



PennState
Dickinson Law

Penn State Dickinson Law
Dickinson Law IDEAS

Faculty Journal Articles

Faculty Scholarship

Fall 2015

Igniting the Conversation: Embracing Legal Literacy as the Heart of the Profession

Laura J. Ax-Fultz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ideas.dickinsonlaw.psu.edu/fac-works>

 Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#), [Legal Profession Commons](#), and the [Legal Writing and Research Commons](#)

Igniting the Conversation: Embracing Legal Literacy as the Heart of the Profession*

Laura J. Ax-Fultz**

Law librarians are experts in instruction, databases, scholarship, and more. This broad expertise has exacerbated an identity crisis in the profession. The author argues that law librarians must develop a core identity, such as legal literacy, to navigate an ever-changing legal landscape that questions the future necessity of law librarians.

Introduction	421
What Is Legal Literacy?	426
Why Should Law Librarians Embrace Legal Literacy?	430
Professional Sentiment	433
How to Embrace Legal Literacy	435
Igniting the Conversation	437
Counterarguments	438
Conclusion	439

Introduction

¶1 Law librarians are experts. They are experts in legal information literacy, information systems, databases, archives, repositories, and much more. This is both a blessing and a curse. Law librarians can be classified into various categories performing similar job duties and functions across all types of law libraries while uniquely adapting to the needs, goals, and missions of their parent organizations. Without law librarians, the legal information and related educational needs of the parent organizations would either go unmet or be satisfied through other means. Unfortunately, defining what it means to be a law librarian can be difficult since law librarians have developed such a widespread expertise that is both taken for granted and generally misunderstood.

¶2 The legal profession and the field of legal education is in a period of rapid evolution, and law librarians must adapt to keep pace. In terms of the evolution of legal resources, materials are increasingly available, and often preferred, in digitized

* © Laura J. Ax-Fultz, 2015.

** Information Services and Outreach Librarian, H. Laddie Montague, Jr. Law Library, Pennsylvania State University Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

formats.¹ Despite the removal of costs related to the creation and distribution of physical materials, the price of digitized legal materials continues to skyrocket. The assumption is that without physical materials in the library, law librarians are unnecessary. Therefore, the library, with expensive materials, databases, and personnel, is an easy target for budgetary savings for the institution. This places law librarians in the difficult situation of working with less while striving to maintain services. And it gives the inaccurate appearance that budget cuts are justified, possibly subjecting the library to even more cost-cutting measures. To counter these inaccurate and damaging perceptions, law librarians must assert their value in a meaningful way that is relevant to the parent institution.

¶3 Defining the core purpose of the profession will provide the foundation on which to build arguments proving the value of law librarians to a parent institution and enable law librarians to leverage their skills in more comprehensive ways. In *Law Librarianship in the Twenty-First Century*, Robert C. Berring summarizes the history of law librarianship to lay the foundation for understanding the current state of the profession. In doing so he boldly questions the core mission of law librarianship and asserts that “[f]orm follows function,”² meaning that the description of the profession may vary depending on what tasks each individual performs in a specific institution. “Given the nature of the law,” writes Berring, “perhaps this is as it should be. Still, we need to find some way of locating the heart of the profession of law librarianship. . . .”³ Berring gives no further insight into or suggestion for a standard definition of “the heart of the [law librarianship] profession.” However, he later raises an interesting question about the future of the profession:

[S]ome feel that the term *librarian* itself should be abandoned in favor of a term that is more reflective of a professional who manages knowledge by working with information, systems, and databases. The entire profession of librarianship has struggled to find its identity and its place at the table in the information economy. Will the term *librarian* become synonymous with a middle management position in which one reports to a manager to whose job one cannot aspire?⁴

¶4 Would changing the title of librarian to something else create a more accurate image of who they are?⁵ Does it really matter? Does law librarianship need a clear definition and purpose beyond the role of caretaker of information? The answer is a resounding yes.

