

VALL Review

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries

Vol. 22.No. 1

The President's Desk



On behalf of the new 2009/10 Executive, welcome to VALL's 21st year as a professional association. During our first 20 years, many dedicated VALL members have served on the executive and we owe each of them and the organizations behind them, a huge debt of gratitude for steering our Association so successfully through the course of constant change and adaptation.

Congratulations and many thanks to our 2008/09 Executive Team for making VALL's 20th Anniversary Year such a memorable celebration for all: *Wilma Macfarlane, Graeme Dempsey, Elena Barreiro, Lynda Mitchell, Katie Heung, Beth Galbraith, Gabriella Barsoum, Susannah Tredwell, Gillian Crabtree, Steve Mathews & Rob Golbeck.*

We have now launched into another year of action, activity learning and change. Autumn is a time of preparation and planning and we are very fortunate to have an enthusiastic team of both new and experienced members serving on the 2009/10 Executive.

Our first Seminar held on Sept. 29th, was an excellent presentation on *Emergency Response Planning* from *Guy Robertson*, disaster planning and risk management consultant for libraries, archives and information centres, held at our new venue, the *Shangri-La Hotel*. Everyone in attendance came away with a greater understanding of this complex subject as well as some quick & easy safety tips for immediate use.

On Nov. 18th West Coast LEAF gave a presentation on the key issues impacting women's equality and some of the key legal cases that continue to impact equality rights for women in Canada. At this meeting we also paid tribute to Peter Bark, a very active and much-loved member of VALL who died in November 1990. Each year the Peter Bark Bursary is awarded for the purpose of assisting in professional development or continuing education. The application information is available on the [VALL Website](#).

Future topics will be selected from the list of suggestions provided by the membership at the annual June Roundtable meeting and summarized in this issue of the VALL Review. Thank you for your participation in what has been a great start to this year for VALL!

“Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well” (Voltaire)

Inside this Issue:

The Presidents Desk	1
From the Editors	2
SLA Conference Report	3
Member News	6
New Courthouse Website	7
Remembering Peter	11
Peter Bark Bursary	12
Marketing Article	13
Roundtable Results	14
Treasurers Report	16

VALL Review

VALL Executive

President

Gillian Crabtree
Edwards Kenny & Bray

Past President

Wilma MacFarlane
Farris LLP

Vice President

Elizabeth Kinersly
Miller Thomson

Membership Secretary

Katherine Melville
Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP

Treasurer

Wendy Holmes
Davis LLP

Programs Committee

Agathe Holowatinic
Lawson Lundell LLP

Graeme Dempsey
LawsonLundell LLP

Lynda Mitchell
Fraser Milner Casgrain LLP

VALL Review Editors

Beth Galbraith
Clark Wilson LLP

Mica Donnelly
Borden Ladner Gervais LLP

Website

Susannah Tredwell
Lawson Lundell LLP

Steve Matthews
Stem Legal

From the Editors

Mica Donnelly, *Borden Ladner Gervais LLP*
Beth Galbraith, *Clark Wilson LLP*

Have you ever seen that old Monty Python sketch “Gorilla Librarian”? The chairman, who is interviewing a gorilla for the position of librarian states, “You see, I don't believe that libraries should be drab places where people sit in silence, and that's been the main reason for our policy of employing wild animals as librarians.” I think most of us would agree employing wild animals in the library falls into the category of Bad Ideas.

I'm sure many of us have experimented with new ideas in our libraries (hopefully none involving gorillas) that may not have gone entirely according to plan. The process of implementing new ideas is not always as easy as we'd like it to be. However, as this issue of the VALL Review demonstrates, innovation is a continuing process and can ultimately pay off with better resources, improved services and happier library users.

Innovation in libraries can involve large projects, such as the Courthouse Library's new website, or endeavors on a smaller scale, such as some of the marketing ideas Wilma highlights in her column. To be innovative, one must take risks. We hope some of the ideas mentioned in this issue of the Review will inspire you to be creative and innovative in your own libraries

The *VALL Review* is the official newsletter of the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries. VALL is composed of members of the law library community interested in discussing issues and sharing ideas. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent VALL policy or position. Unsolicited submissions are welcome. VALL reserves the right to edit submissions.

