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Museletter: October 2004

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Museletter

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ALTERNATIVE CAREERS FOR JD'S

By Joyce Manna Janto,
Deputy Director of the Law Library

Fall 2004 Regular Library Hours

Sunday
10:00 a.m. - Midnight

Mon.-Thurs.
7:30 a.m. - Midnight

Friday
7:30 a.m.- 9:00 p.m.

Saturday
9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.



When I was asked to write an article about alternative careers for JD's, I felt that this assignment was appropriate for more than the obvious reason. Not only do I hold a non-traditional legal job, but my path to the JD was not the traditional one either. I had never had a burning desire to be a lawyer. My knowledge of what a lawyer did was shaped more by "Perry Mason" than anything else and courtroom work was not something I found interesting. In high school I discovered the joys of research. And while I had an interest in law, I wasn't sure how this could be combined with my new love. So while in college, I decided to become a librarian and to work for a law firm. While in library school I was fortunate enough to land a job at the University of Pittsburgh law school library. That job was a revelation, I knew then that not only was I going to be a law librarian, I was going to be an academic law librarian.

Getting a part-time job at the Pitt law library was fortunate for me in two ways. Not only did I discover a career path, but I found my first professional mentor. The director of that library, Jenni Parrish, was generous with her time and career advice. One of the first things she told me was that to advance within the academic law library field, I would eventually need to earn a JD. She strongly advised me to limit my job search to those institutions that would support my attending law school on a part-time basis. This is what brought me to the University of Richmond.

Going to law school part-time while working full-time in the library was an interesting experience. The most frequent question I was asked, by the faculty, by my fellow students, and by my friends was "well, what are you going to do once you graduate?" My questioners were universally astonished when I told them that I would stay working in the law library. I then had to explain to my dumfounded audience that it was quite common for an academic

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librarian to have a second degree, aside from the Masters of Library Science. This "second masters" was the subject specialty degree. It is common for a music librarian to hold an MLS/MFA; a business librarian to have an MLS/MBA, etc. I would hold a MLS/JD, a librarian who specialized in law and legal research.

Over the years, it has become even more common for academic law librarians to hold dual degrees. When I received my JD, it was assumed that only those with administrative ambitions would go through this path. Now, job advertisements for entry level reference librarians state that the JD is either "highly preferred" or required. As an example, of the 7 librarians at this law library, 5 of us hold the JD. Of the 2 non-JD librarians, one, Sally Wambold is the cataloger. This technical service position traditionally does not require a JD. The other non-JD librarian, Gail Zwirner, came to the library with a rich legal research background. Ms. Zwirner worked for almost 15 years as a reference librarian, first for an administrative agency of the U.S. government, and then at Hunton & Williams, the largest law firm in the southeast.

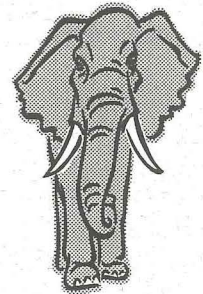
Those of us librarians who hold JD's have a wide variety of responsibilities. We teach, we perform reference for faculty, students, members of the bar and the general public, we have administrative duties, and we work with computers and other technology used in the delivery of information. We also engage in professional activities. Several of us have spoken at workshops and conferences attended by lawyers, librarians, and members of the University faculty. I have recently begun serving a 3 year term as the treasurer of the American Association of Law Libraries.

As I have previously stated, the rapid development of information technology has radically changed the field of librarianship. In many law schools today, including this one, the director of the library is also in charge of computer and information technology for the entire law school. In many cases the title of the director of the library has been changed to that of dean of libraries and information technology. This expansion of the role of librarians now reaches beyond the academic sector. Law firms and courts have also discovered that the JD is a valuable thing for a librarian to hold. Recently the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals advertised for a Circuit Librarian. A MLS and a JD were required for this position. Many law firms, especially those with multiple offices are requiring the dual degree for their head librarian. These firms and courts have come to realize the value of having a librarian who not only understands the where of information, but also the why.

At the end of the day, there is one other major benefit to having a non-traditional legal job. And that is quite literally the "end of the day." As a librarian my day has much more structure than that of a lawyer in a firm. While I may on occasion work beyond 5:00 p.m., that is my choice, not a requirement of the job. My weekends, for the most part, are my own. I can plan a vacation a year in advance and know that only the most catastrophic of events will cause it to be cancelled. When I wanted to attend the world premier of "The Littlest Pumpkin" or an early volleyball game, my colleagues were more than happy to cover for me. These are things that do not happen easily in a law firm. All in all I would heartily recommend the field of law librarianship to anyone interested in a varied, fascinating career.

Election 2004 and the Internet

As we quickly approach Election 2004, the Internet provides an interesting medium beyond TV, radio and print sources for educating voters about the November elections. Websites addressing political issues and the election in general are increasingly prevalent and interactive offering video options, chat lines and web polling, with the appropriate disclaimer that the results are unscientific.



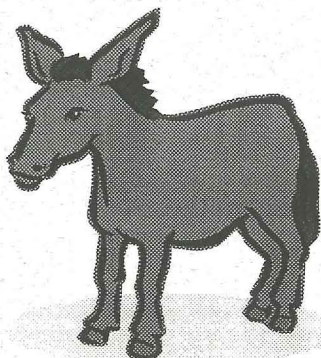
There are of course the official websites of georgewbush.com and johnkerry.com, democrats.org and rnc.org each profiling the respective team, their positions and of course commenting on the opponents. Likewise, all the network and cable news organizations offer coverage, with the standouts being CNN at <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/index.html> and MSNBC offering extensive coverage.

The Federal Election Commission site (www.fec.gov) is the official repository for required reports that disclose how much money a campaign has raised and spent for presidential and congressional campaigns. The FEC also provides "media," "citizen," and "candidate and committee" guides that include FOIA information, policies, regulations and forms.

Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org) is the major program of the Center for National Independence in Politics. The site was selected by the American Political Science Association as the best political website, and now includes research and voter information for over 40,000 candidates. Candidate information includes biographical information, issue position papers, voting records, campaign finances, and evaluations of the candidates by special interest groups.

"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" (bensguide.gpo.gov/) is a great site for educating children on the election process. Link to the appropriate school grade, and find descriptions of the branches of government, how laws are made, citizenship, and the election process.

There are also the more partisan sites such as moveon.org, swiftvets.com, rockthevote.com, and votepair.org. Not to mention the surprises that pop up on occasion such as the unexpected found at swiftboatvets.org. Americans are nothing if not creative.



The University of Michigan has compiled an Elections 2004 reference guide at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/elec2004.html>. It provides many references regarding candidates, a variety of specific issues and the results. It also contains a comprehensive list of links to a variety of different websites ranging from humor to special interests.

THE UNUSUAL OPINION

Have you ever stumbled across that most unusual legal opinion in the legal research process? Recently a citation for *Fisher v. Lowe*, 333 N.W.2d 67 (Mich. Ct. App. 1983) came to attention and is reproduced below for your enjoyment.

We thought we would never see
A suit to compensate a tree.

A suit whose claim in tort is prest
Upon a mangled tree's behest;

A tree whose battered trunk was prest
Against a Chevy's crumpled crest;

A tree that faces each new day
With bark and limb in disarray;

A tree that may forever bear
A lasting need for tender care.

Flora lovers though we three,
We must uphold the court's decree.

Affirmed.

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The **Museletter** is the official newsletter of the
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