards Lynn Fullshire

Newsletter Editor: Barbara W. Osler
Articles may be submitted via e-mail to: bosler@courts.state.ny.us

Next deadline is **JULY 1**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message...

Spring is finally here, it's chilly but sunny, and your President's thoughts naturally turn to Fall! Your Pro Se officers have been working hard to come up with just the right program and speakers to lure as many of you as possible to the Law Librarian's Association Seminar (formerly the Education and Training Seminar) to be held this November 19th through 21st.

This year's Seminar will be a half day longer than prior year's meetings, the better to have more law library programming. We are also reinstating a banquet with a guest speaker. Another change requested by the associations is that the meeting not be held at the Judicial Institute. For maximum attendance purposes we wanted to have the meeting close to the middle of the state, but all the hotels were booked this year, so it will most likely be held in the Westchester area. Next year, knowing our preferences, the Office of Court Administration can get an earlier start looking for a more central location.

It's very important that as many library staff as possible attend this seminar, as OCA is watching to see if we are interested in furthering our skill levels. This is our primary educational activity for the year. And I think we have a great program planned, with sessions (in addition to OCA and OLI updates) on: recent developments in the legal publishing industry from an insider; an on-line reference tracking database; reference tips from the trenches; working with Worldcat.org social software in law libraries; law library services in NYS correctional facilities; planning for your future with a health care proxy, living will, and power of attorney; what's involved in notary public training; a Human Resources program tailored just for the Law Libraries; and concurrent sessions for NYC and outside NYC courts for forms and procedures for Family Courts (Day 2) and Supreme & County Courts (NYC) or Matrimonial 101 - (Outside NYC) (Day 3). All this before we send you packing with a box lunch at 1:00 PM on Nov. 21st. Whew!

We have some wonderful promotions to celebrate. Great congratulations to our two new Principal Law librarians: Laura Barber in Troy and Jean Paul Vivian in Nassau. It is always especially satisfying when a promotion comes from within the ranks.

And finally, a fond farewell to Carol A. Casey, Law Library Assistant in Buffalo and Pro Se Treasurer and keeper of the Officer's Manual for many years, starting in 1989. We hope your well deserved retirement is happy, healthy, and long.

So, to all, a happy and healthy Spring and Summer, and I hope to see you all at the Fall Seminar. Plan now to attend, with as many of your co-workers as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn C. Fullshire, President of Pro Se

NYC CIVIL COURT HAS A NEW STAFF MEMBER

by Deb Melnick



Errol Adams, Esq. joined our NYC Civil Court Law Library staff in March in the Senior Law Librarian position vacated by Richard Parenti in New York County. As with any of our NYC Civil Court Law Library personnel, Errol may be working in any of our counties. Please welcome him.

Errol emigrated to the US from Guyana, South America. He completed his undergraduate studies at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 1997. Then he obtained his law degree from Touro Law in 2003. He joins us after working for various New York City Agencies, including interning with the Queens County District Attorneys' office.

Errol has an avid interest in public interest law and volunteers for the American Red Cross on a national and local level.

NEW PUTMAN COUNTY SUPREME COURT LIBRARY

by Margie O'Loughlin

On Dec. 26 and 27 of 2007 the Putnam County Supreme, County, and Family courts; the Jury Department, and the Supreme Court Law Library moved into a new courthouse. Before this event the courts and other departments were crowded into the Putnam County Office Building, where the conditions inspired a great deal of flexibility on the part of the staff. The law library was no exception. The library was in a small room, adjacent to the Family Court Clerk's Office. All the court mail was sorted in the Family Court office, so all other court employees walked through the library to get their mail. The Law Library Assistant's desk was situated in the library room itself, with filing cabinets and the photocopier as the only divider from the main part of the room. Due to lack of space, the library was also used as a lawyer's lounge and as a conference room. It was not uncommon to find lawyers, social workers, law clerks, and clients often crowded around one long table. Some people managed to accomplish research, but the conditions were not optimal.

In June of 2007, I transferred to Putnam County from the Orange County SC Law Library, in order to be closer to home and cut down on my commute. I spent the next six months preparing for the move to the new library by cancelling subscriptions, as much of the rest of the state was doing, putting many references on the surplus list, and discarding books already discontinued by the previous librarian. I cleaned out old files that didn't need to be packed and moved. All the work was worth it when we moved into the new courthouse.

One first notices the library itself, which is spacious and beautiful. There is ample seating arranged along the side of the library with 6 tall windows. There is now a separate office for the Law Library Assistant with a large desk and 2 tall windows. In addition, there is a circulation desk and a separate work area where mail can be opened and processed. There is plenty of shelving, allowing for the growth of the subscription references. The library collection focuses mainly on New York State material, with a few basic general references. There is a separate small room for the Office for the Self Represented. When this office is not staffed, there is a direct phone link to the Office for the Self-Represented in Westchester County. The room also contains a cabinet full of how-to brochures and forms. What is not quite so obvious is the technology that is available. Outlets for computers are available in all sections of the library. The library went from one public access computer to three with the ability to increase the number, if necessary. All phones are now IP, so that Westchester courts and most of the New York City court offices can be reached by dialing an extension number only. WiFi is available for free in the seating area. The law library is now a pleasant, quiet, efficient, and technologically sophisticated place to do research.



