

VALL Review

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From the Vice President's Desk

I remember a competition I had in college in one of my Library Technician courses. Each of us students had to go to a library, peruse the collection, and find a book that we deemed should no longer be included in that library's collection. The criteria of the why was up to us. We would bring the books to class and present them. The most shocking book, voted by the students, would win a prize. Though I can no longer remember any specific titles, the class was loud with appalled faces, exclamations of disbelief, and furtive whispering at some of the more heinous titles that were found. Though fun in nature, this competition brought up the very important topic of weeding and why it was needed in collection management.



For law libraries, considering the service we provide with our collections, the topic of weeding is quite different. Old does not mean outdated. Problematic does not automatically mean useless. Our collections need to be diverse in the areas of law our firms specialize in.

As such, in my experience, the considerations we have for weeding can be broken up into one or more of the following:

- How often does the book get checked out?
- Who has been checking the book out?
- Does this book cover a major area of law our firm practices?
- Do we have room on the shelves?
- Is this book on the shelf because we wanted to make the shelf look full so our space does not get taken away, but now we need that space for a book we actually want?

Even once a title has been weeded from the collection, many of us work in spaces where removal from the collection does not necessarily mean a recycling depot. We are lucky in the fact that there are a plethora of lawyers, paralegals, and students that may be thrilled to be given a of a text we no longer need. At Fasken, we have a little nook of free-to-take books and it is regularly perused by lawyers and students. Only when it is apparent that the book is not needed by anyone do we officially weed it from the firm.

It is also important to remember, that weeding does not necessarily mean gone or inaccessible. Especially for us. We have a great collective of libraries associated with VALL. If there is something you need, likely someone has it. Lawbster is a great tool to get in touch with others regarding books, or to get a scan of specific sections or chapters. Many of us have databases that give us access to historical information no longer easily found in print. The Courthouse library has an abundance of historical texts and old caselaw reporters. Outside of VALL, academic law libraries across the country have large collections, though accessing those do come with fees. Now, we all just have to hope that everyone does not weed the same book at the same time.

Weeding is an important practice for every library and association. That includes VALL. As president in the upcoming year, I want to review our own collection of pages, policies, and practices to see if any need weeding or updating. If you have an idea of something you think needs reviewing, please email me at kkolthammer@fasken.com for consideration by the executive.

Until the next issue or until we speak by other means,
Kurtis

From the Editors

Beth Galbraith | Clark Wilson
Katherine Gieni | Guild Yule LLP

In this issue of the VALL Review, we are covering a compelling topic in library work: collection management and weeding. Weeding is a necessary and often arduous element of maintaining an effective library collection. It is an experience most library professionals will encounter during their careers, whether as part of routine collection maintenance or due to other pressures, such as moves and changing physical spaces. Weeding projects can feel like a test to our competencies, requiring us to create and implement systems and processes, and sometimes requiring great collection sacrifices. We're grateful to our five contributors on this subject for sharing their experiences with navigating and executing successful weeding and collection management projects.

This issue also contains a special article on a VALL member's undertaking of Queen University's "Certificate of Law" program. Erin guides us through an overview of the courses, the highs and lows of the program, and her overall impression of the whole thing.

We're also pleased to share some unusual and intriguing items from DLA Piper LLP as part of our "Unique Items in My Library" section, as well as new member announcements, news from library vendors, and updates from the VALL Executive team.

Thanks so much to all our contributors for making the VALL Review a valuable tool for education and connection within the membership. If you have an idea for an article, want to share a course or program you have completed, or have some other membership news you would like featured (including submissions for our “Unique Items in My Library” column), please reach out to the VALL Review editors. Happy Reading!

Programming Review

Stephanie Karnosh | Cassels Brock
Kathy Barry | Boughton
Nancy Li | Blakes

On Thursday, March 14th, we had a fun gathering at Mahony’s Tavern located at the Convention Center. We mixed and mingled with about 25 people, including several students from UBC and one student from Langara. The party got off to a great start with ice breaker questions, followed by networking and story sharing against the stunning backdrop of the North Shore mountains.

The venue space was perfect for a group our size. The food was delicious and our server, Natasha, was attentive to our group throughout the evening. Mahony’s Tavern exceeded our expectations and they may have even sparked a new VALL tradition!



VALL Review

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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.

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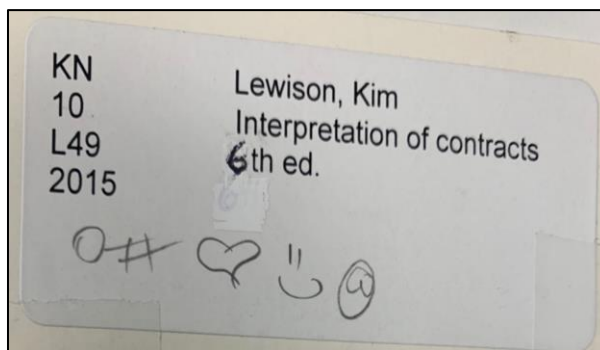
Feature Articles: Weeding and Collection Management

Shrinking Shelves

by Marnie Bailey, Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP

In mid-May of 2022, I was told that our library was moving from the 29th floor to the 26th floor, and we would be losing a little less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of our linear feet. When I went to measure the new space it turned out to be an even greater loss, as the designer's blueprint had 6 rolling shelves and there were only 5 in our new location. I was told I would be provided a very long lead time before I had to start downsizing, and I trusted this. In late June, when I hadn't heard any dates, timelines, or updates from the designer, and I had a sleepy Friday afternoon on my hands, I thought to myself "might as well get started" and set to work. I wanted to do one bay a week at the least, which turned out to be perfect timing...

