In-person conference season is winding down for many of us. Travel headaches notwithstanding, most of us were thrilled to reconnect, learn, debate, collaborate, over-indulge, and party with one another. Now is the time, if we’re lucky, to seize a little downtime before diving into a new semester, court term, or associate onboarding.

The SEAALL board is looking with excitement toward our 2024 conference, with big changes planned to strengthen attendance, the long-term sustainability of the conference, and SEAALL finances. Two significant changes go hand in hand: changing the date to align with the close of spring semester at most law schools and moving the conference away from hotels and conference centers and toward our SEAALL member institutions. Credit goes to VP/President Elect, Beau Steenken, for taking a step back and proposing these innovative ideas to strengthen the conference. We librarians love to explore one another’s libraries and institutions. So, a conference on-site at a member institution makes sense.

As a past board member of AALL and now of SEAALL, I have fumed at the exorbitantly high prices most hotel and conference centers charge and the contract terms that put nearly all the risk on the licensee and very little on the venue. I was appalled this year when we could not provide Wi-Fi for our presenters and attendees because the venue charged a ridiculously high extra charge for that basic access. Then there are the hotel contract terms that require us to guarantee payment for a specific hotel room “block” and use their expensive catering (like it or not) and their A/V providers. That all takes a toll on a small association’s finances and leaves us with little flexibility. So, we are trying something different. We hope you like it. We’re not stopping there. We know the high toll hosting the meeting takes on our local arrangements folks (Thank You!). So, we are offloading many of the responsibilities that normally fall on their shoulders, with the SEAALL Program Committee taking on those roles. We hope that this will encourage our members in the many beautiful SEAALL locales to propose their area for an upcoming meeting. We are still looking for sites for 2025 & 2026, y’all! So, don’t be shy.

Please contact me (dnixon@email.unc.edu) or someone else on the board. This conference format is a pilot. It holds promise. We’ll see where it takes us. I am excited for the conference and SEAALL’s future. You are the key element in this new adventure. So, please save the dates, May 16, 17th & 18th for our 2024 meeting in Lexington, KY.

Meanwhile, please carve out time to relax, recharge, and focus on your well-being and joy. Put on your own mask before assisting others.

-Donna Nixon
Most of us have more opportunities to learn about technology than we can remember. My hope is that you will learn something new, but that you will mostly say, “I remember that!” This article explores various resources and platforms where you can find valuable tech training opportunities, ranging from conferences and online learning platforms to vendor training.

One notable resource to consider is CALIcon’s Conference Archives. CALIcon is an annual conference focused on technology in legal education and CALI maintains archives of past sessions on YouTube, allowing you to access valuable content even if you couldn’t attend the event in person. Here’s a link directly to the CALIcon 2023 Session Playlist.

AALL’s eLearning platform offers a range of educational resources. Their platform includes webinars and archives from the AALL Annual Meeting, featuring sessions on various technology-related topics. These resources can be an excellent way to deepen your knowledge and keep up with the latest developments in the legal technology landscape.

Several online learning platforms have emerged as go-to sources for acquiring tech skills. These platforms offer a wide range of courses taught by industry experts. Some popular platforms include Coursera, and edX. While many courses are available for free, some platforms require payment for certification. LinkedIn Learning is also a great, though subscription only, option. However, many institutions offer LinkedIn Learning to their faculty and staff as a benefit. Nevertheless, the knowledge gained from these courses can be invaluable, enhancing your skills.

For those interested in learning how to code, several resources cater specifically to learning and honing coding skills. Websites, like Codecademy, Kahn Academy, and W3Schools, provide comprehensive tutorials, interactive exercises, and real-world coding examples. These platforms cover various programming languages and offer a structured learning path to help you develop coding expertise at your own pace. Again, there are both free and paid options.

Vendors often offer training programs to familiarize users with their software, tools, or services. These training opportunities can take the form of webinars or training videos, enabling you to learn directly from the experts who designed the products. Whether you are using a Springshare product or Microsoft Excel, exploring vendor-provided training and support can help you optimize your productivity and make the most of the available technology.

Government agencies, law firms, and academic institutions often provide internal training programs to their employees. These programs may focus on technology-related topics, such as legal research databases, document management systems, or other specialized software. It is worth exploring the training opportunities available within your own organization, as they can be tailored to your specific needs and goals, fostering professional growth within your existing work environment.