1. STEVEN A. LASTRES, REBOOTING LEGAL RESEARCH IN A DIGITAL AGE 2 (2013), available at <http://www.llrx.com/files/rebootinglegalresearch.pdf>.

2. Robert C. Berring, *A Brief History of Law Librarianship*, in *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 1* (Roy Balleste, Sonia Luna-Lumas & Lisa Smith-Butler eds., 2d ed. 2014).

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.* at 11.

5. Although this analysis offers a different solution, this is a fascinating question worthy of robust discussion. In fact, on February 27, 2015, AALL asked a similar question: “Is the title ‘Librarian’ still appropriate today?” *Timeline Photos*, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/aallnet/photos/a.452274066805.246610.103201871805/10152671855956806/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2015). As of March 2, 2015, the results indicated more than seventy percent answered affirmatively. AM. ASS’N OF LAW LIBRARIES, <http://www.aallnet.org/> (copy on file with author).

¶5 Law librarianship needs a succinct and powerful statement of purpose. An unambiguous definition of law librarianship will provide clarity for both law librarians and those who employ them. Roy Mersky has argued, in response to his own intentionally inflammatory statement that there is no future in law librarianship:

To rebut my own statement that “there is no future in law librarianship,” the profession is increasingly important, and the future is bright with tremendous prospects for those with degrees in library science, law, computer science, language, management, and other specialized credentials. The challenge to emerging and veteran law librarians is to take a hard look at what we are doing and how we are doing it. There is a need to educate new law librarians and to reeducate existing librarians with skills and knowledge to meet the challenges of the profession and to ensure a proactive approach to services.⁶

¶6 While this is an excellent and hopeful assessment of what law librarians can expect, it still fails to provide a core statement of purpose. Law librarians must create a common vision of the profession to solidify its identity and purpose. Creating a common and holistic view that highlights the importance and value of the profession brands law librarians and defines their purpose. Having a strong core identity will give law librarians the leverage they need to meet and overcome challenges inherent in the rapidly changing legal environment.

¶7 In *Law Librarianship in the Digital Age*, Jean O’Grady argues that “the core mission of the profession—matching people to knowledge—remains intact and drives a vision of the future that distinguishes our profession from all others. We are charged with preserving and optimizing access to knowledge.”⁷ Later in the book, Scott D. Bailey and Julie Graves Krishnaswami provide a useful analysis of what law librarians must do to succeed in a service model for the law library and law librarianship.⁸ The statements are not necessarily wrong, but they lack a meaningful and powerful statement of purpose that defines the profession and distinguishes it from other similar professions.

¶8 One frequently sees powerful statements in sales and marketing,⁹ but what about professional mission statements? Patch Adams is reputed to have said, “The purpose of a doctor or any human in general should not be to simply delay the death of the patient, but to increase the person’s quality of life.”¹⁰ The power and simplicity of this statement continues to resonate and has morphed into a cultural meme. Similarly, the national Future Farmers of America (FFA) solicited T-shirt designs for the organization. One winner, having used the slogan he created for his

6. Roy Mersky, *Introduction*, in *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY*, *supra* note 2, at xvii–xviii.

7. Jean O’Grady, *Foreword*, in *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE*, at xi (Ellyssa Kroski ed. 2014).

8. Scott D. Bailey & Julie Graves Krishnaswami, *The Future of Law Librarianship*, in *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE*, *supra* note 7, at 485.

9. For a list of companies, with their slogans and mission statements, see *MISSION STATEMENTS .COM*, http://www.missionstatements.com/fortune_500_mission_statements.html (last visited Aug. 13, 2015).

10. *Patch Adams: Quotes*, GOODREADS.COM (2015), http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/436656.Patch_Adams. The actual quote from the movie is “A doctor’s mission should not be just to prevent death but also to improve the quality of life.” *Hunter Adams: Treat You as a Person*, SWEETSPEECHES.COM (Dec. 25, 1988), <http://www.sweetspeeches.com/s/2571-hunter-adams-you-treat-a-person>.

state FFA organization, designed the best-selling FFA T-shirt, which highlights the importance of agriculture: “Naked & Hungry: What you would be without agriculture.”¹¹ It’s hard to argue with that! A clear statement of purpose makes a powerful impression on the speaker and the listener. It anchors the profession within the larger world and gives meaning to both the individual and the field.

