

ASL LIBRARY NEWS

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What's New in the Library?

- The Library will be closed on Monday, January 16, for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. There will be no card access on that day. Our prior weekend hours are unchanged, so we'll be open to students from 9 am to midnight on Saturday and noon to midnight on Sunday.
- Winters in Grundy range from mild to frigid, and road conditions across the county can vary considerably. Please be patient if our staffed schedule changes unexpectedly due to poor weather conditions. We'll try to post information as soon as we can, but if there's a chance of ice or snow over the next few months, try to plan accordingly so that you're not looking for Reserve material at the last minute!
- With our early publishing deadline, we didn't have the Lexis and Westlaw student representative hours available at press time. We'll post signs as soon as those times and dates are finalized.

Reference Notes

by Nick Stump, Reference Librarian

The best way to ensure that your research method is efficient is to pinpoint exactly what your research task is. That is, before you start your research project, figure out the exact parameters of your research—as well as the required presentation method—through a proactive discussion with your supervisor. This will save you from a lot of needless work in your early days as an intern/associate. (You might stop me here and say, "Wait, won't my boss tell me exactly what I need to do without further questioning on my part?" I would answer, "Yes, right after she finishes feeding the magical creatures in your fantasy land.") So then, what kinds of questions should you ask? Here are a few to get you started:

- * state vs. federal, or both?
- * cases only, or cases, statutes, regulations?
- * a formal memo, an informal memo, or just a list of authorities?
- * just the law, or the law plus a fact application?
- * your opinions on the matter?
- * an oral presentation of your findings?

Other News

- Keep your eyes open for the ASL Library's biennial student survey, which we'll distribute in paper form to your student mailboxes in February. We're interested in knowing if we're doing a good job, so we've got a list of questions. Tell us the good, the bad, and the noisy! We'll review some of the significant findings in our April/May newsletter, and we'll post the rest on our web site.
- We didn't have quite as much stuff in our lost and found box as we usually collect over a semester, but there's still an odd assortment. If you've lost something over the past semester, check at the Circulation Desk. We'll be throwing out (or, if it's salvageable, donating to a charity) this collection at the end of January.
- Following up on a few stories we've covered in the past:
 - In our September 2011 issue, we highlighted Professor Harris' "Your Weekly Constitutional" podcast, an online audio discussion about important legal topics. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts also offers some constitutional commentary in podcast form on their web site at <http://www.uscourts.gov/> (it's in the lower right in the "Multimedia" box) or directly at <http://www.uscourts.gov/multimedia/podcasts.aspx> – the "Supreme Court Landmarks" is a monthly review of some major cases the High Court has heard, while the "Court Shorts" gives an overview of fundamental areas of law.
 - Way back in our September 2010 issue, we noted that the "Stolen Valor Act" – which disallowed people from claiming they had earned a military award that they really hadn't – had been held unconstitutional by the Ninth Circuit. (We noted a conflict between courts in our March 2011 issue as well.) The U.S. Supreme Court will soon be weighing in on the matter; they've selected *U.S. v. Alvarez*, 11-210, as a case they'll hear this term. Follow the Supremes and their decisions at their web site at <http://www.supremecourt.gov/>
- There's an old joke that the only math a lawyer needs to know is "one-third." (If you need help on that one, look up contingency fees.) But the results of a Spanish research study may force attorneys to know some higher-order math to predict judicial voting patterns. As is likely to be quite obvious, the predictability of a justice is "the fraction (over the whole career of the justice) of correctly predicted votes for that justice" which winds up looking something like this:

$$P_i^A = 1 - \frac{1}{|C_i|} \sum_{j \in C_i} |V_{ij}^A - V_{ij}|$$

If that makes sense to you, feel free to read the whole article at <http://tinyurl.com/sctvotes> If you can provide a "for dummies" version, we'd love to know, but the probability of us understanding it is sufficiently close to zero.

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