ISSN 1712-065X

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries
PO Box 48663, Bentall Centre
Vancouver, BC V7X 1A1

SLA Conference Report

Andy Froese, *Alexander Holburn, Beaudin & Lang LLP*

After a sight-seeing filled week in New York City, I arrived in Washington, DC on Friday June 12th, and spent the afternoon visiting the different monuments along the National Mall. All the main sights are within walking distance of each other, and it was great to see so many iconic American landmarks.

In the evening I walked up to the Capitol Building, where there happened to be an outdoor concert featuring the U.S. Army Band, with their guests, the Canadian Honour Guard Pipe and Drum Band. It was a bit surreal to hear the Canadian national anthem while sitting on the steps of the Capitol building, watching the sunset beyond the Washington Monument. Saturday was hot and incredibly humid, so it was a good day to visit some of the Smithsonian Museums and escape the heat.



In the evening I met up with some fellow Canadians for an excellent meal at a French café. Emma Wood was there with her fiancé Mitch, along with Brenda Wong, another former VALL member, and Karen Sawatsky. We had a great time catching up on all the news. Emma's recap of SLA 2009 are posted on the VALL website. Karen and Brenda also posted some conference highlights on their blog: "Library Technician Dialog" at <http://brendawoa.wordpress.com>.

Sunday morning I made the 5 minute walk from my hotel to the convention center and registered as an SLA 2009 attendee. Woohoo! It was fantastic to be there and to soak in the whole conference experience. That afternoon I went to the *SLA First-Timers Reception*, where I met people from all over the States. It was cool to meet up with some of them again at later sessions and compare notes about the conference.

Sunday evening was the opening session of the conference, with the keynote address by General Colin Powell. Gen. Powell was an excellent speaker, with a relaxed style and lots of humour. His speech covered a wide range of subjects, including: leadership, making the adjustment to retirement, and life in the public eye in the era of bloggers and You-tube. He also mentioned his grandchildren as an example of how today's communication methods are changing. They don't answer emails or phone-calls, they only use twitter and text messaging. Hmm, if I ever needed some proof that I'm no longer part of the younger generation, there it is.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday were a mix of conference sessions, exploring the massive vendor display area, and of course checking out some of the vendor parties. I also paid a visit one afternoon to the impressive Library of Congress.

Some session highlights:

Cast a Wide Research Net and Save Time with RSS with August Jackson, from Verizon. A comment in his introduction that stuck out for me was his description of how the timeframe for being “current” has dramatically shrunk. In the past, an acceptable definition of being current might have meant “this month”, “this quarter”, or even “this year”. Now, being “current” is literally “now”. Even blogging is losing ground and is being replaced by twitter. The three RSS services he recommended were *Net Newswire*, *FeedDemon*, and *Google Reader*. His focus was on ways to make RSS feeds more effective, through things like customized searches, and the collaborative options in Google Reader using Google’s Gmail.

The Role of Social Networking Sites in Research, by Meg Smith of the Washington Post. She gave numerous examples of how she has used sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Wikipedia to find out names of people who were thought by authorities to be untraceable. In Wikipedia, she recommended skipping the actual article and going straight to the article’s discussion page to see the behind-the-scenes activity. See who is actively editing the article and click on his or her profile page. Click the “talk” page on that profile to see who they collaborate with. One of those names could get you a step closer to the person you’re actually looking for.

60 Sites in 60 Minutes. John DiGilio from Reed Smith, and Gayle Lynn-Nelson from LexisNexis each shared 30 of their favourite websites.



There weren’t any websites that were specifically for law libraries, but still some useful sites that may come in handy at just the right moment.

- <http://addictomatic.com> - lets you “create a custom page with the latest buzz on any topic”
- <http://mashable.com> - a blog about social media.
- <http://www.drop.io> - “use drop.io to privately share your files and collaborate in real time by web, email, phone and more.”