¶9 Professor Robert Jarvis has boldly preached the imminent demise of law libraries and law librarians. He states that, in the future, law faculty will want law librarians to advocate for the digitization of legal information in support of the scholarly activities of the law faculty, and, once this is complete, law librarians will no longer be necessary.¹² He assumes that online resources are self-selecting, self-sustaining, and intuitive to use. In an effort to be extremely inflammatory, Jarvis compares law librarians to elevator operators and doormen who were once necessary and common in everyday life but have outlived their usefulness.¹³ His final argument, meant to place the last nail in the coffin of law librarianship, is, “Although I suspect that most professors do not realize it, what they want is for you to become victims of your own success and put yourselves out of business.”¹⁴ It is unnecessary to take the time to refute all of the inaccurate assertions that Jarvis makes; law librarians know he is wrong, and they need to show that he is wrong. Unfortunately, this argument regarding the purpose of law librarians and their impending demise is a common, persistent, and problematic myth, one made more attractive by declining law school budgets.

¶10 Once all legal resources are online, who will be the experts to replace law librarians? Legal information vendors are marketing themselves as a one-stop resource for all legal information needs making law librarians unnecessary.¹⁵ Surveys on the legal information needs of practicing attorneys have focused on the importance of digital resources,¹⁶ from which one can conclude that without books, law librarians are no longer necessary. And, while it is fascinating that newly licensed attorneys rely heavily on digital resources, it is inappropriate to take this as proof that legal information vendors are the best instructors to train attorneys. Newly licensed attorneys may not be as skilled in legal research as they think they are.

¶11 With this widespread digitization of legal materials, derogatory marketing campaigns by legal information vendors, and a sustained misunderstanding of the purpose of law librarians, some fear that law librarians are, or soon will be, obsolete. These depressing and antagonizing arguments can quickly become the dominant influences that push the profession to be reactive rather than proactive. Law librarians, understandably, feel the need to prove themselves as being something

11. Park Alumni Society, *Park Alum’s “Naked and Hungry” A Success* (July 29, 2005), <http://www.parkscholars.org/article.php?id=42>. See the tee shirt at SHOPFFA.ORG, <http://shopffa.org/item/00679/NAKED-HUNGRY-TEE/> (last visited Aug. 14, 2015).

12. Robert M. Jarvis, *What Law Professors Will Want from Law Librarians in the Twenty-first Century*, 96 LAW LIBR. J. 503, 504–05, 2004 LAW LIBR. J. 29, ¶¶ 6–17.

13. *Id.* at 504, ¶ 8.

14. *Id.* at 505, ¶ 17.

15. Greg Lambert, *Don’t Tick Off the Mess Cook, the Supply Sergeant, or the Law Librarian*, 3 GEEKS & A LAW BLOG (Aug. 25, 2009, 6:00 AM), <http://www.geeklawblog.com/2009/08/dont-tick-off-mess-cook-supply-sergeant.html>.

16. LASTRES, *supra* note 1; see also Joseph D. Lawson, *What About the Majority? Considering the Legal Research Practices of Solo and Small Firm Attorneys*, 106 LAW LIBR. J. 377, 2014 LAW LIBR. J. 21.

more than the caretakers of books. Faced with these challenges, law librarians have struggled to find meaningful ways to assert and prove their value to their parent institutions.

