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Gail A. Parting

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National Legal Research Teach-In Celebrates 10 Years of Success

by Gail A. Partin

Can you remember your favorite AALL programs or publications from 10 years ago? Or recall where AALL held its Annual Meeting in 1993? How about the best-selling books that year? TV shows? Movies?

Maybe some of us have a fuzzy recollection or two, but 10 years is a long time. And some AALL members may have been in high school when the spark of an idea became the catalyst

for 10 years of promoting legal research instruction. This year AALL celebrates 10 years of National Legal Research Teach-In success and begins a new decade by expanding and improving upon the many accomplishments of the first.

The Teach-In, sponsored by the Research Instruction and Patron Services Special Interest Section, is an annual campaign that allows law librarians to share materials and ideas for legal research instruction. Each year the RIPS SIS Teach-In Committee solicits contributions from the law library community to create a compilation of materials for use in developing and advertising educational programs and events for law libraries. These materials are distributed several weeks prior to National Library Week in April to anyone interested in legal research instruction.

The initial idea for a teach-in sprang from several "Bridge the Gap" programs designed to bolster the sagging research skills of students and new lawyers. It soon became apparent that law librarians were in a unique position to effectively and economically meet the research instruction needs of the legal community. So the first Teach-In event in 1993 was created to celebrate legal research instruction and to demonstrate the importance of involving more law librarians in teaching these skills.

By sharing the teaching resources designed by individual librarians, law librarians empower all librarians to implement high-quality training programs. When more and more librarians around the country become visible as highly competent and capable instructors, it then becomes easier for others to assume that role in their own institutions. This simple act of sharing has enabled law librarians to

satisfy a genuine need within the legal community while positioning the profession as a proactive resource rather than a reactive one.

Assembling and Packaging Top Teaching Resources

One of the initial questions for the first Teach-In was how best to unearth high-quality instructional and promotional materials and then share them with the law librarian community. The Teach-In began long before the Internet, e-mail, scanners and PDFs, so its founders had to start out the old-fashioned way — calling colleagues for resources, then creating printed materials for distribution and marketing.

Eleven years later, the Legal Research Teach-In has its own Web site at http://www.aallnet.org/sis/ripssis/teach_in.html that links to press releases for ordering materials, instructions for contributing educational resources and information about each of the previous Teach-Ins.

The 2003 Teach-In materials are outstanding, thanks to the outpouring of contributions from law librarians all over the country. AALL and the RIPS SIS are also grateful to LexisNexis™ and West for providing valuable logistical and financial support for the Teach-In since its earliest beginnings.

Notepads were brought back by popular demand in the last few years. Each year for the past decade, the Teach-In campaign has included promotional materials, such as posters, bookmarks or notepads, featuring the "Just Ask" theme, which succinctly captures the essence of law librarianship. With expert technical and financial support from LexisNexis, the Teach-In Committee designed a new, refreshingly colorful notepad for 2003. More than 20,000 pads were available for distribution, selling out very quickly despite the limited quantity placed on each order. In fact, the Teach-In received requests long before the notepads had even been designed or advertised — a wonderful testament to the Teach-In's growing popularity.

Training Resource Kit Offers Wealth of Materials

The *Teach-In Training Resource Kit* is the centerpiece of the National Legal Research Teach-In, with this year's spiral-bound kits topping the bestseller list.

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In the early stages of Teach-In development, organizers realized that the key to continued success was in the high-quality resource kits filled with a variety of instructional materials developed by law librarians: pathfinders, research guides, posters, lesson plans, lecture notes, research exercises and more. Each year since 1993, West has printed and distributed kits to law librarians and others interested in legal research instruction. The first Teach-In campaign distributed 315 training kits nationwide. By 2003, more than 750 kits were distributed around the world. West's publishing expertise and commitment to the law library community is largely responsible for the continued success of the *Teach-In Training Resource Kit*.

The 2003 kit carries on the Teach-In's tradition of excellence with an array of instructional materials. Many of the items are Web-based or slide presentations that have been used successfully by their law librarian authors. Some highlights from this year's *Resource Kit* include:

- *Building Essential Legal Research Skills*, a slide presentation by Coral Henning and Mareth Wilson

- *Introduction to Oakland County Law Library*, a slide presentation by Elizabeth Lindley and Dianne Zyskowski
- *Online Exercises and Learning Modules*, Web tutorials by Peter A. Hook and Keith A. Buckley
- Password access to selected tutorials on legal research from the Center for Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction
- *Guide to U.S. Government Information*, a Web guide by Cecily A.H. Giardina
- *Solving Legal Research Problems*, a Web tutorial by Paul D. Callister
- *Using Lexis & Westlaw at Dickstein*, submitted by Joseph Meringolo
- *Assessing Vendor Issues, Internet Resources and Training Objectives*, by Doris Nuding
- Several entertaining legal research games submitted by Susan M. Boland, Ann Hemmens, Peggy Jarrett, Nancy McMurrer, Cheryl Nyberg and Mary Whisner, including a game show-type slide presentation by Kelly Browne

If you didn't order a 2003 *Teach-In Training Resource Kit*, don't panic — you can still obtain one through the RIPS SIS Clearinghouse at AALL Headquarters. Kits from prior years are also available. All kits are \$10 each. Contact AALL at 312/939-4764, extension 12, or orders@aall.org.

With the surge of electronic resources adding an urgent need for technological, as well as basic, research skills, the unique role that law librarians can play in providing essential skills instruction remains especially critical. As the Teach-In enters its second decade, it's clear from its continued success that the original mission and goals from 1993 are still pertinent to today's legal environment. Now is the time for your library to commit to conducting an educational event or program involving legal research. With the vast amount of materials available to you through the Teach-In, planning couldn't be easier.

Gail A. Partin (gap6@psu.edu) is an associate law librarian at the Dickinson School of Law Library at Pennsylvania State University in Carlisle, Pa.