John DiGilio has his own blog at: <http://www.ibraryguy.com> which looks interesting. One of his recent entries is a link to <http://www.whatis.com> - a dictionary-encyclopedia of IT terminology – a useful tool for when the IT guy gets carried away with jargon. The full list of the 60 sites is available at: <http://drop.io/60sites>

Creating Groupies: How to Add Value, Make Yourself Irreplaceable and Beat the Pants Off Google, presented by Mary Ellen Bates, from Bates Information Services. I found this the best and most inspiring session of the conference. Her notes are available at www.batesinfo.com/SLA2009. One of her main points was: clients don't care about the *features* of a particular product. Instead, we should focus on the *benefits*. Building awareness isn't enough. Our clients should not just say "what a good idea", or "nice to have", but rather "how can I get this?"

Wednesday afternoon was the closing session of the conference. SLA President Gloria Zamora announced that SLA09 had over 5800 attendees, the highest attendance in six years. She also broke the news that SLA has begun the process of selecting a new name for the organization, causing a small ripple of surprise in the crowd.

The rest of the closing session was a panel discussion between Robyn Meredith, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and John Patrick, moderated by Judy Woodruff. It was a very interesting, wide-ranging discussion. Topics included:

- the state of information gathering – we are awash in data – how do we select the relevant information;
- future of the internet – John Patrick says the internet is only now growing into its infancy and there is enormous potential ahead;
- privacy online – Neil deGrasse Tyson's prediction is that once the under-30's age-group become the employers, the fear of having too much personal information online will be much less an issue than it is now.

To sum up, SLA 2009 was fantastic. Thanks very much to VALL for the bursary, in assisting me with my trip. It was a great opportunity for me to get new ideas, to see how enormous the special library community is, and to get inspired about the future of our profession. The chance to do all this plus see the sights of Washington, DC made it an awesome experience.

Andy Froese was the recipient of the 2009 Peter Bark Bursary. For more information on the Peter Bark Bursary and how to apply please see page 9 of this issue.

Member Announcements

Wendy Deighton (*Harris & Co*) gave birth to a daughter a daughter, Alexa Brooke on September 10, two days before she was due to start her maternity leave! Mother and daughter are doing well. Wendy's maternity leave replacement at Harris & Company is **Kaedra Kirilenko**, a recent graduate from UBC SLAIS.

Kaedra Kirilenko – *Harris & Co* (kkirilenko@harrisco.com)
Originally from Saskatchewan, Kaedra moved to BC to complete her MLIS. (Like many other prairie-folk, she decided to stay!) She first became interested in law librarianship last year, due to several interesting conversations with one of her lawyer friends, and is currently filling in for Wendy Deighton at *Harris & Co.* during her maternity leave. She has a cat named Kandavika (Kandhi - rhymes with Gandhi - for short), a love-affair with great food and fuzzy dogs (though not at the same time), Kaedra is also slightly addicted to a dance called West-Coast Swing.

Tracey Carmichael has moved from the *B.C. Securities Commission* to become Senior Manager, E-resources at the *Human Security Report Project*.

Wilma MacFarlane and **Kathy Barry** from *Farris LLP* were profiled in the Vancouver Sun on September 15, 2009 during the Raise a Reader campaign. Wilma talked about their *Fiction Fridays* program. It is a wonderful article and it can be found on the Vancouver Sun website. [Link to article.](#)

Kathy Barry, of *Farris LLP* will be co-chair of the Knowledge Management subsection of BCLMA for the 2009/2010 year.

VALL Review Newsletter Article Content Submission Guidelines

Please take a look at the guidelines below and contact the *VALL Review* Editors if you have any further questions. You do not have to be a VALL member to write for us. Anyone is welcome to contribute to the *VALL Review* as long as you meet the guidelines below. Thanks for your support and interest!

Purpose of VALL Review

- To provide short news and articles on library information and knowledge management developments of interest to VALL members with a priority focus on legal information and related issues concerning the legal sector.
- To highlight resources of interest to VALL which would be useful to the legal community and for professional library staff development.