¶12 One suggested approach to proving the value of law librarianship is to create a structured educational requirement to enter the field. In her article, *Is This a Profession? Establishing Educational Criteria for Law Librarians*, Elizabeth Caulfield has outlined the history of the profession's inability to reach a consensus on the educational needs of law librarianship and whether specific educational requirements are necessary to be a law librarian.¹⁷ Caulfield's goal "is to encourage discussion that leads to the standardization of educational qualifications for law librarians and the establishment of law librarianship as a distinct profession."¹⁸ Although an admirable goal worthy of discussion, defining educational requirements risks ostracizing skilled law librarians, may exclude qualified individuals, and may artificially limit the future scope of the profession. Perhaps the problem is that the profession cannot agree on educational requirements because it cannot agree on a common identity that covers all aspects of librarianship. Perhaps both issues are merely symptomatic of the ever-changing and somewhat chaotic nature of law librarianship. Whatever the reason, law librarianship continues to suffer from an identity crisis.

¶13 The 2013–2016 Strategic Directions document of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), provides some guidance. It sets out a core ideology for the organization, a vision, and the list of goals and objectives of the organization.¹⁹ All of these concepts focus on the organization as an "advocate and supporter" of the profession of law librarianship. Perhaps the most useful statement regarding the identity of law librarians is the vision that states, "AALL and its members will be the recognized authority in all aspects of legal information."²⁰ Given that membership is not restricted to law librarians,²¹ this statement does not explicitly define the purpose of law librarianship. AALL should not be responsible for defining the profession; instead law librarians must leverage the resources of the organization to develop, define, and support the core purpose of law librarianship.

¶14 AALL has supported many initiatives to assist law librarians in developing key arguments that assert their value to parent institutions. Most recently, AALL sponsored a study entitled *The Economic Value of Law Libraries: A Report of the American Association of Law Libraries Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee*.²² The importance of this report cannot be overstated. Every law librarian should read and use this resource. The report includes broadly written best practices that it then applies to specific types of law libraries. The primary goal of this

17. Elizabeth Caulfield, *Is This a Profession? Establishing Educational Criteria for Law Librarians*, 106 LAW LIBR. J. 287, 2014 LAW LIBR. J. 19.

18. *Id.* at 288, ¶ 3.

19. Am. Ass'n of Law Libraries, *Strategic Directions: 2013–2016*, AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, <http://www.aallnet.org/mm/Leadership-Governance/strategic> (approved Dec. 2012).

20. *Id.*

21. Frank G. Houdek, *AALL History in Brief: A Chronology 28*, in AALL MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY 2014–2015 (2014).

22. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF LAW LIBRARIES: A REPORT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE LAW LIBRARIES SPECIAL COMMITTEE* (Jan. 2015), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/mm/Publications/products/economicvaluelawlibraries.pdf>.

report is to enable law librarians to effectively communicate about the law library and their work. It also provides the framework in which to make the arguments asserting the value of the law library, although the substance of the arguments must be tailored to each unique situation. The only issue with this report is that it still ties law librarians to the library, even though the library is not tied to physical space.

The library is no longer a “place.” The library is a collection of information across multiple formats, organized and disseminated in a method designed to provide access to high-quality resources. Library services reach beyond the mere collection and organization of information. Library professionals provide services that deliver content, as well as providing instruction on accessing that content effectively through training, teaching, and demonstration.²³

The report provides a contemporary and robust definition of the law library, highlighting that law library services are not tied to the collection. Teaching users that the library is not a physical space is one of the greatest challenges facing librarianship.²⁴ However, it asserts that library professionals exist as the facilitators of library content. Can a law librarian exist without a law library? Yes, but defining the purpose of law librarians will advance the idea that a library need not exist as a physical space with physical collections.

¶15 The scholarly literature produced by law librarians proves that they excel at improving their professional practice. Law librarians should leverage that expertise to create a narrative that articulates how their work fits within the larger field of law librarianship. Ideally, it should become commonplace that when anyone hears the term “law librarian” he or she knows the primary purpose of a law librarian, what defines the “heart of the profession.” Any further explanation would explain the role of the law librarian within a specific organization. This definition would not alter the work performed by law librarians but instead how they view themselves, how they approach their work, and how they present their work to others. Legal literacy is that purpose, the core concept, the heart of law librarianship. The purpose of law librarianship is legal literacy.

What Is Legal Literacy?

