

1-2000

## Museletter: January 2000

Gail F. Zwirner

University of Richmond, [gzwirner@richmond.edu](mailto:gzwirner@richmond.edu)

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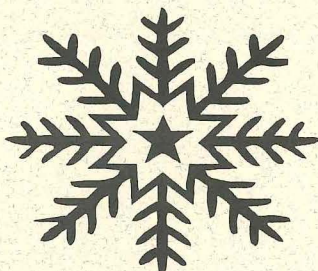
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# Museletter

## THIS ISSUE:

<i>Online Evolution</i>	1
<i>Browbag Courses</i>	3
<i>Drink Containers</i>	3
<i>One-L Lexis/Westlaw</i>	3
<i>Faculty Pubs.</i>	4



## SPRING 2000 Regular Hours

Sunday: 10:00 a.m.  
to 12:00 Midnight

Monday-Thursday:  
7:30 a.m. to 12:00  
Midnight

Friday: 7:30 a.m. to  
9:00 p.m.

## FROM THERMAL PAPER TO SPAM: REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGAL COMMUNITY'S TANGO WITH ONLINE INFORMATION ACCESS BY PAUL BIRCH

I've done the math and presently feel an odd combination of pride and horror to realize that this year is probably the half-a-lifetime-ago marker for my involvement with online research. It was the fall of 1976, only weeks after I'd begun working at the University of Wisconsin Law Library, that the school's first pipe-organ-sized LEXIS terminal was set up eight feet from my desk in the library's break room.

In those days the break room was a handy place for it. After manually dialing the phone number and cradling the receiver in its acoustic coupler modem, selecting library and file and entering a search, there was plenty of time to drink a cup of coffee before any results returned. At that time, LEXIS was the only online service available, and the scope was limited to federal case law—no statutes and no secondary materials. The vendor initially conditioned the uploading of a given state's case law on a certain number of commercial subscriptions being sold in that state, a policy eventually abandoned in favor of a full-scale introduction of those materials. There was little else to do with found documents except print them on the silver-coated thermal paper that ran through the attached printer. I hope there weren't too many practitioners who erred, as I once did, in leaving their rolled-up printout on a dashboard in the sun over lunch and returned to find their precious data totally blackened out. Of course, there was no way to have your data in any other form but print, but in PC-less 1976 why would anybody have wanted to? Floppy what?

Fun as it is to wax nostalgic on the primitive state of LEXIS in the seventies (and Westlaw, when it became available in an academic package in the eighties), much of what stands out in my mind about the services is how well they had the formula down, even in their early years. That it is possible today to enter a Boolean search using precisely the same syntax one used nearly a quarter century ago is a staggering testimony to the original developers' work. That these services were designed for, and are daily searched by, end users is equally revolutionary. Other services such as Dialog (databases we find in First Search or Westlaw), were cumbersome to get into and marked by a frustrating lack of uniformity in search syntax. These services were merely indexing/abstracting tools. Full text was not searchable or obtainable unless one chose to order a U.S.-mailed copy.

I will leapfrog over most of the 1980s. OK, a little bit of free-form eighties computing lore: WALT, Ubiq, Commodore 64, WordStar, floppy disks that couldn't fit in the glove compartment but held precious little data, and—oh yes!—the IBM PC. But, amidst all that, the close of that decade marked the beginnings of alternative visions for online research, cast outside the corporate model and taking full advantage of the public domain status of primary legal materials. Federal court-sponsored services such as Project Hermes, ACES, and PACER began offering opinions in dial-up formats, as did

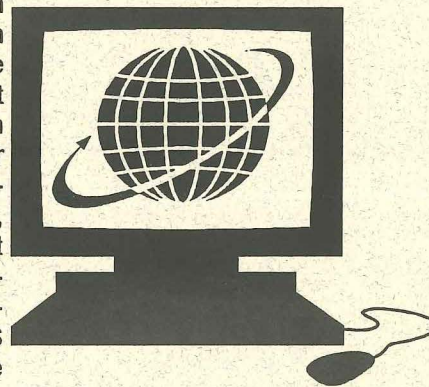


*“That it is possible today to enter a Boolean search [in Lexis or Westlaw] using precisely the same syntax one used nearly a quarter century ago is a staggering testimony to the original developers’ work.”*

some of the state legislatures, including our own. Little or no searchability was the rule, but fast, free access to legal materials online had arrived, setting the stage for startling developments as the nineties opened.