Web Based Services At The Supreme Court Criminal Term Library New York County

by David Badertscher

For those who have not visited us, the New York Supreme Court Criminal Term Library of New York County (sometimes referred to as the New York Criminal Law Library) is located in lower Manhattan near the Brooklyn Bridge, City Hall, and State and Federal courthouses. Like other Supreme Court libraries located throughout the State of New York, it operates under the auspices of the New York Unified Court System and participates in the various state-wide initiatives sponsored by the OCA Office of Legal Information.

Although the primary focus of this library is to provide reference and research support to personnel of the Criminal Term, its actual responsibilities and obligations are quite broad. Using its various collections in all formats, including digital, in conjunction with various web and online services, including a website and a weblog; this library functions as both an information repository and an information service. These resources and services enable it to reach out to patrons both local and worldwide, as time and resources permit. Part of the library's responsibility is to provide support as needed and operational oversight to the New York County Public Access Law Library, which is charged with serving those members of the public who need law-related information.

In order to discharge these responsibilities with limited staff, it has been necessary for the library to work cooperatively with library consortia and other groups to provide the added resources and services required to maintain an acceptable level of service. One of the organizations that has been especially helpful to us is the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO). The library has been a member of METRO since 1981. It was through METRO that we first learned of QuestionPoint and were invited to participate in a 2002 pilot project. With some initial apprehension we accepted the offer and became an active participant in the latter part of that year. The New York County Public Access Law Library has also been very helpful in enabling this library to maintain an acceptable level of web based reference services. Since many of our QuestionPoint users are public patrons a majority of those questions are now handled by that library; Theodore Pollack, the Senior Law Librarian at the Public Access Library also serves as my backup administrator for QuestionPoint. We are grateful for the assistance of Ted and his staff in helping support this effort.

Despite some initial reservations that we might not be able to keep up with expectations and workflow, the use of QuestionPoint has been quite successful for us. It serves as a useful and important adjunct to our other web based services in both reaching out to our patrons and through its referral features. It enables us to augment our resources in ways otherwise impossible. For example on more than one occasion we have used

QuestionPoint to search worldwide for materials that would otherwise have been unobtainable. In order to make it work for us, however, we have needed to avoid some of the features that are essential to others. We do not use chat or any form of instant messaging because we simply do not have the appropriate staff resources to make this work satisfactorily for us. We have not, however, found the lack of chat a limitation at all.

Over the past few years many libraries, including this one, have been involved in lively discussions as to how best to respond to demands for digitized information which can be retrieved at any time from a variety of devices, both stationary and mobile. After some experimentation, our response has included the use of blogging technology coupled with RSS feeds. In 2004 we introduced the New York Supreme Court Criminal Term Library blog powered by Bloglines, <http://www.bloglines.com/blog/pll>. It incorporates many features including a link to our QuestionPoint form for submitting reference questions, RSS feeds, and the capability of storing online reference, legislative, and other information useful to patrons. This blog based outreach service also serves as a vehicle for sending New York Legislative Activity Reports, updated information regarding appellate court criminal decisions originating from this court, and other relevant updated information directly to the work stations of judges and judicial staff on a regular, ongoing basis. It is popular with both court personnel and public users and remains our most effective outreach service on the web. As of April 29, 2008 it is visited by an average of 153 patrons per day and 1,069 per week. We obtain this and additional statistical information through special software designed to collect statistical information regarding website use. Reports are sent to me weekly.

Although the New York Supreme Court Criminal Term blog remains both useful and popular, we have found it necessary to also create a new blog, www.criminallawlibraryblog.com, to take advantage of added features which cannot be incorporated effectively into the original blog. For example, the new blog includes both a QuestionPoint form for submitting questions and a direct link to the public portion of the QuestionPoint knowledgebase. Using this feature, users are able to type in key words which will in turn retrieve questions/answers in the knowledgebase which correspond to their queries. The global knowledgebase feature is located near the upper left part of the screen of our newest blog. This particularly innovative feature has been developed and included as a direct result of the inspiring online QuestionPoint presentation this summer by Peter Armenti of the Digital Reference Team at the Library of Congress. This blog also includes the capability for uploading documents not currently on the web, a useful feature not included in the original blog. Finally, the Criminal Law Library Blog has substantially greater search capabilities. In order to adequately describe the added features included in the Criminal Law Library Blog, we are calling it an "added value blog."

We are encouraged by the positive responses from library patrons both inside and outside the courts to these services. These responses along with statistics gathered and staff observations demonstrate that by introducing these initiatives along with others sponsored by the Office of Legal Information, the library has been able to meet reference, research,

and access needs of patrons far more effectively than in the past. Our hope is to be able to continue developing web based services and to work together with others to improve access and services for all of our libraries.