¶16 Literacy, according to its dictionary definition, is the ability to read and write.²⁵ This concept, fundamental to our daily lives, involves layers of complexity and analysis that scholars are just beginning to unravel. Literacy is far more than simple reading skills, but “[u]nfortunately, the definition of literacy one finds is often simplified, even reductive: Literacy is the straightforward encoding or decoding of print. Literacy is a single thing, measurable through a standardized test. Literacy means the reading of one kind of text but not another.”²⁶ This is the most simplistic definition of literacy and has little relation to contemporary discourse on

23. *Id.* at 1.

24. This is a good argument in favor of Berring’s suggestion of finding a new word for librarians. Berring, *supra* note 3, at 11.

25. AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1024 (5th ed. 2011).

26. LITERACY: A CRITICAL SOURCEBOOK 2 (Ellen Cushman et al. eds., 2001).

literacy. Some of the central themes in literacy studies include the relationship between literacy, knowledge, and cognition²⁷ plus the inherent power imbalances that occur when individuals do not have sufficient basic literacy skills or literacy skills in subject areas.²⁸ An expanded meaning of literacy, “being knowledgeable in a particular subject or field,”²⁹ which includes a deeper subject understanding, is used throughout this paper.

¶17 But what about legal literacy? The concept of legal literacy has been around for decades in various forms. Within the United States, definitions of legal literacy have been posited in scholarly work, usually related to education or law, and have been stated either as singular concepts or as a spectrum of knowledge. James Boyd White argues that legal literacy can range from the mere ability to recognize legal words as being “part of the world of the law” but nothing more,³⁰ to achieving competency as a reader and writer of the law, which expertise can only be developed after professional education and years of practice.³¹ This idea of the spectrum of legal knowledge provides a useful framework for understanding other definitions of legal literacy.

¶18 In the context of civics education, Suzanne Bolton argues for a singular definition of legal literacy:

[L]egal literacy could be defined as the background information stored in one’s mind that enables them to take up a legal document, read an article in the newspaper on a law-related event, with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implications, relating what they read to the unstated context which alone gives meaning to what they read.³²

In this context, legal literacy is a general and indistinct concept comprising merely the ability to understand, when reading text, that something is legally significant and even possibly understanding the legal implications of that text, which frankly may be more than one could expect at a secondary civics education level. As stated above, this would be the lower end of White’s spectrum. However, Bolton attempts to further refine this idea by breaking it into component parts:

The major objectives and rationale of legal literacy a.k.a. (also known as) law-related education are succinctly put forth as follows: “1) broad understanding of basic legal concepts, principles, and the valued ideals of our constitutional democracy, 2) awareness and increased understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, 3) growing respect and appreciation for legal processes and rational legitimate authority, and 5) [sic] the knowledge skills and attitudes that promote citizenship participation.”³³

¶19 Note that Bolton refers to legal literacy as “a.k.a. law-related education.” Arguably, law-related education is the precursor to basic legal literacy in that one

27. *Id.* at 5.

28. MORE POWERFUL LITERACIES 2–4 (Lyn Tett et al. eds., 2012).

29. AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, *supra* note 25, at 1024.

30. James Boyd White, *The Invisible Discourse of the Law: Reflections on Legal Literacy and General Education*, 54 U. COLO. L. REV. 143, 143–44 (1982–1983).

31. *Id.* at 143.

32. Suzanne Bolton, *Legal Literacy*, 4 MICH. SOC. STUD. J. 13, 14 (1989).

33. *Id.* at 16.

must develop an understanding of certain government structures and requirements before undertaking the development of legal literacy skills. The component parts make no reference to reading and understanding legal documents, but highlight that legal literacy includes the ability to function in a democracy. This definition of legal literacy is more expansive than simply reading legal documents, as she initially asserts, but requires having background knowledge to draw on to understand what has been read. This definition requires substantive education in current and historical facts and the development of analytical skills to apply that knowledge. While at first her definition may appear to be a simplistic focus on reading, falling at the lower end of White's spectrum, it actually requires a sustained or broad education to develop.