The first thing I did was devise a plan of attack. What books were absolute must keeps, which were nice to keeps, and which were ok to recycle? I printed off the shelf list, printed it again because I forgot to sort by call number the first time, and into the stacks I went, armed with sheets of orange and purple stickers.



In 2015 we started indicating if a book was 'used in the library', but not signed out. When shelving the 'used in the library' books we made a mark on the card pocket – a circle for 2015, a hashtag for 2016, a heart for 2017, and so on. This gave an indication that a book had made it off the shelf. If it had, it was likely useful, and by changing the mark every year, we could see if the book was constantly used, used slightly, or if use had dropped off completely. Why is this relevant? I picked up every single book off every single shelf, opened it to the back, looked at the card, and looked at the pocket. If the card had initials I didn't recognize (we use cards in pockets and sign books out using people's initials) but it had 'used in the library' marks from the last 5 years, it got to stay. If it had initials I recognized but no 'used in the library' marks, I made a note on my shelf list to see when it was last signed out. If it hadn't been signed out in the last ten years, it got an orange sticker. If it hadn't been signed out in the last ten years but I thought the book should stay, it got a purple sticker. Must keeps remained sticker-less. If a book had no sign outs in the last ten years and no 'used in the library' marks but I felt we should probably keep it, we did (Wigmore, I'm looking at you right now).

Once I'd stickered all the books that were nice to keeps and ok to recycle, I measured the books we had left, and measured the shelves we were moving to. I did this four more times, until I was confident that I had the right amount of shelf space and books. It was about this time (mid-September) that I was given the 'very long lead time' of "we booked the movers for the beginning of October". I measured again, and put large red pieces of paper with the new bay numbers in

between the books – 18 cm from A1 – A2, 18 cm from A2 – A3, and so on. I only measured the books we were keeping, and I erred on the side of caution. It turns out I am not a very good measurer...

I let all lawyers and students come to the library before the move, to take any books with orange stickers on the spine. All remaining orange stickered books were recycled by the moving team, and the remainder of the books were moved to their carts, brought down to the 26th floor, and moved to the shelves. Where it was clear I was a terrible measurer, as Bay A1 was too long, Bay A2 was too short ... but everything fit! We spent the next six months working in a construction zone (do not recommend) and the following six months shifting the collection to allow room for new purchases, weeding out a few random orange stickered books that got missed, deciding if the purple stickered books should stay, and marking the catalogue records of those we discarded with “Discarded – reno 2022” in our private notes field. Now just over a year to the day we were settled in our new space, we are thrilled with our location (on the litigation floor!) and our collection is circulating like it hasn't in years. And not once has someone asked for a book we recycled. Yet...

Packing Light: Weeding a Collection for a Smaller Library*

By Susannah Tredwell, DLA Piper

DLA Piper moved to a new office last year; with the drop in the number of people physically working in our Vancouver office, the firm decided to reduce the size of the premises. A much smaller library space meant that we would have to discard 75% of the collection: a massive weeding project!

The first step was to determine just how big our collection was. In our old premises the library collection was scattered over four floors, with most floors having multiple locations for library materials. I created a spreadsheet listing what was where and how much room it took up.

The second step was to determine what resources were available elsewhere. For example, we checked to see which law reports were available online and/or held by the courthouse library or UBC; this information was added to the spreadsheet. We carried out a similar process for periodicals, government publications, and reports. Since the federal government has [digitized a significant number of government publications](#), we were able to discard anything that was already digitized. Similarly, there were a number of materials in our collection that were also available on CanLII. One key consideration was the likelihood that the materials would remain available online. (There are a number of items in our catalogue that bear witness to the concept that online is not forever.)

It became obvious that, given the space restrictions, we would have to get rid of almost all our law reports. (Disposing of them proved a major challenge.) We did keep some British reports that were not easily available and did not take up much space.

At this point I put tape on the collection to help visualize how much space we would have in the

new library and so I could see if the greatly reduced collection would fit. (It did not.)

The final step was weeding the text collection. Texts were assessed by usage and usefulness. (It was a voyage of discovery: why did we still own a copy of *Complete Toastmaster: A New Treasury for Speakers*, published in 1960?) For any items that fell into a grey area I checked with our research lawyer and/or subject experts. More than one item was returned with notation “Toss! Toss! Toss!”

I’m happy to say the move went smoothly (or as smoothly as could be expected) and the new collection fits into the space. Despite the smaller footprint, it’s been wonderful to have the collection all in one place.

**Editor’s note: title created with assistance from ChatGPT*

Weeding Strategies for an Agile Library*

By Alise Nelson, Courthouse Libraries BC

Ah, weeding. Whether it’s space concerns, funding concerns or both, the decisions for what to keep and what to replace can be a bit tricky. But what happens when you have 30 branches across the province?

At Courthouse Libraries, weeding can be complicated. The process of new book in, old book out turns into a bit more of a clockwork procession; titles are assessed by staff to see if they can find a new home in a different branch before they are discarded from the collection. Our collection development team is split into 5 sub teams, including teams that make purchasing suggestions for new titles, electronic resources, and handing down decisions.

So how does this work? When new books arrive in one of the 8 fulltime branches, the librarian there checks if they have an older edition that is still relevant and then adds this to a handing-down spreadsheet. If there have been significant changes to the area of law which renders the older edition too out of date to be useful, it will get added to a weeding list. If it’s still useful, it goes on the hand-down list.