The law school community can take some well-justified pride in its “early adopter” status on the Internet. Retrofitted from librarian to computer services librarian, I didn’t reach the Net until 1992. Initially, our access involved a slow modem dialup to mainframe and connecting to any of a handful of computers running the law gophers. Not too long after this, I found myself entering zones where some of the characters on the screen were boldfaced, and discovered that they were, in fact, hyperlinks, and that with a bit of tab and enter key manipulation, I could find myself at a different site altogether: the beginnings of the World Wide Web! I guess it’s forgivable that this seemed merely a quaint addition to the list of available Internet protocols. By today’s standards, the character-based interface was cumbersome to navigate, and woe to those trying for the first time to save found documents back to their own hard drive. Legal resources were frustratingly patchy, but here and there one would triumph. I particularly recall the moment when I was able to find and download a certain treaty from a gopher: the first instance when the Net actually yielded me something that did not yet exist in print in our library.

Even Cornell Law’s Tom based browser like the single most event for which either credit or 1994, and integration lawyers, the Siegel. In what mouse-click, Can-message advertising coming INS virtually all of the net news groups



counting the release by Bruce of a Windows-Cello, I would argue that important defining Internet the legal world is owed blame occurred in April involved two Phoenix imr Laurence Canter and Mar was presumably a single ter and Siegel delivered a ing their services in an up- “Green Card Lottery” to five to ten thousand Use- existing at the time, giving a new meaning to the word “spam,” and releasing the cork from a bottle containing the huge volume of advertising that we now see everyday in our mailboxes and on the websites we visit. Internet purists were stunned and predicted doom. The event replaced 1993’s unleashing of 600,000 AOL subscribers onto the Net as the chief outlet for cyberspatial hostility. Say what you will about Canter and Siegel; sooner or later *somebody* was going to do it. It just happened to be a couple of attorneys.

That brings us to the present. Actually it doesn’t, but I haven’t yet learned how to be nostalgic about the Internet’s recent past. My predictions for the future really don’t go beyond the “more, better, faster” types of pronouncements, which I long ago learned are always safe. Bandwidth demands and technology’s ability to meet them will make today’s strictures seem like a joke. The printed page will remain viable, even if only as a device to humor those of us who enjoy debating the continued viability of the printed page. For those of you who have endured these ramblings to their end, I extend my greetings for a happy and prosperous 1900!

**Paul Birch**

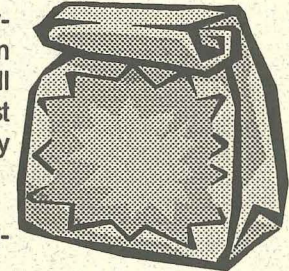
Computer Services/Reference Librarian

[Paul’s article is an excerpt from an article published in the Winter 2000 issue of the Newsletter of the Virginia Association of Law Libraries.]



## Reference and Computer Services Staff Team Up to Provide Series of "Brownbag" Refresher Courses

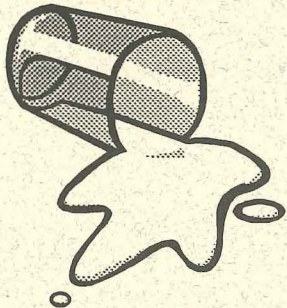
Beginning on January 19, 2000, the Reference Librarians and Computer Services Assistant will alternate weeks to provide a series of brownbag refresher courses in various areas of legal research and computer technology. You bring your lunch; we'll provide a soft drink and dessert. **All classes begin at Noon in Room 114**, and will last 30 to 45 minutes. It's a perfect opportunity to improve your research and technology skills to prepare for a summer job.