If everything else fails, Google and YouTube will find an answer for you, though I make no guarantee that it will be the right one.

Tech Note: SEAALL has a Twitter account and we love to highlight the accomplishments and activities of SEAALL members. Please tag @SEAALL1 on Twitter or send us a direct message or email apitt16@lsu.edu with your news you would like us to share with our Twitter followers.
CONEL Grant Recipient: Joanna Averch

The CONELL program kicked off with a breakfast and some words from the CONELL committee. Many of the speakers mentioned the assistance of their coworkers and mentors along their career path. The overwhelming message was one of collaboration and community. All the members of the CONELL team were enthusiastic about helping new librarians to network and form valuable connections. The speakers also mentioned the importance of volunteering for committees and being active in the AALL communities.

While the DUCK boat tour was my favorite part of CONELL, the programming was excellent. The organizers provided numerous opportunities for new librarians to engage with more experienced librarians and with each other. The program also provided a forum for newer librarians to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking coworkers or managers. If I were to offer any suggestions, it would be to provide programming about job searching.

Lorel Reinstrom
Head of Access and Technical Services
The University of Tennessee College of Law

Lorel Reinstrom has been collecting books since her childhood. Her home library has grown and changed over the years, and her books have remained constant with her. Her collection has changed, moved, and grown (a lot!) through the years, but it is one thing that has remained constant with her throughout her life. Where she goes, her books go. Regrettably, she has had to pare down her collection several times in the past few years, mostly due to life circumstances (moving 3 times) and space constraints, but her classics, complete series, rare books, and favorites have remained with her as she relocated twice in Florida and now to Tennessee.

For 30-plus years, I lived in a lovely ranch home in Florida, which had many built-in bookcases. I filled these to the brim with all my and my children’s favorites. My two girls are also bibliophiles, so we had many great adventures visiting bookstores and book sales together. Together we amassed 3 complete Harry Potter series and a complete series of the original Nancy Drew books, as well as at least a hundred of the standard children’s classics. I personally own complete collections of John Grisham, Louise Penny, Rita Mae Brown’s fox-hunting series, The Tudor Queens by Alison Weir, the Robert Galbraith Cormoran Strike series, and the McNally series by Lawrence Sanders. I also have a first edition of John F. Kennedy’s Portraits in Courage, with a signed letter from JFK to my great-uncle gifting him the book.

Over the years, I have winnowed my 500+ books down to approximately 200 titles, after moving 3 times and discovering that books are heavy and expensive to move in large quantities. Additionally, I felt it was time to share a bit, so most of my books were donated either to libraries or to Goodwill where more people can enjoy them. The remainder of the collection lives on 3 large bookcases in my apartment, and still have about 10 boxes in the closet. I have a bit of PTSD from moving so much after having been in one place for so long, so until I find my permanent home, I decided to simply unpack the ones I want with me the most. I find that a house doesn’t seem like a home at all unless there are books on the shelves. Books provide much comfort, like old friends, during times of upheaval and change. I couldn’t move my friends to Tennessee, but I could certainly move my books!

I still can’t resist buying new print books, so the collection is on the up-tick again. I may have to find a bigger place to live, but I will keep adding the comfort of books to my home. Thank goodness print books are still available, as I can’t imagine a world without them. After all, even when I’m gone, “I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.” (Jorge Luis Borges)

Closed Stacks

Greetings everyone! I’m having lots of new experiences lately - new to SEAALL, new to law librarianship, new to Tennessee. One thing that is not new for me is collecting books. I’ve had a library of books in my home since my childhood. My book collection has changed, moved, and grown (a lot!) through the years, but it is one thing that has remained constant with me throughout my life. Where I go, my books go. Regrettably, I have had to pare down my collection several times in the past few years, mostly due to life circumstances (moving 3 times in the past few years, mostly)

I felt it was time to share a bit, so most of my books were donated either to libraries or to Goodwill where more people can enjoy them. The remainder of the collection lives on 3 large bookcases in my apartment, and still have about 10 boxes in the closet. I have a bit of PTSD from moving so much after having been in one place for so long, so until I find my permanent home, I decided to simply unpack the ones I want with me the most. I find that a house doesn’t seem like a home at all unless there are books on the shelves. Books provide much comfort, like old friends, during times of upheaval and change. I couldn’t move my friends to Tennessee, but I could certainly move my books!