¶20 The *Report of the Canadian Bar Association Task Force on Legal Literacy* also asserts that the ability to read and understand words forms the basis of legal literacy:

The Task Force soon recognized that the ability to use and respond to words as they are used in the context of legal documents and procedures was also basic and essential to a society that relies heavily on law. Literacy means something more than an ability to recognize and decode words. It is a cumulative process that must also include the ability to respond: to understand words, to draw conclusions from them, and then to use those conclusions to take action. Specific to the law, literacy must also include the ability to understand words as they are used in a legal context.³⁴

Both Bolton's definition and the definition of the Canadian Bar Association Task Force rely on the functional definition of legal literacy encompassing both reading and comprehension of legal words and texts.

¶21 At the other end of White's spectrum, Leonard J. Long makes an argument in favor of supporting legal literacy initiatives that focus on reading. Long emphatically argues that legal literacy means being well read in the law³⁵ and that to become legally literate, students must read books about the law and gain a "mastery of law literature."³⁶ Without this background gained exclusively through reading the law, one cannot hope to be legally literate.³⁷ The main premise of his argument is that law school is not enough to become legally literate.³⁸ Law school is merely the first step toward legal literacy. Thus his argument, while focusing on the fundamental educational needs of would-be attorneys, also excludes a large segment of the population from ever hoping to become legally literate, leaving legal literacy to the professionals.

¶22 Legal literacy should be defined to encompass all individuals. Although White has created a broad concept, he does not explain what skills would be needed to achieve competence in legal literacy. A legal professional, as discussed by Long, would exist at one end of the spectrum, with the other end of the spectrum being

34. CANADIAN BAR ASS'N, REPORT OF THE CANADIAN BAR ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE ON LEGAL LITERACY 23 (1992).

35. Leonard J. Long, *Resisting Anti-Intellectualism and Promoting Legal Literacy*, 34 S. ILL. U. L.J. 1, 10 (2009–2010).

36. *Id.* at 24.

37. *Id.* at 10.

38. *Id.*

inhabited by those who have no more knowledge than the ability to identify that a word or concept might be legal in nature. Within White's spectrum of knowledge, all individuals no matter their expertise can have an identifiable level of legal literacy, and he believes there is a nonprofessional ideal in the middle of the spectrum. A midpoint of legal literacy would encompass the competence needed to function within our "increasingly legalistic and litigious culture."³⁹ Although Bolton and White seem to agree that a functional level of legal literacy is required to be a good citizen in a democracy, they have not provided concrete guidance, leaving the requirements for that achievement unfocused.

¶23 Mary Sarah Bilder's definition of legal literacy is also a spectrum concept and provides the most useful definition for law librarians:

Legal literacy refers to the reading, writing, speaking and thinking practices that relate to the conduct of litigation. Instead of forcing a binary decision of whether a legal practitioner is a lawyer or not, consideration of legal literacy allows us to identify and to place participants in the legal system along a spectrum of functional skills.⁴⁰

This broad definition, though similar to White's, highlights the need to identify skills and provides for a range of skills among legal professionals. Although this definition refers to participants in the legal system, the context of the assessment does not lend itself to a thorough analysis of nonprofessionals. However, one can extrapolate from this definition a range of functional skills, rather than the more ephemeral concept of understanding a body of knowledge, to define the level of legal literacy.

¶24 A synthesized definition of legal literacy is the ability to read, write, and understand concepts, which abilities exist on a spectrum of skill levels ranging from having no skills to having all of the knowledge and skills necessary to function as a legal professional. Because of the iterative nature of law and technology, all individuals can improve their personal level of legal literacy. This enhanced definition would apply to everyone, therefore representing the full range of clientele who might be encountered in any law library, whether or not an actual assessment of skills is undertaken.

