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Law Library Annual Reports

W&L Law Library

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W&L Law Library Annual Report 2023-2024

The Law Library at Washington and Lee University School of Law

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Annual Report of the Washington and Lee Law Library: July 2023 - June 2024

Introduction

The Law Library is pleased to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Washington and Lee Law Library. Throughout this academic year, the Law Library once again remained committed to its mission of supporting the academic and research needs of our faculty, staff, and students through excellent service and timely resources.

Several new employees were hired this year: Kerry Shibib and Denise Jensen.

A complete list of employees is below:

- Michelle Cosby, JD, MLS (she/her) - Assistant Dean of Legal Information Services and Professor of Practice
- Andrew Christensen, JD, MLIS (he/him) - Deputy Director of the Law Library
- Ashley Evans, JD, MSIS (she/her) - Head of Collection Services
- Jenny Mitchell, MA, MLIS (she/her) - Archivist and Special Collections Librarian
- Lorelei Sensabaugh, MSI (she/her) - Part-Time Metadata Services Librarian
- Kerry Shibib, JD (he/him) - Outreach and Reference Services Librarian
- Brittany Fix (she/her) - Library Assistant II
- Denise Jensen (she/her) - Administrative Assistant II
- Victoria Johnston (she/her) - Library Assistant II
- Emma Martone (she/her) - Administrative Assistant II
- Milea Webb (she/her) - Library Assistant & Circulation Lead

The Law Library also employs several student workers to help assist our patrons. During 2023-2024 we had the following:

- 10 Circulation Student Workers
- 3 McThenia Research Assistants¹
- 1 Library Research Assistant

Public Services

Our Public Services department provides research support, circulation services, including interlibrary loan, class instruction, and digital services to our community. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the law librarians and research assistants answered almost 500 reference

¹ [McThenia Research Assistants](#) are funded by the [Frances Lewis Law Center](#) and managed by the Law Library.

questions for students, faculty, staff, and the general W&L community. Support for faculty research was also robust, with our librarians and McThenia Research Assistants working on 17 projects for 11 faculty members.

A new Law Library Research Assistant position was created in August 2023 to assist with administrative projects in the library and other units within the Law School. For example, our Law Library RA helped a faculty hiring committee gather data for their nationwide search, checked our catalog for continuing subscriptions that were duplicative, and assisted a Legal Writing professor in developing fact patterns for her class. This position complements the McThenia RAs, who support the faculty's scholarly research.

Additionally, over 1500 items were checked out from our Circulation Desk during this period. The library introduced Meescan, a self-checkout system, and 410 transactions were made using the system.

Interlibrary Loan continued to be a popular service. We provided access to 53 items to W&L patrons and sent 74 items to other libraries.

Instruction

As always, the law librarians taught the required 1L Legal Research course. Additionally, librarians provided guest lectures to law school and undergraduate courses, sharing insights on specialized legal research and archival topics.

In April, the Law Library collaborated with the Office of Career Strategy (OCS) to host *Spring Into Summer Success*, an annual event offering students expert insights and strategies for legal research and professional development in their summer jobs. In addition to our librarians and career professionals, attorneys from Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP and representatives from LexisNexis and Westlaw offered advice and instruction. OCS's Rachford Fellows and the Legal Research Burks Scholars also provided insights on how their fellow students can make the most of their summer work experience.

In June, the Law Library participated in the inaugural launch of the APEX Program. APEX is a new initiative of the Law School, introducing undergraduate students to the field. The law librarians taught a virtual session on Legal Research.

Digital Initiatives

The [W&L Law Scholarly Commons](#), the Law School's open-access institutional repository, received 621,967 downloads this year, compared to 483,000 for the 2022-2023 academic years. The downloads came from 223 countries and regions. Additionally, over 230 works of faculty scholarship, *W&L Law Review* articles, *JCRSJ* articles, and archival items were added to Scholarly Commons during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Additionally, the Law Library provides electronic access to [LibGuides](#), a platform that provides 24/7 access to help our patrons find information and research more efficiently. During the 2023-2024 academic year, [LibGuides](#) was accessed 38,710 times. The most popular were our [Bar Exam Resources Guide](#) (20,605 visits), [Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Reading List](#) (10,747 visits), and [Study Guides for 1L Classes](#) (2022 visits).

Notable Acquisitions & Initiatives

Providing high-quality services and resources is something that the Law Library takes great pride in. We are excited to provide access to the resources below:

- Wordrake: New this year, WordRake is a service, that edits documents for the legal field. Wordrake makes suggestions for clarity and brevity.
- Meescan: In partnership with Leyburn Library, we provide access to Meescan, a system that allows patrons to check material out on their own. Patrons can use the Meescan station at the Law Library Circulation Desk or download the mobile app.
- Procertas: Procertas is a tool that teaches students how to use Microsoft Office products efficiently for the practice of law. This year, Legal Writing used the Memo and Brief modules.

Additionally, Notary Services are available in the Law Library from Monday to Friday, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, for the W&L community.

Powell Archives and Special Collections

The Powell Archives had a successful year in 2023-2024. The archives hosted 13 researchers for in-person visits and hosted tours for 28 visitors. The archives also participated in a number of special events including hosting open house tours and the 2nd Annual Powell Archives Spring Showcase. The spring showcase was an even bigger success than the previous year. Featured items included photos, letters, and artifacts from Justice Powell's service during World War II. Architectural plans, brochures, and reports documenting the design and construction of Sydney Lewis Hall were also displayed.

The Archives answered 73 reference questions in 2023-2024. The most common questions were about the law school's history, faculty, or alumni making the institutional records the most heavily utilized resource. Researchers primarily utilized materials from the Powell Papers, but the Charles Laughlin Papers and Frank Parker Papers were used as well. Collections management work continued including projects to improve housing for the textiles in the Powell Papers as well as beginning an inventory of the faculty publications archive. Library Assistant Brittany Fix was trained on the use of the new flatbed scanner and has been working on the digitization of Supreme Court case files from the Powell Papers.

