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New in Montana

Fritz Snyder

University of Montana School of Law, fritz.snyder@umontana.edu

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New in Montana

By FRITZ SNYDER, University of Montana Law Library

I became the Law Librarian at the University of Montana Law School in August 1994. This past year has flown by like an arrow. The most recent graduates had their hooding ceremony in May with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor of the U.S. Supreme Court giving the Commencement Address.

Where has my year gone?—The ABA inspection (which comes every seven years); a successful Dean search; four building projects all in the planning stage (\$500,000 for a Professional Development Center; \$40,000 for high-density shelving; \$25,000 for library lighting; and \$19,000 for renovating a LEXIS/WESTLAW room), and of course many other things.

Last summer at the AALL Conference in Seattle, friends had offered good advice: Don't take on too much. Things (projects), though, take on a life of their own. The decision to turn the library basement into a Professional Development Center (a center for CLE activities, though it will have library and law school uses as well) was made before I arrived, and the donor had given the sum for this specific purpose. The high-density shelving in an adjoining room is needed for books that were in the basement. The lighting grant was also already in place, and the current LEXIS/WESTLAW area is in violation of fire codes.

Some successes. Some frustrations. In a word, life. Clearly, a competent, hard-working library staff is essential for any successful library, and I'm blessed to work with

such a staff here. We're a small staff—just five including me. But the place works—students are served, new books come in, the faculty is happy. Underproductivity on the part of any of our staff is the least of my concerns.

It's nice to be able to put to good use skills learned in other places. I did acquisitions work for ten years and reference work for fourteen years at the University of Kansas Law Library before coming here. Both skills have been essential for me here.

Acquisitions takes up a big chunk of a library's budget and is one of the few discretionary items a library director has to deal with. I think that a new director who had no training in acquisitions could have a very tough time. How to know what you need? How to know what you *have*? What are the major treatises in each particular area of the law? What about when you need to spend money in a hurry?—that flurry that often comes near the end of a fiscal year. How do you do this sensibly? How do you work out a priority list? How to put into effect a write-for-order plan that will save significant amounts of money by reducing the terribly expensive supplementation of treatises (Matthew Bender and Clark Boardman Callaghan stuff, in particular)? Bibliographies and lists (e.g., *Recommended Law Books*, ABA, 1986) can be of some help, but it seems to me that it is a fairly long process to really get a feel for acquisitions.

Continued on page 6

It is just a joy to see the new books coming in—one of the real tangible benefits of being a librarian. One professor commented that he feels like a kid in a candy store to see quality monographs come in from major university presses. Where the titles are not expressive of their content, I like to write a short blurb about them for the acquisition list distributed to the faculty.

Other helpful tools are subject guides to the fifteen or twenty major areas of a collection. These note the most important treatises our library has in an area. Simply putting these guides together has forced me to analyze our holdings. While doing this for the guide on estate planning, for example, I realized we had nearly everything available—and that's a lot. Too much for a library our size. So then I asked for help from our estate planning professor, and we reduced our holdings in this area (almost all of which had supplements). These subject guides are handy for users also.

Acquisitions ties in so much with reference. What do people ask for? What do the experts use? What do patrons need to answer their questions? Acquisitions and reference play off of, and feed into, each other.

Reference, of course, is where you meet the user. I work on the reference desk every day and find it invaluable (as well as fun). Actually, we're so small that our reference desk is really the circulation desk, but that's okay. People turn books back in. I look at them. Don't we have anything more recent? Then I check the publishers' catalogs or WLN or send a query on Internet.

Reference and teaching (I teach Advanced Legal Research and will teach the first-year legal research course in the fall) go hand in hand. One student in his pathfinder noted that Am.Jur.2d has signed articles. I thought he was mistaken, but he's right. That old quibble about not citing a legal encyclopedia section in a brief (partly because encyclopedias are anonymous) perhaps is not so valid at least in the case of such signed articles—particularly when state supreme courts do it all the time (check it out on LEXIS or WESTLAW). Also, by explaining the BNA *Environment Reporter* and the ELI *Environmental Law Reporter* to students, I finally understand their different indexing systems myself (the BNA set really has three different indexes without any overall master index).

Fortunately, we have extremely competent people here in the areas which are not my strengths: cataloging and computers. It is abundantly clear that the staff knows what they are doing. I simply try and support them in whatever ways I can. Frankly, I think, you just stand back and let professionals do their work.

I have found the Law School Library Committee to be extremely useful. The Dean makes the committee appointments, and he appointed me to be chairperson. This sounds logical but sometimes in other places another faculty member is the chairperson. At any rate, I've found it very useful to be chairperson and to take an active role.

However, even more important is the makeup of the committee—having people on it who really care about the library. On our committee this year was a former Dean, our most prolific scholar (62 entries on WilsonDisc and 94 entries on the LegalIndex file on LEXIS), an enthusiastic young visiting professor, a conscientious student, and our two other librarians.