Authors are advised to submit their draft articles that meet the minimal criteria:

- 1) In Microsoft Word, plain text or RTF.
- 2) Maximum of up to 800 words for full articles.
- 3) Single spaced with paragraphs.
- 4) Functional URLs and corresponding footnote bibliographic information for further reading.
- 5) Identification of author, their official position title and parent organization.

Publishers and vendors should only highlight for submission any new product developments that the vendor has not yet publicly released or that the vendor would like feedback from its customers. (Note: If a vendor has already released public marketing information to all customers on its corporate web site, *VALL Review* editors will exercise rights to determine if there is sufficient space to include the submitted information, in light of other VALL content publishing priorities.)

The New Courthouse Library Website: How, What and Why

Mandy Ostick, *Courthouse Libraries BC*

I'm delighted to be invited to introduce our new website in the VALL Review. We launched our new Courthouse Libraries BC website on November 6, 2009 after an in-depth user consultation, design and development process. It's a big leap forward for us (we know that adjusting to a new site is a challenge for frequent users who were very familiar our old site). We're listening to the feedback we're getting – kudos, brickbats and all – and will be incorporating some great suggestions in our next update to the site. As many of you are involved in implementing similar projects, I'd like to share the consultation and development process behind our website project and how it informed the decisions we made on the new website's content and functionality.

User consultation and usability testing were priorities

User consultation and user testing were the foundation of our website project process. We wanted to attract more users to our website by better meeting the information needs and technology usage preferences of lawyers who aren't currently users of our website. To help us find out more about needs outside our current pool of frequent users we worked with a legal marketing firm. We ran an online and print-based survey on online information needs and habits and followed up with two focus groups and seven interviews. Our survey received 408 responses (offering two iPod Touches as prizes seemed to help us get more responses than we generally do on surveys).

Our two focus groups went into matters more deeply with new associates and solo & small firm lawyers (as we'd chosen members of these groups as potential website users) and our consultant conducted interviews with three lawyers and four law librarians for more insight into information and technology needs. What we learned from these user consultations helped us to determine what we needed to offer on our new website; such as the needs for information organized by practice area and an improved site search.

Having defined our goals for the website, we selected an IT consulting firm with strengths in usability and .NET technologies to work with us to design and develop the new website. After more work with users to test our ideas around labels, navigation, and necessary features, our consultants created clickable wireframes (similar to a blueprint for a website) and seven lawyers from around the province tested the wireframes so we could find out if the proposed navigation and functionality made sense. When we first introduced the possibility of website accounts to our website testers, I suspected account creation would be rejected as too time-consuming for the busy lawyer. As it turned out, testers accepted or even embraced website accounts in order to get the benefits of faster online ordering, options for website customization, and the potential to receive future subscription-based content.

The next phase – design and implementation – lasted approximately four months and ended with a final round of user acceptance testing by lawyers, local law librarians and Courthouse Library staff. We also sought periodic informal feedback from users as we worked through a series of development “sprints” with our consultants.



The redesigned website search functionality is both more intuitive and more powerful.

Richard Fowler | Gibbons Fowler

1 2 3 4 5

New & Notable

[VIEW ALL](#) [BY PRACTICE AREAS](#)

- Nov 30, 2009
[Saunders Appointed to the Supreme Court of BC](#)
- Nov 27, 2009
[Supreme Court of Canada Decisions: Labour Relations](#)
- Nov 26, 2009
[Supreme Court of Canada Decision: Labour Relations](#)
- Nov 26, 2009
[Improvements Made to CanLII's Legislative Materials](#)
- Nov 26, 2009
[Digitization of Older Canadian Parliamentary Publications](#)

[View All](#)

The Stream

[SUBSCRIBE](#)



Nov 26, 2009
[Homepage Links: Suggestions Are Open](#)
Since the launch of our new website we've received a lot of helpful feed...

Nov 20, 2009
[Searching Law Journals on Google Scholar](#)

Nov 6, 2009
[Welcome to our New Website](#)
We are delighted to launch the new Courthouse Libraries BC website.