Collection Services

Collection Services acquires new material, including print, eBooks, databases, and even chargers. They also make material in all media forms findable for our patrons through the catalog. The department achieved significant milestones this year, notably through extensive work with the library's physical collection. This initiative ensured that outdated materials were removed, making way for current and relevant resources. Collection Services also successfully relocated hundreds of physical books and completed a comprehensive inventory of the Law Library's Reserve Room and Circulation Desk items to improve accessibility.

Additionally, the department collaborated with the Law School's Academic Success department to provide targeted resources for students to improve their law school studies. Further, a new faculty publications collection was created, enhancing the visibility of the scholarly achievements of the law faculty.

The Collection Development team also participated in a Collection Services Retreat with Leyburn Library employees, sharing insights and strategies. These efforts reflect the Law Library's commitment to maintaining a dynamic and responsive library environment.

Finance and Administration

Over the past year, the Law Library has achieved notable budget accomplishments. By regularly reviewing the budget, the Law Library was able to optimize budget utilization and provide timely resources to our patrons. Through diligent financial management and planning, the Law Library successfully expanded its service offerings beyond physical books and databases and has added tools such as Wordrake and Procertas.

Additionally, the Law Library was able to utilize its funds to host events such as the Powell Archives Spring Showcase and the Fall Scholarship Celebration and the Bar Exam Lunch with the Library. These achievements underscore the Law Library's dedication to delivering exceptional value to its patrons while remaining financially prudent.

The Law Library values the feedback of our patrons. One way we solicit feedback is through the [Student Library Advisory Committee](#). The Student Library Advisory Committee continued to provide valuable counsel and information to the Law Library, meeting both semesters with our staff to discuss student perspectives and opportunities for improvement in library services. By meeting with this group, the Law Library made several space improvements, purchased new resources, and acquired updates to our print study aids collections.

The Law Library also regularly engages in strategic discussions and team-building activities. During the 2023-2024 academic year, we held a retreat at the [Senshin'an Tea Room](#) in the Watson Pavilion on the undergraduate campus. The retreat was facilitated by Professor Janet Ikeda from the department of East Asian Languages & Literatures and her Tea Room students.

Special Events

Outreach to the W&L Law and University communities is highly valued by the Law Library. Below are the events the Law Library hosted or participated in during the 2023-2024 academic year.

- August 2023: 1L Orientation Presentation, Carrel Assignments, and Information Fair
- October 2023: Shenandoah Archives Fair – Powell Archives
- October-November 2023: Powell Archives Table and Tours*
- December 2023: Fall Exam Break Table*
- March 2024: Powell Archives Spring Showcase*
- April 2024: Spring into Summer Success*
- April 2024: Law Alumni Weekend – Powell Archives
- April 2024: Spring Exam Break Table*
- May 2024: Undergraduate Alumni Weekend – Powell Archives
- June 2024: Bar Exam Lunch with the Law Library*
- June 2024: MARAC Virginia Caucus Repository Tour – Powell Archives

Events with the asterisk are hosted by the Law Library*

Professional Development and Service

The continued professional development of our team allows us to bring you high-quality, innovative services.

- **Milea Webb**, Library Assistant and Circulation Lead, celebrated her five-year anniversary with the Law Library.
- **Milea Webb, Brittany Fix, and Victoria Johnson** celebrated their one-year anniversary as notaries.
- **Andrew Christensen**, Deputy Director, celebrated his ten-year anniversary with the Law Library. He served on the School of Law's Assessment Committee. He began his term in May as President of the Virginia Association of Law Libraries (VALL). He also served as Chair of the Programs Committee for the Arlington and Richmond VALL conferences. On the national level, Andrew also became Chair of the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and will be a candidate in October for election to the AALL Executive Board. He also served for a second year on both the Nominations Committee of the Southeastern Chapter of AALL (SEAALL) and the Grants & Awards Committee of the Black Law Librarians Special Interest Section of AALL.
- **Ashley Evans**, Head of Collection Services, served on the School of Law's DEI Committee. Her publications this year included a [book review](#) in *Law Library Journal*. She was a contributing member to SEAALL's Newsletter Committee, and the AALL Technical Service Special Interest Section's Nominations Committee.
- **Jenny Mitchell**, Archivist and Special Collections Librarian, served on the School of Law's DEI Committee. Additionally, she served as the chair of the Nominations and

Elections Committee for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference. She also served as a judge for the state-level National History Day competition held in Richmond, Virginia.

- **Michelle Cosby**, Assistant Dean of Legal Information Services, chaired the School of Law's EPCC Committee and served as a member of the Clinic Hiring Committee. She was a co-recipient of the Law School's Faculty Service Fellowship Award. She was Selected as a participant for the Washington and Lee University Mudd Center Ethical Reasoning in Action (ERiA) Faculty Learning Community. She published the chapter *Washington and Lee School of Law Library* in the book *Organizational Structures of Academic Law Libraries Past, Present, and Future Volume 2*.

Opportunities Faced

As with the previous year, lean staffing necessitated creative approaches to maintain high-quality services. Open searches were successfully fulfilled, providing new energy for 2024-2025.

Conclusion

The W&L Law Library has maintained its commitment to excellence in supporting legal research, education, and community engagement. We extend our appreciation to our dedicated team, the law school, and university partners for their contributions to our achievements.

As we look to the future, the Law Library will continue to adapt, innovate, and collaborate to meet the evolving needs of our patrons. [Our mission](#) remains steadfast, ensuring that we continue to be a valuable resource hub for legal research, education, and community support.