¶25 A simplified definition of legal literacy is the ability to understand the law and apply the law. The skill level of each individual is based on his or her education, background, and life experience. Again, form follows function such that the level of legal literacy education provided at the institutional level varies depending on the needs and legal fluency of the patrons. A law firm librarian would not be expected to provide reference services to an attorney in the same manner that an academic librarian might instruct a law student or a public law librarian might work with a member of the public.

¶26 All law librarians engage in legal literacy in one form or another because everything law librarians do ultimately serves the purpose of understanding and applying law. The connection between legal literacy and the law librarian roles of legal research instructor, faculty services librarian, scholarly communications

39. White, *supra* note 30, at 144.

40. Mary Sarah Bilder, *The Lost Lawyers: Early American Legal Literacies and Transatlantic Legal Culture*, 11 *YALE J.L. & HUMAN.* 47, 51 (1999).

librarian, and reference librarian is easy to make. Working directly with individuals, assisting them in understanding and accessing the law, is clearly legal literacy. Other law librarians may be more hesitant to assert that they engage in legal literacy. However, catalogers create records containing information vital to accessing and understanding the law; acquisitions librarians select materials tailored to the needs of the patrons of a particular institution to guide patrons' understanding and application of the law; electronic resources librarians provide access to legal resources leading to the improvement of legal literacy; and law library administrators coordinate these activities with the ultimate goal of satisfying the needs and demands of their parent institutions, which, whether they realize it or not, are grounded in legal literacy. Therefore law librarians can assert that legal literacy is the "heart of the profession" because it encompasses the work of all law librarians working with all patrons, no matter their skill level, at all law libraries.

Why Should Law Librarians Embrace Legal Literacy?

¶27 The core concept of legal literacy provides a goal to which all of the various types of law librarianship aspire. It is the heart of law librarianship. Without the core concept of legal literacy to define law librarianship, the daily tasks performed by law librarians would be nothing more than administrative tasks to keep the machinery of the parent institution moving. Legal literacy gives purpose to the work of the law librarian and leverage to use when faced with budget cuts or the suggestion that law librarians are no longer needed as print materials become digitized. Creating a holistic framework where legal literacy forms the foundational concept of law librarianship allows individuals to explain the purpose of the law library, law librarianship, and their individual function within the parent institution. This is necessary to counterbalance the challenges facing librarians.

¶28 Samantha Hines argues that to improve the standing of librarians, librarians must address the challenges of "deprofessionalism," the proliferation of online sources, and the expectation of immediate gratification by users.⁴¹ The first challenge, deprofessionalism, strikes at the heart of librarianship and threatens the meaning of librarianship. In 2007, Casey Schacher argued:

However valuable library professionalism may be, the attitude of many toward librarianship has grown increasingly hostile. Maurice Freedman, former president of ALA, painted a vivid portrait of this fact when he said, "the chorus decrying the need for and continued existence of professional librarians has grown like a disease." Despite the efforts of librarians to firmly entrench themselves in professionalism, a growing trend toward deprofessionalization has threatened their status. Deprofessionalization has become what Crowley calls the "fundamental transformation" of libraries. This means that the number of full-time, professional library positions is being reduced and replaced by part-time, nonprofessional positions. Furthermore, job functions once performed by librarians, such as reference and storytelling, are routinely being transferred to library workers with minimal training.⁴²

41. SAMANTHA HINES, PRODUCTIVITY FOR LIBRARIANS: HOW TO GET MORE DONE IN LESS TIME 5 (2010).

42. Casey Schacher, *Libraries Without Librarians, Library Worklife: HR E-News for Today's Leaders*, ALA-APA.ORG (Nov. 2007), <http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2007/11/16/libraries-without-librarians/>.

For law librarians, deprofessionalization⁴³ may not yet be the “fundamental transformation” that is seen in public libraries, but it is visible at the highest level as law library administrators in law firms are eliminated and, at least at Harvard, schools are no longer sure that law librarians should be library directors.⁴⁴ Without a core concept to define law librarianship, it becomes more difficult to argue why certain professional qualifications are necessary. By asserting the core concept of legal literacy as the foundation of the profession, one can easily make the argument that certain professional standards must be maintained for the law library and the parent institution to succeed in their missions.