[View our blog](#)

Search

[ADVANCED SEARCH](#)

Enter books, keywords, articles below:

[SEARCH](#)

[Select Sources](#)

Frequent Requests

- [Ask a question](#)
- [Request copies](#)
- [Borrow a book](#)

[Learn more about our services](#)

NOTICES

- (Smithers) The library will not be staffed on December 22 and 29.
- (Chilliwack) The library will not be staffed on December 23 and 30.
- (Courtenay) From November 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010 the library will be staffed on alternate Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. The regular schedule, Monday 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., will resume in April 2010.

[View more](#)

READING GUIDES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The LawMatters project now provides Reading Guides that list law books available in public libraries by subject. See our LawMatters page for more recommended materials for public libraries and community groups.

FOR THE PUBLIC

Not a lawyer? Try our public-oriented resources site [clicklaw.bc.ca](#).

Clicklaw features legal information and education resources.



Courthouse library website continued

Now that we've launched we're experimenting with adopting a bit of a "perpetual beta" approach to our ongoing website development – we'll continue to update the site and develop additional functionality based on areas of interest to our users.

Focus on Content Development and the Legal Community's Information Needs

In the past Courthouse Libraries BC attempted to create website content that served both our legal community users and the general public. Now we are creating content for our website specifically aimed at the legal community. We're also creating content specifically aimed at the general public for [Clicklaw](#), the publicly-oriented website that Courthouse Libraries BC operates. We are glad to leave behind our "one size fits all" approach to developing web content, which was not terribly effective.

A lot of the changes we've made to our website were done with small firm and solo practitioners in mind – for example, our new Practice Portals on topics such as Family Law and Personal Injury. We particularly want to do more for lawyers who practice outside major population centres and don't have the in-house research services and resources of a larger firm or convenient access to a courthouse library. We'll be well positioned to start offering some great new content on our new website in 2010.

Website Features: Universal Searching and Website Accounts

One of the key new features on our website is a universal search tool that searches both the catalogue and our online content. This decision to introduce this new tool was driven by user consultation on search needs and analysis of problematic searches evident in the search logs of our catalogue and website. We wanted to offer a quick and easy universal search on the homepage to meet the needs of less experienced library searchers who find a Google-like search to be intuitive in a way a library catalogue is not.

We also wanted to continue to offer advanced search options that allow experienced researchers to refine searches and sort search results. We're considering our catalogue as an advanced search tool, available for our users one click away from the homepage on our Search page. We know that moving the catalogue one click off the homepage is a controversial thing for a library to do. We did it because we wanted to highlight the universal search tool on the homepage so that first time users who are not familiar with our resources are not required to decide whether to start with a catalogue search or use the site search. While we hope you try our universal search and take advantage of the options to order copies and place book borrow requests directly from your search results, we expect that VALL members will remain heavy users of the catalogue.

People with library backgrounds tend to be often surprised to see that the default search operator for our new search tool is OR instead of AND. This approach results in a high number of search results – but we’ve done a lot of work on relevancy to bring the most relevant material to the top of your search results and will continue to refine relevancy. The number of search results shouldn’t matter if the top results you get are highly relevant - you can also do more refined searches for shorter, more precise search results lists. We’ve introduced a “fuzzy factor” to the default search option so that your search terms can differ from the words in the searched content by a letter or two (exact phrase searching is also an option for more precise searches). This Google-like approach benefits inexperienced researchers, who sometimes fail to find relevant materials by doing searches that are too specific. We’re also working on a synonym table to aid searches for legal terms that have common variations, abbreviations and so on.

Given that 87% of respondents to our 2008 user consultation survey (offered online and in print format in all our libraries) indicated that they buy goods online, we decided to bring our online order processes more in line with expectations of how online ordering generally works. Using a website account to save your contact information should speed up the online order process considerably compared to our old website. Some of our most frequent order placers are VALL members and we hope that you find the new process to be faster – no more filling out the form with all your contact info each time you order!