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The West Virginia University (WVU) College of Law has had three different locations on campus since its founding and moved into its current location in 1974.

Now on the eve of the building’s Golden Anniversary, it seems a fitting time to pause and look back on how it used to be.

West Virginia University was founded in 1867 and in the summer of 1878 the Board of Regents took steps to establish a Department of Law with the creation of a Chair of Law Equity. The first law classes were held in the fall with one student graduating in 1879. While no separate law library is mentioned, the law classes were likely held in the same building that housed the University Library, which then contained about 5,000 volumes. The 1878-79 catalog lists donations received by the library during the previous year, including a Senate Journal and volume 12 of the West Virginia Reports; copies of both are still a part of our collection today. By 1902, a law library had been established with 1,700 volumes and grew to 14,000 volumes by 1920. With the increase in students, faculty, and books, a new location became necessary.

In the summer of 1974, the WVU College of Law moved into its present building. The October 1974 issue of Jus et Factum, the WVU Law School newsletter, describes the law library as having three floors for the collection of 95,000 volumes with room to grow to 150,000 volumes and containing a rare book room and a micro-material reading room. The article also notes, “The newly installed orange and yellow chairs add an extra flair never present in the old law library.” In 1978, many events were held to commemorate the centennial of the College of Law including the dedication of the Andrew J. Colburn & Harry B. Colburn II Rare Book Room in the library.

The early 90s brought a new color scheme to the library with carpeting and furnishings being changed to shades of blue. In 1994, the library was named the George R. Farmer, Jr. Law Library in honor of a 1956 alumnus of the College of Law.

Big changes came to the WVU College of Law in 2012 and eventually to the library with a $28 million expansion and renovation project. Construction on the Law Library took place during the 2015-16 school year, but the prep work began earlier with relocating government documents to off-site storage and eliminating the no-longer-updated physical collections of other state codes. All the remaining books were moved either first to a temporary location or directly to a renovated space. The library was renovated one floor at a time so that other areas could remain open and available for use.

The renovation process was challenging, but the results were worth it, as today the George R. Farmer, Jr. Law Library is a bright and welcoming place for study and research. With 325 seats there is a perfect study space for everyone, whether a student prefers enjoying the view from a soft chair by the window, the block-out-the-world option of a study carrel, or the collaborative work area of a table or one of five study rooms. Over 160,000 volumes now grace the shelves with ample space for expansion. Recently added book collections include the Racial Justice Collection, Legal Leisure, and a Public Interest Collection. Another newer collection is the Fun & Function
Recent Acquisitions: Reading (& Listening) On the Go

As of late, I’ve found myself travelling more than usual. Between conferences, vacations, and meeting up with old friends, I’ve been a bit all over the place in recent months. Because I’ve been on the move, I haven’t had much time to sit down and read for extended periods of time – in fact, I’ve been kind of avoiding picking up anything that would be too much of a burden to take on a plane or train. I’ve also ended up walking and using public transportation more than I expected, so books and even e-readers can be a little inconvenient when having to hop from stop to stop (or impossible when you’re just simply walking).

So what’s a librarian to do? Well, looking through some of my options, I ended up rediscovering Libby. I’m sure many readers of this column will be aware of what Libby is, but just in case, I’ll give a quick rundown. Libby is an completely free app that allows you to borrow books and audiobooks by registering through your local library. The selection can be pretty robust – even smaller libraries will in all likelihood have access to at most of the new, popular, and classic titles.

Alright, so Libby’s great and all, but what about those acquisitions? I dabbled in reading and listening to a few titles, but for now I’ll focus on two: one book and one audiobook. One book I checked out was The Honjin Murders by Seishi Yokomizo. I’ll keep the explanation brief: it’s a locked room mystery, originally published in the late 1940s, that’s the first in a series of detective novels. I noticed the book wasn’t especially long, so I figured it’d be just the right length to pick up and finish in a timely fashion, even if in short bursts. This proved absolutely true, and the whole process was quick and easy. Reading on the phone isn’t ideal, but having the option is certainly better than nothing. Also, if you dig or have a tolerance for weird, convoluted solutions to mysteries, I can recommend the book for sure.