The team assigned to handing down goes through this list and assesses where the title should go. Some of the things considered in this process:

- who has the oldest copy in the system?
- does a branch not have this title at all?
- does the branch with the oldest copy have circulation stats in the subject area that warrants a newer copy?
- does a branch getting a newer copy have an edition they can pass down to a different branch, including the local branches?

A 2024 copy of a title arriving in Vancouver might mean that Kamloops gets Vancouver’s 2022 copy

and they can pass down their 2018 edition to Campbell River. Each title getting passed along gets sent with a print-out of what title the new branch is receiving, and what to do with their existing copy or if this title is new to the them.

But this is a weeding article, so what happens at the very end of the chain when books are finally weeded?

- Smaller branches send their weeded titles to the Victoria branch where it is assessed whether they are the last one in the system and need to be kept as a point in time resource.
- All branches add the details of the removed title to a weeding spreadsheet.
- Managers look through this spreadsheet to check for 'last copy' items of a title. These titles are then sent to Vancouver or Victoria to be held as historical reference copies. Some will receive a sticker that designates them as out of date historic materials.
- Titles to be weeded are stored on a designated shelf, preferably outside the main library shelving. Some of these books are offered to lawyers to take for free.
- Loose leaf pages are often recycled with the binders discarded if they are in poor shape, or reused if possible.
- Bound titles will either get discarded or stored until there are enough titles to warrant calling a removal company.

This process takes a lot of time, with a lot of moving parts, but it means that Courthouse Libraries is able to spread out collections to areas appropriate for their usage and client needs, as well as provide historical resources for members of the legal community. We aim to have a current copy in at least one branch in the system, and if you need the *Shipping-Laws of the British Empire* (1854), guess who's got it? Do you need any edition of *Phipson on Evidence* back to 1892? Courthouse Libraries has all 21 editions.

Courthouse Libraries strives to have a full collection of both current and historic legal materials, only weeding excess copies of the truly outdated.

**Editor's note: title created with assistance from ChatGPT*

Musings on Collection Maintenance

By Alex Everitt, Harris & Co.

Harris and Company LLP is a mid-sized boutique law firm, specializing in labour and employment law. For this size of firm we have a substantially sized collection comprising of workplace law resources, including historical labour, employment and human rights material. Harris does not have a detailed retention or weeding policy and so I have generally resorted to an ad hoc system where I assess the situation and make a game time decision. There are times I've wished for a formal



weeding & retention policy. One that I can wave in front of a partner when I'm handed law school texts from the 1970s. However, for the majority of situations when a massive weeding project is necessary, I don't think a policy would benefit my firm library. Below I discuss two large weeding projects, a digitization project and my general thoughts on day-to-day collection maintenance.

Absorbing a Merging Firm's Collection

Ten years ago, months after joining the firm, Harris absorbed a smaller firm and I subsequently inherited their library collection. Truth be told I don't remember much of the process and as a very

junior librarian some guidance would have been helpful. I read some blogs and some books and came up with a plan. Luckily the entire collection did not move to my library first, I was able to visit the office space and assess their collection before moving titles into my collection. Any title that was a duplicate I did not take unless it was in better shape than the title in my collection. I worked with the team of lawyers moving to Harris and was able to identify key titles that were necessary to move over. The remainder of the collection was donated and discarded.

Office Renovation / Library Move

During the pandemic Harris completed a firm-wide renovation that took the walls down and built them back up. The large specialized print collection of labour & employment material had to be drastically reduced. The entire collection needed to be assessed and with time against us we needed some easy ways to get space fast. We also did not want to box up and move a large chunk of our collection if we weren't going to keep it. It was decided we would toss all our law reporters that were available on Westlaw and Lexis+; this gave us 58 shelves of space. We did not get rid of all reporters, we kept historical labour relation board decisions (for BC, Ontario and Federal jurisdictions) and a few others. Excluding legislation, reporters, and looseleaf we physically assessed every title in our collection. Was the title out of print? Did it have historical value? Could we easily access it at CLBC? Who and when was the book used last? Did we have other similar resources in our collection? This allowed to weed our collection some more and to really assess the collection to make sure the books we had on the shelves were necessary.

Digitization

Another way we weeded our print collection was to digitize content such as old conference material. This allowed us to get rid of bulky binders and have 'cleaner' shelves. (The library also digitized 3500 collective agreements to free up space and make the collection more accessible ...but details of that process we'll save for another time.)

General Weeding

We still do not have a collection maintenance policy, but with space at a premium and the library space more visible we are better at weeding material. We try to only keep a 2-3 year backlog of soft cover annual publications (think White Book, Canadian Master Labour Guide, Annotated Canada

Labour Code, etc.) I am better at saying no and we try very hard to not be a lawyers' personal archive. When we replace a new edition, depending on the title we have a shorter lifespan for keeping historical copies. Sometimes the decisions are not easy – what if somebody *really* needs that one section from that one book? But that is a problem for future librarian Alex and so far we've been ok.

Post-Covid Libraries: The Journey from Physical Places to Digital Spaces

By Christina Tribe, Norton Rose Fulbright Canada

Reasoning:

Over the past several years our national collection has developed its digital presence, mostly organically. More recently, it became apparent that we needed to speed up the mostly slow and uneven process of as-it-happens updates and single-office solutions. As a result, Vancouver started a pilot project for a large and on-going weeding project to sync our shelves, catalogue, and online collection.