Using Court Records & Briefs

by Julie Gick

William H. Manz wrote, in my opinion, a helpful article called *Legal Research: New York State Records and Briefs*, which appears in 30 *Law Lines*, No. 4, p. 12, Summer 2007. It is available on line at: http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/lagny/LL_summer2007.pdf.

The article mentions the Unified Court System web site which is providing briefs from the Second Department (<http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/ad2/index.shtml>) at no charge. These may be searched full text as well as by party name and case number. Both Brooklyn Supreme Court and Fourth Department law libraries have extensive holdings in hardcopy. The LION database now includes citations to hardcopy briefs.

There are a couple of things not discussed in the article that I would like to add. One is that if you file by fiche ID number, but have only an Appellate Division case number for First and Fourth Department cases, you can locate the fiche fairly easily even without the fiche ID number, because the case numbers are assigned sequentially. Case numbers appear in Westlaw and Lexis, but not always consistently. Usually the case number will display above the caption in Lexis; in KeyCite and below the caption in Westlaw.

Since October, 2007 the Second Department has been scanning its decisions online at:
<http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/ad2/calendar/webcal/webcal.html>
The .pdf version has the argument date stamped on the decision.

From August 23, 2001 the Third Department has scanned images of its decisions at:
<http://decisions.courts.state.ny.us/ad3/Search/AppDiv3Intro.htm>
These opinions have a calendar date. According to 22 NYCRR 800.11, calendars are prepared for argument or submission. On the sample case I tried the calendar date and the argument date were the same. If this is generally true it should cut down on the time spent searching packing slips for cases not yet indexed in LION.

Records and briefs are a good source for copies of unreported lower court decisions and orders that have been appealed. They also provide insight into cases where the lower court decision was affirmed without an opinion. Sometimes the only way to locate records

and briefs is searching packing slips, but thanks to modern technology, it is getting easier.

The New Bronx County Hall of Justice Law Library

by Margaret Beirne

The high-tech glass Bronx County Hall of Justice building opened January 28, 2008. The 775,000 square foot building spans over two blocks on 161st Street between Sherman and Morris Avenues. The 161st street side the building looks like a square green glass block but the back of the building is L-shaped. It is nine stories high. The building took fifteen years to build and cost of 421 million dollars.

The glass exterior is both functional and deceptive. The main entrance all glass walls opens to a large bright lobby. In other sections the glass cleverly screens private areas such as prisoners being brought to courtrooms as well as a separate judge's access to courtrooms. The complicated system of light reflection reduces heat gain and solar glares.

There are forty - seven plus courtrooms, many with audio and video capabilities; seven grand jury rooms, interview rooms and offices. It was designed before the court system merger of misdemeanor and felony cases into a single Bronx criminal court. Some redesign is needed to accommodate the increased volume of these cases.

The cylinder shaped two story building in a courtyard houses a giant jury assembly room which seats 350 people. Occasionally the Court of Appeals goes "on the road" to hear oral arguments. They recently held one of these sessions in this jury assembly room.

The Law Library located on the seventh floor serves as the primary legal reference resource for judicial personnel and support staff of the Bronx Criminal Court. The library's basic program includes: reference services, collections resources, technical services and support for chambers collections. The Law Library has a collection of New York and U. S. legal reference materials including statutes, regulations, cases and treatises relevant to the court in 8300 linear feet of shelving. The collection includes some useful donations. A donated set of New York Jurisprudence 2d was received from Broome County Law Library. A set of New York Reports was donated by Richmond County Surrogates Court. An archival collection of historic materials is also housed in the library.

The library seating area is a nice mix of carrels, tables and comfortable couches for research and reading. Computers with access to LEXIS/NEXIS and Westlaw are available for users and there is WiFi connection. In addition the library has a training room available for Lexis & Westlaw sessions. There is office space, a large reference desk, and space for photocopiers and fax machines. There is a library lounge room for staff use. The library is open to public attorneys.

Original plans included a significant public access section but this option is still under development. (The public access library for Bronx County remains in the Bronx Supreme Courthouse 851 Grand Concourse 2 blocks away on 161st Street).

The Bronx County Hall of Justice is a welcomed, bright, new addition to the Bronx landscape and courts. The Law Library is one of its finest assets!

New York State 12th Judicial District Law Libraries:

Bronx County Hall of Justice
Law Library 7th floor
265 East 161st Street
Bronx, NY 10451
718-618-3190
Open: 9:00 - 5:00
Court Staff and public attorneys

Bronx County Courthouse
Law Library, Room 817
851 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10451
718-618-3710
Open: 9:30- 1:00 public
9:30 - 2:00 public attorneys



**NEW YORK STATE UNIFIED COURT LAW LIBRARIES
ASSOCIATION
2008
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

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Institution: _____

Address: _____

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Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

email: _____

The above information is for the Directory. If you wish to have mailings sent to an alternative address (i.e., home address or email), please check here and provide the additional information on the back of this form: _____

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Membership is based on the calendar year and is \$15.00 per year.

Please make checks payable to:

NYS Unified Court Law Libraries Association

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Cynthia J. Kesler
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