The schedule is as follows (legal research courses are in standard type; computer related courses are in italics):

January 19:	Internet legal sites	March 15:	<i>Presentation Software</i>
January 26:	<i>Computer maintenance</i>	March 22:	Legislative History
February 2:	Statutes	March 29:	<i>Spreadsheet applications</i>
February 9:	<i>Remote access to the UR network</i>	April 5:	Secondary sources (Restatements, Uniform Laws)
February 16:	Case law research/digests	April 12:	<i>Exam preparation</i>
February 23:	<i>WordPerfect advanced formatting</i>	April 19:	Secondary sources (trial practice tools)
March 1:	Comparison of citators: Shepard's v. Keycite		

## Library Relaxes Drink Container Policy



Good news! Effective January 3, 2000 there is a new, more liberal policy regarding the types of drink containers that are acceptable in the Law Library. Acceptable containers are ANY containers that have a lid and from which you can drink with the top intact. Also, please remember that NO drinks in any type of container are permitted in the computer lab.

Examples of acceptable containers are: (1) mugs like the Law Library mug that you received during orientation; (2) cups with lids and straws; and (3) squeezable bottles that do not require the removal of the top to drink.

Examples of containers that are NOT acceptable are open coffee cups, soda cans, and bottles that require the removal of the top to drink.

Now the negative side of this new policy. The library staff and library student employees will begin enforcing more strictly this new policy. All users with drinks in non-acceptable containers will be asked to remove the drinks from the library immediately. So, on your next trip to the Down Under, bring a spill resistant mug with you to transfer your soft drink or coffee. We appreciate your cooperation to keep the library clean. Thank you.

## ONE-L Lexis and Westlaw Training Schedule (Required for Law Skills) (Weeks of January 24 and January 31)

Monday: Noon-1:30 p.m. (Room 114)	Wednesday: Noon-1:30p.m. (Room 102)
Monday: 4:00-5:30 p.m. (Room 102)	Thursday: 4:00-5:30p.m. (Room 102)
Tuesday: 11:00a.m.-12:30p.m. (Room 114)	Friday: 1:00-2:30 p.m. (Room 114)
Tuesday: 4:00-5:30p.m. (Room 102)	Friday: 3:00-4:30p.m. (Room 114)

Please sign up for the sessions at the Reference Desk. Thank you.





## Recent Faculty Publications

### Azizah Y. al-Hibri

*Islamic and American Constitutional Law: Borrowing Possibilities or a History of Borrowing?* 1 U. Pa. J. Const. L. 492 (1999).

*Is Western Patriarchal Feminism Good for Third World/Minority Women? IS MULTICULTURALISM BAD FOR WOMEN?* (Princeton Univ. Press 1999).

*Islamic Law and Muslim Women in America. ONE NATION UNDER GOD* 128 (Routledge, 1999) (Proceedings of Harvard Conference by the same name).

*Islamic Constitutionalism and the Concept of Democracy. BORDER CROSSINGS: TOWARDS A COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY* 61-87 (Lexington Books, 1999).

### John Paul Jones

*The United States Supreme Court and Treasure Salvage: Issues Remaining After Brother Jonathan.* 30 J. Mar. L. &

Com. 205 (1999).

### Rodney A. Smolla

*DELIBERATE INTENT: A LAWYER TELLS THE TRUE STORY OF MURDER BY THE BOOK* (Crown 1999).

*LAW OF DEFAMATION* (West 2d ed. 1999).

*THE BILL OF RIGHTS, THE COURTS, AND THE LAW* (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy 1999) (with Lynda Butler, A.E. Dick Howard, Robert O'Neil, Barbara Perry, Melvin Urofsky, and David Bearinger).

### Peter N. Swisher

*Legal and Risk Management Issues Surrounding Managed Care. TEXTBOOK OF CRITICAL CARE* (4th ed. 1999) (with Karen Swisher).

### Deborah Tussey

*The Creative as Enemy of the True: The Meaning of Originality in the Matthew Bender Cases*, 5 Rich. J. L. & Tech. 9 (Spring 1999).

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Gail Zwirner, Editor  
Museletter  
Law Library, School of Law  
University of Richmond  
Richmond, VA 23173

The Museletter is the official newsletter of the  
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Editor: Gail Zwirner

Contributors: Paul Birch and Timothy Coggins.