History:

Our first major weeding project began about 10 years ago, in anticipation of the move to our new office. Books, loose-leafs, and serials were thoroughly and ruthlessly ranked, sorted and discarded. The new library space had a much smaller footprint, and books would be put on rolling shelves in a shared space. Several years and a merger later, budget cuts necessitated further culling – this time many loose-leaf services were canceled or suspended. Though we kept many services, we did not maintain them. A few more years passed, and Covid-19 hit. We all stayed home, but loose-leaf updates kept coming. No one was in the office to use the print. Our lawyers began to rely heavily on the digital resources, our students used them exclusively. When we did eventually return to the office, we had mountains of updates to file. For some loose-leafs, it was cheaper, faster, and easier to order and file one new set of contents and binders. We then chose to discard a few more print services but kept the online equivalents. New vendor contracts put the nail in the coffin to most of the rest of our loose-leaf services. We now had available huge digital collections that were accessible to all, at all hours and required zero library maintenance. Only the most used and beloved print resources survived the final cuts.



One of our first initiatives post-quarantine was a labelling project, alerting users to the currency of each loose-leaf service. There were three kinds of labels. The labels on canceled updates simply said “canceled, updated to ____” with the date of the last update written in. Some labels were for resources that were canceled in print but had online access. Those labels said “Print canceled,

please access online via _____” where the publisher portal was written in. The last set were the digital twins, where loose-leaf services were still being updated and we also had digital access. Those labels said “Online access also available via _____” with the publisher portal listed. Loose-leaf services that were not canceled, and did not have digital access did not get labeled.

At about this time several library technicians in the firm struck a National working group to address the unevenness of digital access and inconsistent database records across our Norton Rose Fulbright Canada’s English library catalogue. The eResources Group was formed, and a national electronic resources database was built. You may be asking yourself, “what do these national digital access initiatives have to do with physical weeding in Vancouver?” When the digital resources were unrolled with our new vendor contracts, we decided to not maintain many of the remaining print services. As a result, we had old-content ghost books that were not updated, and we did not want to encourage their use. Some had become so out of date as to be unreliable. We also had partial or outdated records that needed edits. Looking ahead to future national cross-library initiatives, physical library and database clean-up has now become priority #1.



Process:

We are currently deep into the weeds of the discard process. I check each item on the shelves, and dust/shelf-read at the same time. I have gone through item by item, keeping in mind what is now available online. If it’s available online, and the last update was longer than 3 years ago, the binder gets pulled. I pull the card, edit the record and include the link, recycle the pages, and box up the binders. I double-check my edits in the “Basic Report Form” to make sure that all the now irrelevant information is deleted (ex. physical description, call number, location). If the book or service is not one we want to keep in print or electronic format, I delete the whole record. So far there have not been many of these, save for outdated books in subject areas we no longer practice. I have broken the task

down per half-rolling shelving unit – or one side of the stacks at a time. The discards from one row, consisting of five bays, with six shelves each bay, will fill approximately three library carts. The guts of books from two of the library carts will fill a large recycling bin. An extra bin is sometimes needed. The empty binders will fill several photocopy paper boxes. The physical discard part of the project is noisy, dirty and takes a lot of working space, so best to be done before anyone else comes in for their work day. I discard the books first, and then use quiet time later in the day to edit the records.

Results:

Our physical collection is now approximately 50% the size it was. I anticipate that in the next couple years it will be reduced by a further 25%, as all the remaining loose-leaves that currently fall outside the current weeding criteria, will eventually age out and need to be weeded. It is now much easier to find what we need. We have better accessibility and can easily see and reach for items because the top and bottom shelves have been left empty. The shelves are now lighter, and easier to move. We can readily see sections where we need to shift, re-catalogue, or books we need to re-label, or repair. Our collection is cleaner – both tidy and dust-free. An unexpected bonus was finding several

missing items. Certain areas have now opened up, and we have more space to keep large annual volumes, like the PITA. We have space to consolidate some satellite collections if needed.

Here is the quick scan / checklist / tl;dr version:

Reasoning / History

- Cancellations
 - Many loose-leaf services (out of date / still on the shelves / prevented people from using the up-to-date digital)
 - Canceled outright/no other access (item ceased publication; we no longer practice in that subject area)
 - Canceled print updates, but access available online
 - Hybrid
 - We had both the print service and digital access
 - The hybrid copies were then canceled due to digital library agreements with various vendors; labour and upkeep costs were considered before canceling print updates
- Budget
 - Expensive to purchase
 - Expensive to maintain (labour)
- Digital resource contracts
 - Did not have to have print – digital means access for all 24/7
 - Combine this with IP access for many titles, it meant digital was first/easiest choice for hybrid work environment
- Space crunch
 - We share the space (6 rolling shelves) with a very busy & expanding wealth department
- Circulation / Usage
 - Low usage – so why keep?
- Relevance
 - Focus on reference services meant that loose-leaf service updates were never prioritized, and therefore never as current as they could be
 - As soon as it's in print, it's out of date
 - Pile up fast, and now we can use the space previously dedicated to loose-leaf filing storage for some firm archive breathing room
- DB/T records now prepped for transfer to new national eResources database
 - The database is being populated, but at some point in the future it's expected there be an import/export of records
 - Our records need to be bare bones to merge with national system
 - Other libraries have different catalogues; different ways of cataloguing; different cataloguing systems (we use Moys, others use KM modified); different information; different focus (we are more user focused and therefore the way we catalogue is minimal and not strict)