Our website project has been a fantastically interesting project to work on and it is very satisfying to have launched the new site. However, the launch is only the beginning – the new site will always be a work in progress and we look forward to developing the site further to meet changing user needs.

Law Libraries and Facebook

On slaw.ca in June, Connie Crosby announced that she had helped the Toronto Association of Law Libraries (TALL) set up a Facebook group. They had about 30 people join the group by word of mouth alone, and almost doubled their membership after a couple of weeks.

Some of the reasons behind creating the Facebook group included:

- a desire for members to show their membership affiliation on their Facebook accounts
- attract library students to the association
- to encourage general interest in the association.

The full article can be found [here](#).

Considering the popularity of Facebook, especially among young people, do you think it would be worthwhile for VALL to set up a Facebook group? What about the use of social networking sites at work – if you cannot access Facebook from your work computer would it deter you from joining the Facebook group?

Remembering Peter Bark

Anne Ikeda, *Lang Michener LLP*

On my first day at what was then Lawrence & Shaw, I knew I had lucked out when so many people said “Oh, you’re going to be working for Peter – aren’t you lucky?” And indeed I was.

With my Library Tech diploma and 6 months working at the Courthouse Library, I had a lot to learn and Peter, as both a librarian and a lawyer, not only knew so much but had the ability to pass that knowledge on – not just to me but to all our students and anyone else who showed an interest. As his research skills became more and more in demand, he, I think quite gladly, handed over many of the library administrative tasks to me.

We moved the library, first to temporary quarters and then back to a brand new space and any of you who have been involved in a library move will know that that can put a strain on any relationship. Peter wasn’t always the most patient man but we usually ended up having a laugh and getting the job done.

I was flattered to see that in his obituary it says that he wrote poetry for his close friends so I can count myself in that fortunate group. When we brought home our two Dalmatian puppies, Peter presented me with a witty, charming, and decidedly silly poem all about getting daffodils from the Fraser Valley!

Energy? You had to run to keep up with him. And yet he could make people feel they were special and, when he was with friends and acquaintances from all walks of life, they got his full attention. At a get together after his death, a fight almost broke out as a number of people from different spheres of Peter’s life claimed him as their best friend and really didn’t want to share that honour.

A couple of stories illustrate his very special interpersonal skills. As, I think, the first programme coordinator for VALL, he arranged for the Legislative Counsel to speak to us which somehow gave me the nerve to call the Legislative Counsel directly with a question from one of our lawyers. I told him I worked for Peter so he, rather grumpily, wanted to know why I was bothering him when Peter probably knew the answer better than he would. In my best pathetic voice, I told him that Peter was on vacation and right away he became so sympathetic and helpful.

On a personal level, after seeing my cousin Maggie Steed in a British TV movie, Peter didn’t just say she did a good job, he wrote her a fan letter which I had to deliver along with a book of Alice Munro short stories on my next trip to the UK!

Peter was one of the founding members of VALL and would be happy to know that a bursary has been set up in his name. When his colleagues in VALL wanted to do something in his memory, a professional development bursary seemed to be a natural. This was appropriate as Peter could always be depended on to share his knowledge and he encouraged learning of all kinds. The fund was built up with donations from members of the profession, legal publishers and friends. In fact, Peter’s parents were thrilled when we told them that their son would be remembered in this way and they still send a contribution each year.

I hope you will all give some thought to applying for the Peter Bark Bursary so that you, or someone in your library, who otherwise might not have the opportunity, can attend a conference or take a course.

Peter Bark Bursary

The Peter Bark Professional Development Bursary was established by VALL to commemorate Peter Bark and his contribution to VALL and law librarianship. The Bursary assists VALL members demonstrating financial need in attending meetings of the Canadian Association of Law Librarians or other law library associations, continuing education workshops or other professional development. The fund is sustained by donations from individuals, law book publishers and grants from VALL.

Guidelines for applicants

Value: Bursaries up to a maximum of \$1,500 per successful applicant may be awarded per year.