I used the committee as a sounding board. I wrote all the documents and memos, but I wanted their advice—and they gladly gave it: on the write-for-order plan, on the library's collection development policy, on the self-study for the ABA inspection, on the priority list for big-ticket items for the \$35,000 or so to be spent near the end of the fiscal year. These committee members are my friends, and we all want the library to succeed. They'll note when it's important for the faculty as a whole to sign off on something—as the faculty did for the write-for-order plan, the collection development policy, and the self-study.

I do know that it can be tempting for an administrator to hide the ball, or if not to hide it to simply not say anything about the ball at all. Advice from various quarters can get in the way of action, and you have to keep explaining things. But that's good—particularly for someone new. Advice has saved me from precipitous action. Also, as you explain and get suggestions, you refine. And the ideas of others are often better than your own.

I've never been a fan of committees, but a good committee is very, very helpful. It can help prevent disastrous errors. Anything of importance should be broached to the committee. Candor to the committee and to the Dean is essential. If you think something will reflect badly on you or the library, get it out in the open.

Also, I've not hesitated to send out memos to all the faculty about certain things and asking for their suggestions (e.g., the titles of the 65 or so new periodicals we were thinking of adding and the specific titles on the write-for-order plan we were thinking of getting supplementation for every three to five years). Also, I asked them to fill out a short written survey about the library. (I also asked students to fill out a survey. These surveys were helpful in preparing the self-study report for the library.)

I don't believe in secrets. The library staff should know everything that I know about the library. At our meetings (every two weeks, usually) anybody can bring up anything. We have a posted agenda before the meeting which anyone can add to. We also take turns typing up the minutes of the meeting, and the minutes come out within a day or two after the meeting.

Odds and ends:
—My computer skills have improved significantly. We have no secretary here (we did at Kansas). In fact, without the word processor, Internet, and LEXIS/WESTLAW, this would have been a much more difficult year.

- We put in WilsonDisc this year—it costs about \$2,000 less than LegalTrac, and WilsonDisc doesn't index the legal newspapers which can be such a hassle.
- To free up space, we have sold state reporter volumes for which we already have case coverage in the National Reporter System. I have come to realize that these are worth sizable amounts of money to others. The National Law Resource Company in Chicago has been a good customer, and we also placed ads in individual state bar journals to good effect.
- Every summer our library does a complete inventory of all of our materials.
- Even though our circulation function is not automated, we have a handy self-check-out system for periodicals, treatises, and monographs.
- One of our most popular services is lending out laptop computers to students and faculty (the brainchild of our computer services librarian).

I do occasionally think of the time when I was not a director, when if there was a total screw-up on the part of the library, well, let the director worry about it. But now that's me. However, my prior training prepared me pretty well, I think. I have encountered no major surprises, and I have felt pretty comfortable since I've been here. I do, though, seem to spend more time in the middle of the night thinking about the library than I used to. But life is an adventure. Sometimes it's exhilarating to try new things. The biggest loss is the friends no longer with me.

I am happy here, though. I try to deal with one day at a time and not to worry about possible disasters in the future. I try to play to people's strengths and to overlook individual quirks. I do find librarianship fun and interesting, and I expect it will continue to be so.

Fritz Snyder (fritz@selway.umn.edu) is Law Librarian, University of Montana Law Library. ■

The Process of Discovering the Organizational Culture of Colorado State University Libraries

By TERESA Y. NEELY & TERI R. SWITZER, Colorado State University Libraries

Following is the "process" that the task force used to begin the assessment of the Libraries, culture. Also included is a selected bibliography compiled by the task force of materials on culture in libraries.

Colorado State University Libraries (the Libraries) has a well-documented history in regards to realignment/reorganization, which has been addressed in both the Libraries Faculty Council (LFC) and Cross Divisional. The Realignment Task Force (RAF) was formed in July of 1994 to pursue the realignment of library functions. Its charge was to "look at a functional realignment of the Libraries."¹ RAF recommended forming a task force on culture to "conduct an assessment on analysis of the libraries culture,"² explaining:

Underlying any organizational structure is the culture of the Libraries. Throughout the discussion of structure, members had comments on culture. In some senses, there is belief that any organizational structure would work, but not in the total sense, as members recognize to be able to position and focus for the future, change is required. . . . Trust is integral to a functional culture. Given past history and the current climate of exchange, members have concerns. Building trust is necessary. How to build cul-

ture based on trust can't have everyone involved in every decision that is made. . . . Another given of culture is perspective on information issues that affect the Libraries and the broader issues that affect the University.³

The Colorado State University Libraries (CSUL) Task Force on Culture, consisting of five members of the CSUL staff (two state classified, three faculty), met and agreed that the culture of the Libraries is greatly affected by the University as a whole, the Fort Collins community, the state of Colorado, and the fact that we are a land grant institution. It is also affected by the classification of CSUL employees which consists of tenure-track faculty, administrative professionals, and nonunionized civil support staff.

With charge in hand, the task force chair, Teri R. Switzer, conducted a literature search and began to compile a bibliography on organizational culture in libraries. Because of the limited time frame (seven months), the committee sent out proposals to consultants to conduct a cultural assessment of the Libraries, while continuing to review the literature and conducting independent research. Feedback from consultants revealed that there

Continued on page 8