Steps

- Project plan, recommend Gantt Charts to plan and track

- Pre-Covid - removal of conference binders
 - Pre-Covid / Post-Covid
 - Low usage stats
 - CLE Online – Courses on Demand
 - Digital
 - Look for missing items
- Post-Covid – removal of digital twin loose-leafs
- Removed [more] old conference binders
- Removed all items from subject areas we no longer practice
- Removed all items outside out retention schedules for annual items
- Removed duplicates
- Then old/irrelevant (ex. Microsoft for Dummies; practice management; out dated PD; gifts/donated copies from lawyer continuing education sessions)
- Row by row
 - Each book was inspected for use, currency, condition
 - Kept some point in time sets for archival purposes (ie, BC Companies Law)
- Recycled
 - Pulled cards
 - Gutted binders
 - Looseleaf guts and smaller soft cover books were recycled
 - Two library carts full of discards will easily fill up most of a large shred/recycle bin
- DB/T update
 - Timing
 - Process the records when I had time later in the day/week
 - Can be done on WFH days, not necessary to be in the office
 - Delete records
 - Missing items
 - Items for subject areas we no longer practice in
 - Separate records for older editions of annual publications (some were treated like serials, some were treated like new editions)
 - Update records
 - Current links
 - Removed call numbers; redundant alt titles; staff notes; release information; updated notes on passwords (we now have IP access so that information is not necessary); old account information (numbers; vendor contacts); order info; location; format; physical description; catalogue label; holdings and retention; record status; routing information; filing priority; issue received
 - Double-checked against basic records for fields we don't use anymore
 - Aim for bare bones records

Things to Consider

- Timing
 - It's noisy, dirty, dusty, takes a lot of space
 - It generates a lot of attention
 - It does go fast – two library cards can be processed in about an hour

- Coordination with other departments/staff
 - Needed help from Office Services to have the bins brought and unlocked, & boxes ready
 - Confirm garbage procedure – approximately 3 library carts full of binders mean approximately 6-8 photocopy paper sized boxes need to be stockpiled for when you're ready to tackle
- Murphy's Law
 - If we need something in print again, we can always re-order
 - ex. pension manual; energy service
- It's best to break it up into chunks – I was doing one row (5 bays, 6 shelves each) at a time, which filled approximately 3 library carts
 - I recycled them all within an hour or so, but saved a few I wanted to double-check. This meant I had to find space to store the things I pulled but didn't recycle

Bonus

- Learned how to use Gantt charts for project management
- First steps (labeling) can be assigned to a summer hire or library student
- Collection records more consistent (ie, serials entries vs new edition entries)
- Budget can now be spent on priority texts
- Able to see what needed attention
- Tidier; cleaner (dusted)
- Found missing items
- Easier to find what's needed/ relevant
- Room for expansion (ex. PITA texts)
- Increased accessibility (lighter rolling shelves, can now see and can reach books without assistance)
- Have a better idea of what routes (sign out in DB/T, we don't keep usage stats but the cards show this)
- Easy to identify gaps/areas we'd like to expand
- Room to consolidate satellite libraries if needed

From Dewey to Dockets: Law 101 for Library Professionals*

By Erin Clupp, Norton Rose Fulbright LLP

As a self-proclaimed “accidental law librarian” who does not have a background in law, most of what I know about the legal information profession I learned on the job, like many of us I suspect. Prior to joining Norton Rose Fulbright LLP as a Research Librarian in 2019, I had not worked in the legal sector and had spent most of my time working in archives or records management roles. As I progress in my career, I wanted to enrich my knowledge of the subject matter I work with on a daily basis so I decided to go back to school.

The commitment of a law degree is not appealing to me but fortunately, there are many part-time options available for study that do not require one to write the LSATs, including a [Certificate of Law](#) program offered through Queen's University. I wanted to share some information about the program and my experience so far for anyone else who might also be interested in professional development options.



Queen's Law School logo

Queen's Certificate in Law – Program Overview

The Certificate of Law courses are offered online, are mostly asynchronous, and are taught by Queen's Faculty of Law instructors. There are three intakes: winter, summer, and fall so you can hop in anytime. You can take as many or few of the courses as you want, and completing the full certificate is not mandatory. In order to finish the certificate, you must complete four of the seven courses offered:

- LAW 701 – Introduction to Canadian Law (not mandatory but recommended to start with)
- LAW 702 – Aboriginal Law
- LAW 703 – Workplace Law
- LAW 704 – Corporate Law
- LAW 705 – Public and Constitutional Law
- LAW 706 – Intellectual Property Law
- LAW 707 – International Law

The courses are a bit pricy (~\$1200), which may be a barrier for some but I was fortunate enough to have my employer cover the costs. For anyone who is interested in the course(s) who do not have financial support, there are several bursaries and funding opportunities available such as the [Peter Bark Bursary](#) offered by the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL), and several [scholarships and awards](#) offered by the Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL).

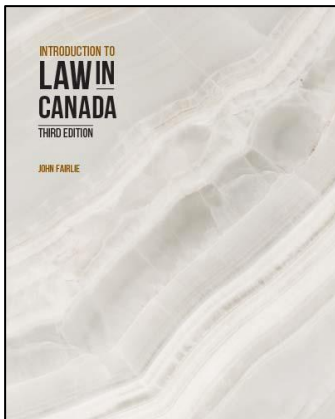
LAW 701: Introduction to Canadian Law – Course Structure and Content

As recommended, I began my studies taking Introduction to Canadian Law (LAW 701), which gave me a solid foundation and explained fundamental legal terms and concepts (like ratio decidendi), how English common law came to be (we can thank William the Conqueror), and how to apply legal principles and basic legal reasoning to a set of facts.