Eligibility: Applicants will have been members of VALL for a minimum of one year. Members of the current executive are eligible to apply.

Financial circumstances of applicant(s) will be considered.

Preference will be given to applicants attending a professional conference for the first time or who have conference responsibilities or who are active in VALL or in the law library community.

Conditions: Recipients may be expected to attend particular sessions at the conference as VALL representatives.

Recipients may report back to the VALL membership at the June meeting with an oral report on conference activities (this condition is not mandatory) and provide a written submission for the VALL review.

Apply by letter and include reasons why you wish to attend the meeting and your conference responsibilities, if any. Attach a letter from your employer indicating extent of financial support from your firm/institution.

Please send applications by **March 1, 2010** to:

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries
RE: Peter Bark Professional Development Bursary
P.O. Box 48663, Bentall Centre
Vancouver, B.C. V7X 1A1

The VALL Review is adding a new column, all about marketing! Marketing is a topic that comes up all the time in the Roundtable discussions as a topic that our members are interested in knowing more about. This recurring column will be a way for VALL members to share with others their unique ways of marketing their library to their users. If you would like to submit an article for this new column please contact the editors!

Separating the Good Librarian from Google

Wilma Macfarlane, Farris LLP

In this short piece I will simply outline my personal experience in marketing library services to a law firm and give examples of initiatives that worked well. Many of the ideas will be familiar to you and may already be in place, but perhaps some will be new to you.

Just as law firm corporate cultures are distinct from one another, so are the personalities and strengths of the staff who work in their libraries. So it is as important to market yourself as it is to market your services.

Have you ever thought of yourself as “Legislation Central”? Nothing garners more respect in a law firm than being an expert in current and historical legislative research. Market the library every chance you get and become known as the ultimate “go to” person in this area. It takes time to build expertise and to completely master this somewhat dry subject, but it is well worth the effort. Train every new student diligently and you will have a built-in fan club who will sing your praises. Remember that the student of today is the partner of tomorrow. Make it a library branding exercise.

If you are a news junkie like me, market the fact that you follow international news as well as all the local news. Keeping current with firm activities as well as those in the wider legal community is also important and will make for much easier elevator conversations and visibility. This is as much about your own personality as it is about your skill set, so if you are uncomfortable with this approach, then best leave well alone. However, if you embrace this aspect of marketing your library, here’s a tip: Read the file opening sheet each day and check the boardroom bookings. By doing this simple two minute check, you will know which clients are coming into the office and what questions or issues might arise. Almost all lawyers are flattered that you are aware of their current hot topics and begin to trust your judgment as their personal information professional. Again, this takes time to build a reputation, but this ploy straddles the fine line between personal and library marketing.

New books and services added to the library are a bread and butter marketing tool. Every library uses this approach in some form or another. If you can tie your purchases to a particular file, make sure everyone in the group knows that you are on top of the subject. Good current examples are the recent amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act. It seems like all of a sudden the whole firm wants to talk about this exciting subject.

Good librarian continued

To be able to say that you have already purchased at least one copy of the books published by the major vendors to date, while stressing that you are on the lookout for anything else, makes for good publicity. As to online services, they are often expensive when initially rolled out, but making sure everyone is aware of the potential value is another way to keep your profile high. Try to have read or be familiar with a new feature, rather than respond with “I will look into it and get back to you.”

Never forget the library mantra “Deliver, deliver, deliver.” Always follow up to find out if the work you did was on point and useful. The goal should be that research assignments are on time and reflect your very best effort. Senior practitioners in receipt of an excellent piece of research are often the best library boosters. Cultivate your champions. Bring your successes along to staff and manager’s meetings as well as to the attention of your marketing people. This way everyone in the firm is aware of the library role. Don’t be shy.

Be prepared to be a bit silly from time to time if your corporate culture allows. Decorate the library, dress up for Halloween, join in and make your colleagues gasp at your ingenuity. It speaks volumes to your flexibility as an individual, and makes you much more approachable. We have boxes of props in our library that we trot out with the seasons, as well as arguably the best treats in the city. However, if you are having an “off day” and yes, we all have them, keep a low profile and save your reputation. Easier said than done a lot of the time, but remember you are always making an impression, good or bad, when you are “on stage” in your library.

