Elevating Justice Institute
University of Richmond School of Law

March 9, 2023

A hands-on exploration and collaborative discussion of Access to Justice topics and techniques. Hosted in conjunction with the Southeastern Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting.
The Elevating Justice Institute is made possible through the financial support of two organizations. The Virginia Law Foundation provided a Spot Grant to support this work. The Virginia Law Foundation support projects throughout the Commonwealth that facilitate access to justice, promote an appreciation and understanding of the Rule of Law, and provide law-related education in support of these ideals.

Support also comes from the AALL / Bloomberg Law Continuing Education Grant Program. The purpose of the AALL/Bloomberg Law Continuing Education Grant Program is to encourage educational program development and promote program sharing among AALL entities. The Elevating Justice Institute takes place on the day before the two-day annual conference for the Southeastern Association of Law Libraries (SEAALL).
Program Schedule Overview

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. Check-in and Registration
9:30 – 10:00 a.m. Breakfast
10:00 – 10:30 a.m. Institute Introduction and Overview
   Roger Skalbeck, Richmond School of Law

10:30 – 11:30 a.m. User Mapping & Issue Spotting
   Emily LaGratta, LaGratta Consulting LLC

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Break & Lunch
12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Lunchtime Keynote
   Hon. Don Johnson, PhD, Chief Judge, 19th Judicial District of Louisiana

12:30 – 1:00 p.m. Local Innovations & Solutions
   Emily LaGratta, LaGratta Consulting LLC

1:00 – 1:15 p.m. Break
1:15 – 2:15pm Real-World Planning for Self-Help Centers
   Hon. Susan J. Stoney, Fairfax County District Court
   Renee Danser, Harvard A2J Lab

2:15 – 2:30 p.m. Break
2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Communicating Clearly: Forms, Scripts and Signs
   Emily LaGratta, LaGratta Consulting LLC

3:30 – 4:00 p.m. Action Planning
   Emily LaGratta, LaGratta Consulting LLC
Institute Facilitator + Consultant

Emily LaGrata, LaGratta Consulting LLC, New York, NY

Emily LaGrata, J.D., is a national subject matter expert on the topics of trust-building and procedural justice. As part of this work, she designs and implements innovative pilot efforts and conducts trainings across multiple touchpoints of the legal system, from courts to corrections. Recent efforts include the Court Voices Project, a 12-court pilot collecting real-time feedback from staff and court users about pandemic response practices, and trust-building interventions in three prosecutor offices. Emily has authored many practitioner resources, including “We Want to Hear From You!: A Toolkit,” To Be Fair, and “Procedural Justice in Action.” She started LaGratta Consulting in 2019 after nearly ten years at the Center for Court Innovation, where she served as the Director of Procedural Justice Initiatives.

Institute Planning Team

Member, Virginia Access to Justice Commission’s Committee on Self Represented Litigants

Roger Skalbeck, Associate Dean and Professor of Law, Richmond School of Law, Richmond, Va.
Member, Virginia Access to Justice Commission’s Committee on Self Represented Litigants

Nick Stump, Head of Reference and Access Services, West Virginia University College of Law, Morgantown, WV
Commissioner, West Virginia Access to Justice Commission

Member, Virginia Access to Justice Commission
Member, Virginia Access to Justice Commission’s Committee on Self Represented Litigants

Recognition

Thanks to the University of Richmond School of Law for providing space and support for the Institute. In particular, thanks to Jenika Simmons for event coordination and logistics, Carl Hamm for media support and production, Research Assistant Allie Voehringer, L’23. Also, several people provided contributions to the resourced list created for this event.
Participant Biographies

Judge Susan J. Stoney, Fairfax County General District Court Judge

Judge Susan Stoney is Fairfax County General District Court Judge. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia and William & Mary Law School. Susan clerked for the Honorable James W. Benton, Jr. on the Court of Appeals of Virginia before beginning her career as a Legal Aid attorney.

Over her twenty-five-year litigation career, Judge Stoney represented the interests of low-income individuals and marginalized communities on a wide variety of cases in both state and federal court. She served as the Deputy Director of Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV) from 2010 until November 2016, when she was appointed to the Fairfax General District Court bench. Susan was recently appointed to the Committee on District Courts and serves as on the Access to Justice Commission’s Committee on Self Represented Litigants. She also serves on Fairfax County’s Council to End Domestic Violence (CEDV), co-chairing the Court Process Work Group. Susan was awarded Most Influential Women of Law in 2020 and Leader in the Law in 2012.

Renee Danser, Associate Director of Research and Strategic Partnerships, Harvard A2J Lab

Renee L. Danser obtained a Bachelor of Arts and her J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. She graduated from the Institute for Court Management Fellows Program in May of 2013 where her project was awarded the Vice President’s Award of Merit for Applied Research.

Ms. Danser began her career as a court manager when she chaired the multidisciplinary committee to unify the family court in Pittsburgh under the best practice principles of “One Judge/One Family”. Thereafter Ms. Danser began oversight of self-represented litigant services. Ms. Danser then went on to oversee all court operations as the Court Administrator for the 43rd Judicial District of Pennsylvania before transitioning to advocacy as the Deputy Director of the Self-Represented Litigation Network (SRLN).

Hon. Don Johnson, PhD, Chief Judge, 19th Judicial District of Louisiana

Judge Donald R. Johnson is a lifelong resident of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In 1977, he graduated from Southern University with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. In 1982, he earned his Juris Doctor degree from Louisiana State University, Paul M. Hebert School of Law. He has several advance degrees, including two doctorates.

Immediately after graduation, he worked as an Assistant District Attorney with the East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney’s Office. During this period, he opened a private law office until his election to the City Court of Baton Rouge in 1993. In 1999, he was elected to the 19th Judicial District Court where he has served on all divisions of court. Currently, he serves on Criminal, Traffic, Drug Treatment, and the Pretrial Release Court. He is the winner of several award, including the William R. McMahon Award from the American Bar Association for significant implementation and development in the use of technological advances in a court of limited jurisdiction.