The course was broken up into several modules covering different areas of law, with a new topic each week including:

- Introduction – provided an overview of the Canadian legal system, Indigenous peoples and the law, the development of the common law system, and outlined the skills needed to “think like a lawyer”
- Public law – covered constitutional, administrative, and criminal law
- Private law – covered torts, contracts, and property law (both real and personal property)
- Business law – covered aspects of corporate, employment, and intellectual property law
- International law – covered aspects of public and private international law, and the creation and role of the United Nations

Workload and Assessments



Course textbook: John Fairlie, Introduction to Canadian Law (Toronto: Emond, 2023)

Every week there were new videos and readings assigned for each topic, which were presented by a different professor specializing in the subject area. The number of hours put into each week was dependent on the content and number of assignments, with some weeks having more videos or readings than others. The main textbook assigned for the course was [Introduction to Canadian Law](#) by John Fairlie but there were also other assigned readings such as chapters from other textbooks, articles, case law, and sections of legislation.

The assignments were varied, with a weekly quiz corresponding to each topic, and a “fact pattern assignment” at the end of each module.

The assignment would give various fact patterns based on the module’s contents and students would have to respond to a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. For example, in the module on criminal law, you would be given a scenario describing an offence and you would have to determine what charges to lay as the prosecutor, what defences might be given as the defense lawyer, and what considerations a judge may give when determining sentencing, using relevant legislation, case law, and course materials to support your answer. In addition to the asynchronous modules, there were also several tutorials in real time (called “applied learning sessions”) where we would meet in smaller groups with a TA to discuss the materials and review mock scenarios or simulations.

The course content was challenging but not overly difficult per se (I think anyone working in the legal profession would be familiar enough with the material), but there was a substantial time commitment, with assigned videos and readings every week as well as a lot of smaller assignments that add up and take time.

Course Highlights

Being a survey course, I really enjoyed the variety of subjects in LAW 701. It provided a nice flavour for each of the different areas of law, most of which have their own full course. I will admit my favourite topics were at the beginning of the course where we learned about the history and development of various systems of law, writs, and royal courts (I did a history degree before my MLIS) but there were also others I found surprisingly interesting (property law), others quite useful (corporate law), but really there is something for everyone.

While I enjoyed every module and learned something new from each, the one on international law was one of my favourites. The course covered the history and development of international law that led up to the creation of the United Nations, concepts of state sovereignty, and sources of international law (e.g. treaties, conventions, customs). There are different branches of public and private international law but given the limited time, the course mainly focused on international criminal law, in particular crimes of aggression, and the creation and jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court under the Rome Statute. I look forward to taking the full course on International Law to further explore the topic and visiting The Hague for some “experiential learning”.

Biggest Challenges

Honestly, the biggest pain point was the application process. Unlike some other courses, you can't simply sign up and pay, you have to apply to the certificate (as you would a degree or diploma program), which means creating an account, submitting an application, paying an application fee (\$100), sending in transcripts, pulling your hair out, and being accepted. Everything is done online now and tracking down transcripts and logins for all my prior education required more effort than I realized. I don't say this to deter anyone but for something to be aware of. If you intend to register, make sure to give yourself lots of time before the application deadline.

Another challenge was readjusting to being a student again. It had been a while since I had taken a formal course like this and I had to get myself organized and prepared at the beginning to ensure I stayed on track and didn't miss any assignments (e.g. creating colour-coded spreadsheets for assignments and readings, calendar reminders in five different places, etc.). I set aside dedicated time for coursework each week, usually one evening during the week and then one day on the weekend to review the course materials, do the readings, and complete my assignments. Sometimes it would be a few hours, sometimes it was more, but it did become more routine over time.

The course also challenged me to think and approach the subject matter in a different way than what I am used to. The assignments weren't about understanding a specific area of law or how the law changed over time (e.g. the legislative histories that we are often asked to be done) but how to use the law to make an argument or answer a question. While one class does not make me a trained lawyer, I think it was valuable to get a bit more insight into how lawyers or students might approach a matter and what information they might be looking for when they come to us with a question. This helps us, as the legal researcher, to understand the relevance of a resource and identify more pertinent information for them.

Final Impressions

Overall, I really enjoyed the course and look forward to taking more in the future (although I will be taking a break over the summer!). Even without completing the entire certificate, I found taking the introductory course alone was valuable, and I would recommend it to anyone wanting to learn about Canadian law. The course was also quite practical as it combined theory with applied learning and I already feel like some of what I have learned has already come in handy with my job. I also feel more confident finding and perusing applicable case law, which was something I felt less comfortable with as a researcher.



My true heart's desire (Photo taken by me taken at the American Bookbinders Museum in San Francisco c. 2018)

As enjoyable as the course was, I likely won't be hurrying to sign up for law school anytime soon and will just dabble with a course here and there. It did however remind me of why I became a librarian in the first place – I like to learn and I like to find things. That and reading about the printing

press and precedents made my head perk up (and my heart flutter) more than reading about torts! So after twelve weeks, what is the one takeaway I have about the law? To quote one of my instructors, “*The law is logic, wrapped in language, wrapped in history, forged in conflict.*” I’m pretty sure the library has a good book or two on the subject...

If anyone has any questions or wants to chat more about the course or the program, please reach out!

* *Title credit: ChatGPT*

From the Web Editor’s Screen

Jen Brubacher | DLA Piper

Hello and happy Spring! I've been looking at how the VALL website can be a more valuable resource to our members. On that track, I've starting building a collection of [local or virtual Professional Development Opportunities](#).