As far as audiobooks go, I checked out The Last Wish by Andrzej Sapkowski, which is chronologically the first book in the Witcher series. I’ve long had grand plans to read the books, watch the Netflix series, and play the video games, but never made too much progress on any front. With the newest season of the Witcher coming out, though, it inspired me to start with the books. Through this I ran into one of Libby’s only “issues” – it only allows for a certain number of checkouts of each digital item at a time, so I was initially put on a waitlist to get access to the audiobook. It took about a week, but it was smooth sailing from there. This might be a hot take, but since getting an audiobook from Libby is indistinguishable from getting it anywhere else, I think it might be even better for audiobooks than books.

So would I recommend my “acquisition” (or rather re-acquisition) of Libby? Absolutely! Since all it really requires is a library card, it’s worth downloading if only to see what your library has available digitally. If you can deal with potentially long waits (now that Witcher fever has kicked up again, The Last Wish audiobook has a four week wait at my library), then it’s a great resource to have in your back pocket.
Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a beacon of innovation, igniting curiosity, and excitement across diverse fields. Among the countless admirers of this technological marvel, I find myself entranced and sometimes overwhelmed by the limitless possibilities AI tools offer. From its transformative impact on industries to its potential to enhance our daily lives, my fascination with AI tools has led me on a journey of exploration and discovery.

Fears and Resistance to Embracing AI

Despite the rapid advancements and transformative potential of AI, there exist genuine fears and widespread resistance among individuals and organizations toward adopting and learning this groundbreaking technology. One primary fear revolves around job displacement, with concerns that AI automation could render certain job roles obsolete, leading to unemployment and economic insecurity. Additionally, there are apprehensions about AI’s potential to invade privacy and compromise data security, which has recently ignited several lawsuits. Furthermore, AI-powered essay generators and paraphrasing tools can produce seemingly original content, making it challenging for instructors to detect instances of plagiarism. AI use in education also raises concerns about the integrity of academic assessments and the erosion of the fundamental principles of education, which emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and originality.

Solving Real-World Problems with AI

What captivates me most about AI tools is their unparalleled ability to process massive amounts of data and extract meaningful insights, unlocking hidden patterns and opportunities for advancement. Contrary to the notion of AI replacing human capabilities, I firmly believe that AI tools can empower human potential. By automating mundane tasks and streamlining processes, AI frees us to focus on higher-level thinking and creativity. AI is a rapidly evolving field, and this constant evolution provides an ever-changing landscape for learning and exploration. Alongside the excitement, my fascination with AI tools is tempered by a sense of responsibility. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into our lives, the ethical dimensions of AI fuel my commitment to explore, learn, and harness AI’s potential for the greater good.

Have Fun with AI

I tried my hand at some creative fun with AI-generated art on Imgcreator. I uploaded the profile picture to the image creator, https://imgcreator.zmo.ai/ai-generator. For the first image, I used the default settings (See image 1).

For the second image, I used the same photo and added the following description, “smiling, African American librarian and professor” (See Image 2).

Conclusion

Embracing the possibilities of AI, I attended several workshops this year on AI with Lexis, Westlaw, Fastcase, and the Instructional Design Network (IDN). I encourage you to embrace the expansive possibilities that AI is bringing by exploring IDN’s past professional development webinars at https://dlss.flvc.org/idn-webinars. Also, keep up to date with new AI by exploring “the largest AI aggregator,” https://theresanaiforthat.com/, or “the largest and fastest-growing AI newsletters and AI tool directory,” https://www.futurepedia.io/. Finally, if you are interested check out Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Cooperative for Educational Technologies national survey, Supporting Instruction and Learning Through Artificial Intelligence: A Survey of Institutional Practices and Policies, which was published June 30.
As I set out to write this article, I began thinking of movies with courtroom scenes. Why? Well, because this is a “Legal Movie Review” and legal movies have courtroom scenes. Of course, with that as the sole criterion, I could plausibly review movies like *Lenny*, *Sudden Impact*, and *Legally Blonde*. Then I thought that courtroom work is actually not that common for lawyers. In fact, usually only litigators find themselves in a courtroom. Regular lawyers are most commonly found in offices. Personally, I have spent more hours in a courtroom as a juror that as an actual attorney. Ironically, when I have been seated in a courtroom as a potential juror, my status as an attorney has often kept me off a jury.