Finally, in your marketing efforts, never underestimate the personal touch. It’s what separates the good librarian from Google.

Summary of the June Roundtable Discussion

Beth Galbraith, Clark Wilson LLP

This June we had an excellent turnout for our last meeting of the 2008/2009 year. The responses to the June Roundtable were very helpful for the 2009/2010 executive in making decisions about the seminar topics and learning what was on the mind of the VALL membership. But what is on everyone’s mind?

Career Development

Members look to VALL and other associations like SLA, CALL for new ideas and seminars. Professional reading, blogs and websites were another source for finding out what is new in the law library industry and to gather tips and tricks on how to do our jobs better. Legal courses were also mentioned, the University of Toronto’s Legal Research on the Web course provides a needed primer for those who are new to legal research and a refresher for experienced researchers. The desire for further research courses, including the mention of a CLE on Legal Research show a need in our community to keep our skills sharp.

Roundtable continued

The struggle for self promotion and marketing came up a number of times in the roundtable, (it was mentioned in three sections!) to help give the membership some new ideas and offer a forum for sharing we have created the new marketing article in the VALL Review. This will be a recurring column and any member is invited to write a couple of paragraphs to share how they market their libraries.

Practical & Technical Skills

We asked how VALL could help you with practical and technical skills and what you would like to have workshops on, the response was phenomenal! Some of the highlights include:

- writing for the web
- legislation primer/tracking legislation
- negotiating with vendors
- cataloguing and database refresher courses
- software comparisons
- internet searching tips/free resource refreshers

These suggestions and more help us to develop the programs for future VALL seminars so we can provide the programming that you want.

New Professionals

There were lots of great suggestions about how to get more people involved in VALL. Many want us to keep up our presence at the SLAIS program at UBC and the Library Technician Program at Langara College. Other suggestions included creating a Facebook group, creating posters or bookmarks, or even helping with practicum placements.

Seminar Topics

The response to last years seminar topics was very positive, with the most enthusiastic responses to the VALL 20th Anniversary Party, and Madame Justice Susan A. Griffin's talk "Who's Lying and Who's Telling the Truth: How does a Judge Determine Credibility?" Great speakers and interesting topics make the most enjoyable and the most educational seminars. This year the executive is planning to have another year of great speakers!

VALL Website

The feedback for the VALL website was both positive and negative. Some users felt that the website was not as easy to use as they would like and they would like some more guidance and how –to help. Others felt that they had nothing to post to the site. We hope that as more members get used to the site and see its potential to share information on research or library news, the VALL website will become a go-to site for the law library community in Vancouver. Some user guides or help topics will also be created to help users get to knowhow to use the new website.

Thanks to all our members for participating in the June roundtable discussion!

VANCOUVER ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSES
AUGUST 1, 2008 – JULY 31, 2009

INCOME				
	Membership Fees	3600.00		
	Bank Interest	10.15		
	Luncheon Fees	13558.50		
	Transfer from PBMF	500.00		
			<u>\$17,668.65</u>	
EXPENSES				
	Office Supplies	34.21		
	Rasmussen Bindery	241.50		
	Post Office Box	162.75		
	Lunch Venues	11473.59		
	Speakers'	165.12		
	Flowers	280.00		
	Reimbursements	452.59		
	PBMF Recipient	1500.00		
	Miscellaneous	4.94		
			<u>\$14,314.70</u>	
NET INCOME				<u>\$3,353.95</u>
Chequing Account				
	Balance	As of July 31, 2009	\$14,108.13	
	Shares		92.57	
TOTAL				<u>\$14,200.70</u>
Peter Bark Memorial Fund	Term Deposit	Matures April 22, 2012	\$10,500.00	
	T-Bill Savings Account	As of July 31, 2008	1,662.17	
	Shares		115.20	
TOTAL				<u>\$12,277.37</u>