When I first joined VALL it was recommended I apply for the Peter Bark Bursary. Since I'd completed my library studies overseas I had no idea where to look here for options. I've recently had the same sentiment expressed to me by others, so I hope this new page will be a helpful resource for anyone who wants to continue their studies in law librarianship and related topics.

We also have a page of [Other Resources](#) on the website featuring links to library and law associations, research blogs, and sources of Federal and Provincial legislation. And our members can watch [videos of our past VALL events here](#).

If you know of any opportunities you'd like to see listed on our new resource page, or have some other feedback to improve our membership offerings, please [contact me](#).

Member Announcements

VALL is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Liz Lepik – UBC iSchool Student (Final Year)

I am in my final term of the MLIS program at UBC, graduating this May. I am currently working as a Student Librarian at UBC's Koerner Library and as an auxiliary at the Vancouver Public Library. Previously, I received my J.D. from the University of Alberta and my Library Technician Diploma from Langara. Before changing fields into librarianship, I worked as a personal injury lawyer at Bungay Law Office and as a Policy/Legal Advisor at WorkSafeBC. I am excited to have the opportunity to combine my experiences and enter the field of law libraries. I am originally from Vancouver and in my free time I enjoy walking my dogs, reading, playing video games, and gardening.

Kyla McCallum – UBC School of Information Student

Kyla McCallum is a first-year master's student in Library and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia. She graduated with a BA in New Media and Digital Design from Fordham University in May 2023. As the Social Media Coordinator for Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL/ACBD) and the Small Business Accelerator Student Librarian for UBC, Kyla is enjoying learning about specialized libraries. Her master's thesis will critically analyze Canada's persuasive nation branding from a user engagement perspective. When not researching or writing, Kyla can probably be found reading, cross-stitching, or carving linoleum for a relief print.

Katy O'Shaughnessy – Attorney General Law Library

I am the Director of Knowledge Services in Legal Services Branch (LSB) in the Ministry of Attorney General. The Knowledge Services department is a new team that combines the existing law library team with a new knowledge management program. I graduated from UBC's Master of Library and Information Studies program in 2016. Prior to this role, I worked as a Knowledge Services Lead, as a Senior Law Librarian, and a Project Director leading the implementation of a knowledge management program at LSB. In my free time I enjoy cooking, baking, gardening and being a mom to a 1-year-old kiddo. I am currently reading *The Legal Singularity* and *The Fraud*.

Foo Weng Sin - Langara College, Library & Information Technology (Year 1)

My name is Foo Weng, and I am delighted to become a member of the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL). Currently, I am in my first year, second semester at Langara College, pursuing a diploma in Library and Information Technology with a keen interest in specializing in law librarianship. During my time at Langara College, I have been immersing myself in various aspects of library and information science, gaining foundational knowledge in cataloging, reference services, and information retrieval systems. I am particularly drawn to the intricate world of legal research and librarianship, partly influenced by my elder sister who works as a legal secretary for over 20 years back in my home country of Singapore. I am excited to explore this field further. While I may be new to the law professional landscape, I bring with me a passion for learning and a strong commitment to contributing meaningfully to the library community. I am a big fan of John Grisham's legal novels, having read over 25 of his novels so far besides cooking my favorite Hainanese steamed chicken rice for my family in between studies. Previously, I came from the film industry here in Canada, whereas I did theatre and entertainment lighting design back home in Singapore for the past 15 years. I will be embarking on my first practicum with Boughton Law under Ms Kathy Barry as my host on April 8 this year. I am eager to engage with fellow members of VALL, learn from your expertise, and collaborate on projects that promote access to legal information and enhance library services. Thank you for welcoming me into this esteemed association, and I look forward to connecting with all of you.

If you have an announcement you would like to see featured in the VALL Review, please contact our editors. Announcements can include new VALL members, retirements, new jobs, published articles or speaker credits, or personal milestones like weddings or births. Anything you would like to share with the VALL community – please consider submitting it to us!

Unique Items in My Library

Most of us love a touch of personalization, whether it's in the form of knick-knacks, visual aids, or other fun items. These things make our libraries unique and make us smile. Please enjoy these fun elements of our members' libraries, and if you have a unique item that you would like featured in the VALL Review, contact our editors with your pictures!

This month we are highlighting some items from the library at DLA Piper LLP. Thanks to Jen Brubacher for providing the photos and descriptions!

Left: Edward Pease Davis's cane, engraved "EPD Venice 1929"

Top right: Edward Pease Davis's horsehair courtroom wig. EP Davis practiced law from 1886 to 1931, and in 1892 he set up the firm that would become Vancouver's Davis & Company, later DLA Piper (Canada) LLP

Bottom right: Davis & Company print blocks previously used to create letterhead



News from CLEBC

Adam Simpkins, Marketing Manager | CLEBC

CLEBC is Proud to Introduce *Financial Issues in Family Law - 3rd Edition*

The third edition of *Financial Issues in Family Law* is an indispensable resource for lawyers navigating complex financial issues in family law cases. This guide thoroughly addresses the financial challenges arising from relationship breakdowns, especially when business interests and trusts are involved. It offers in-depth coverage of property characterization, financial disclosure, valuation principles, division methods, tax implications and child support income calculation.

Featuring annotated sample documents, including financial statements and business valuations, this edition empowers lawyers to understand business ownership, effectively collaborate with valuation experts and confidently manage tax and support considerations. Key updates include discussions on the *Family Law Act's* property division regime, comprehensive analysis of financial statements and business valuation and the incorporation of the joint expert requirement.