Perhaps because I am both a lawyer and a law librarian, I see legal issues everywhere, in both real life and in movies. Matters such as criminal law, property, contracts, family law, and agency come up every week at the reference desk, and usually make for good drama in film.

Let’s look at *The Godfather*. Besides being a great movie, it is also a great legal movie, even though it doesn’t have a courtroom scene. The movie begins with a plea for justice and a description of a criminal sentencing. The next big scene is a huge wedding, which is a form of contract. At this wedding, a different type of contract is discussed: Michael relates how his father and Luca Brasi secured the release of a singer from a personal services contract with a big-band leader. Outside of the wedding party, FBI agents write down the license plates of the wedding guests.

In the film, we see many examples of contract negotiations. In one, the Turk offers a partnership deal to Don Corleone: for legal protection and a million dollars up front, the Turk offers 30% of the profits. The offer is not accepted. Later on in the film, Michael offers to buy a hotel and casino from Moe Greene. The offer is not accepted. In both cases, the chief negotiator later rebukes a member of his team for failure to present a unified position. A divided front is interpreted as weakness. Trouble soon follows.

Contract language makes for memorable lines from the film. Michael remarks, when relating a story, “My father made him an offer he couldn’t refuse.” Later in the film,
Michael uses the same language about himself, “I’ll make him an offer he can’t refuse.” Don Corleone declares, “Someday, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do a service for me.” We frequently hear the words offer and service throughout the film. Most of the relationships are transactional. The family has their own personal lawyer: Tom Hagen is their Consigliere. He offers legal and business advice to the family, even though they often reject it. He also acts as their agent. Of his role, Tom reveals, “I have a special practice. I handle one client.”

The film is also the story of a family business passing from father to son, while preserving all the customary values and rules of that business. Michael, who never wanted to be part of the family business, chooses to jump into it when he decides to kill a police captain. Sonny challenges him on this dramatic shift. “Nice college boy, huh? Didn’t want to get mixed up in the family business? Now you want to gun down a police captain.”

Michael’s action changes both his legal status generally (now a wanted criminal) and his “legal” status within that world (no longer a civilian).

I’ll end this review with a simple observation. Most films have characters who make legal decisions. In every-day life, we make legal decisions every day. Film simply reflects that fact.

Movie Cont.

John Culhane’s legal-historical analysis in More Than Marriage looks at the status of marriage, marriage-alternatives, and the future of the legal aspects and benefits of marriage while exploring an alternative form of relationship recognition.

Rooted in the fight for marriage equality, Culhane’s book examines the alternatives to marriage used by LGBTQIA+ couples prior to the recognition of the fundamental right to marry in Obergefell v. Hodges. While domestic partnerships and civil unions are now uncommon, the examination of what those non-marriage recognitions of relationships sought to accomplish help inform Culhane’s examination of the legal rights conferred to a married couple, the assumptions that the law makes about what a married couple wishes to confer, and some gaping holes that the dependence on marriage to confer legal rights and responsibilities has created.

Culhane points to Colorado’s designated beneficiary agreement (DBA) schema (Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 15-22-101 - 15-22-112) as an inclusive alternative to status of marriage. It is not a marriage replacement, or stand in, like civil unions or domestic partnerships; rather it allows the recognition of relationships and conferral of selected benefits to consenting adults no matter what their relationship. A properly executed DBA provides an a la carte approach to what rights the two parties wish to grant and receive from each other from property rights, trusts, and probate matters to powers of attorney, health care powers of attorney, and the right to visit each other in the hospital.

Arguing that a federal recognition of DBA is needed to address current needs of queer and straight relationships alike, Culhane maintains that marriage is still needed. However, he points out that DBAs can help families and caring adults navigate the minefield of benefits, legal rights, and responsibilities in a thoughtful and more inclusive manner.

This book is a great addition to our collection for its historical overview and its examination of the current legal landscape.
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Submission Guidelines

The Southeastern Law Librarian (ISSN 0272-7560) is the official publication of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries. It is published quarterly and is distributed free to all SEAALL members.

Newsletter submission deadlines are:

- Summer: July 20, 2023
- Fall: Nov. 9, 2023
- Winter: January 20, 2024
- Spring: April 20, 2024

MS Word is the preferred format for electronic submissions.

All submissions will be edited for grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and to ensure style consistency within the newsletter. Every effort will be made not to change the intended meaning of the text.

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