Edited by leading experts in the field, this publication (available now in print or as an online subscription) is a must-have for legal professionals seeking to confidently handle financially complex cases.

Secure your copy today and stay ahead in family law practice. Visit www.cle.bc.ca/804 to find out more.

To learn more about CLEBC's current and upcoming publications, go to: www.cle.bc.ca/publications.

News from Courthouse Libraries BC

Liz Blackburn, Manager, Regional Libraries | Courthouse Libraries BC

Free Access to Court Services Online eSearch on Our Computers!

We are very excited to share that publicly available court documents can now be freely accessed on our public computers in our libraries. We are grateful to Attorney General Niki Sharma and Court Services staff for partnering with us to modernize access to the legal resources people need to resolve their own or a client's legal issues. We hope this access will help reduce financial and technological barriers to court documents for legal service providers and the public.

Please visit our [website](#) for additional information about Court Services Online eSearch and the information you can expect to find. We are learning a great deal about this tool so please ask us if you have any questions.

A few notable ways you can use CSO include:

- Accessing living pleadings and precedents from Notices of Civil Claim and Petitions

- Finding official company names
- Learning which lawyer/firm represents a company or client

Our librarians can check CSO eSearch in advance of your visit to the library and let you know if documents are available for a given file, but you will need to come to our library to access these materials yourself.

“I prefer to use a copy card!” Said No One Ever...

Our honour system for photocopying and printing services has been a resounding success. Self-service costs remain at \$0.25/page.

If you or your firm have a stash of our copy cards that turn up in your spring cleaning, please bring them with you the next time you visit. We can read what is on the cards and take them as payment for any of our fee services you use. And we can also recycle them on your behalf!

Free Stuff!

Our document delivery and print resources mailing services are FREE! See details for all our services on our [website](#).

Shelf Management and Collections

If you visit our Vancouver library, you may notice we are engaged in shifting some of our print collection. We are creating space where it is needed and working to improve access to our holdings. We have added signage to our shelves to notify clients that we are moving books.

News from InfoAction and Vancouver Public Library

Patti Wotherspoon, Acting Manager | InfoAction

InfoAction Staffing News

After many years of working for InfoAction, Patti Wotherspoon will be retiring this summer. Ronit Landon returns from maternity leave in July and will resume her position as Manager at that time.

New Additions to VPL's Digital Magazine and Newspaper Archives

Recently added and providing free access for all VPL cardholders, VPL's digital library now includes the following historic business and news sources:

- The Atlantic Magazine Archive: 1857-2014
- Bloomberg Businessweek Magazine Archive: 1929-2010
- Forbes Magazine Archive: 1917-2000
- Fortune Magazine Archive: 1930-2000
- Jet Magazine Archive: 1951-2014

- Vanity Fair Magazine Archive: 1913-1936, 1983-2015
- The Guardian: 1821-2003
- The Observer (UK): 1791-2003

News From The King's Printer

Neal Yonson, Manager of Projects and Legislation | King's Printer

The King's Printer is pleased to announce that [Annual Statutes for 2022](#) were added to BC Laws in April 2024 and [Consol 42](#) (up to March 11, 2024) was also added.

How are the time frames for the Archived Statutes Consolidations decided?

The cut-off date for each Archived Statute Consolidation is decided by the Office of Legislative Counsel in the Ministry of Attorney General. The biggest consideration is timing. Ideally, two consolidations are produced each year: one in the spring and one in the fall. However, those timelines may be adjusted in response to things like a large volume of amendments (e.g. [Bill 14 - 2023](#) which included over 2,300 amendments, and affecting more than 200 Acts) or a pandemic.

News from LexisNexis

Alex R. Bambo, Marketing Manager – Mid Law, Large Law | LexisNexis

LexisNexis Canada remains committed to our customers, to innovation and to the rule of law. Here are some recent events, resources, and new products we have developed to support Canadian lawyers, law libraries, and legal organizations.

Launch of Lexis+ AI Commercial Preview in Canada

Earlier this year, LexisNexis announced the launch of the Canadian commercial preview of Lexis+ AI, a generative AI solution designed to transform legal work. Grounded in our extensive repository of accurate and exclusive Canadian law content and use cases, Lexis+ AI combines the power of generative AI with proprietary LexisNexis search technology that **seamlessly navigates both English and French legal content** to deliver results that are always backed by verifiable, citable authority. Lexis+ AI is generally available in the U.S., following a successful commercial preview in 2023. Lexis+ AI technology features **conversational search, insightful summarization, intelligent legal drafting, and document upload capabilities**, all supported by state-of-the-art encryption and privacy technology to keep sensitive data secure.

- **Conversational search** simplifies the complex and time-consuming legal research process, offering a user-friendly search experience for various legal inquiries complete with citations. This empowers lawyers to conduct research effectively and efficiently.

- **Enhanced summarization** provides a custom summary of legal documents, expediting and guiding insightful analysis.
- **Generative document drafting** guides customers throughout the legal drafting process, automatically generating an initial draft based on user prompts. This innovative feature allows users to easily modify the language and tone to suit their needs.
- Additionally, **document upload** capabilities allow for rapid analysis, summarization, and extraction of key insights from legal documents. Specifically tailored for Canadian legal professionals, the Lexis+ AI offering will support interactions in both English and French providing users across the country with access to Halsbury's® Laws of Canada, the only up-to-date national legal encyclopedia, Juris Classeur®, the only French civil law encyclopedia in Canada as well as unique and exclusive English and French commentary, Pleadings, Motions and Facta court documents and practical guidance.

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.)