¶29 The second challenge asserted by Hines is the proliferation of online sources.⁴⁵ Hines fails to explain the concept, but one might make several opposite inferences based on the statement. In one instance, a librarian might be expected to master all online resources available at an institution, thus expanding the performance requirements of the position. Or, in the opposite situation, the challenge may be the persistent, albeit incorrect, idea that librarians exist only in relation to print resources and are increasingly superfluous as materials become available in a digitized format. The real challenge here is that law librarians find it necessary to justify their positions in so many and varied ways because they lack a succinct statement of core purpose.

¶30 The final challenge that Hines perceives is the need for immediate gratification by users.⁴⁶ Although Hines is specifically referring to the perceived need of instant service, the problem runs much deeper. Patrons may view librarians simply as a walking, talking encyclopedia from which they can obtain an immediate answer. Librarians may view the reference interview as a teaching moment to help the patron both in the immediate instance and in developing skills to be used in future research endeavors. Again the problem goes back to lack of understanding of the purpose of librarianship and specifically law librarianship. If all law library users understood that the core purpose of law librarians is to improve legal literacy, the user expectation would shift such that users may be less insistent on immediate gratification and appreciate the assistance in developing legal literacy skills. This function has been traditionally defined as legal information literacy and, it is argued, is a smaller part of the larger field of legal literacy.

¶31 Legal information literacy is recognized as a fully integrated part of law librarianship.⁴⁷ This concept has been embraced by law librarians who teach. There is a robust collection of scholarly literature focusing on improving, changing, and refining instruction for attorneys, law clerks, law students, and others. In this narrower aspect of legal information literacy, the role of the law librarian is clear. It is easy to connect the role of the law librarian as instructor to the information found

43. For an extensive analysis of the movement toward deprofessionalism, see DEFENDING PROFESSIONALISM: A RESOURCE FOR LIBRARIANS, INFORMATION SPECIALISTS, KNOWLEDGE MANAGERS, AND ARCHIVISTS (Bill Crowley ed., 2012).

44. Greg Lambert, *Are Law Firm Library Directors Passe?*, 3 GEEKS & A LAW BLOG (May 18, 2010, 9:30 AM), <http://www.geeklawblog.com/2010/05/are-law-firm-library-directors-passe.html>.

45. HINES, *supra* note 41, at 5.

46. *Id.*

47. Am. Ass'n of Law Libraries, *supra* note 19.

in legal materials, thus supporting the law librarian's role in improving legal information literacy.

¶32 The AALL appointed a committee to develop the *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*, which states:

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) has developed a set of principles and standards for legal research competency, drawn from information professionals' deep involvement in legal research within academe, law firms, the courts, government agencies, and other related settings, as well as the literature of the legal profession indicating that research competency directly impacts professional efficiency and effectiveness.⁴⁸

The foundation of these standards was developed from the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* as approved by the Association of College and Research Libraries.⁴⁹ The legal research competencies have a basis in information literacy and have been adapted to the legal field as a function of legal research. However, not all law librarians engage in instructional or other activities that would fall within the purview of the *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*. If law librarians do not teach, they may not see themselves as being integral to legal information literacy. Therefore, it is necessary to expand that concept to legal literacy so it encompasses more than just legal information, allowing all law librarians to be defined by the core function of legal literacy.

¶33 In its Strategic Directions document, the AALL states that the core purpose of the organization is to "advance[] the profession of law librarianship and support[] the professional growth of its members."⁵⁰ Implicit in the statement is the assumption of a common understanding of the core purpose of law librarianship. The document lists the Core Organizational Values as

- Lifelong learning and intellectual growth
- Equitable and permanent public access to legal information
- Continuous improvement in access to justice
- Community and collaboration
- The essential role of law librarians within their organizations and in a democratic society⁵¹

All of the core values are clearly elements of legal literacy. However, the Strategic Directions document loses sight of this when it explains its goals and objectives almost exclusively in terms of legal information literacy. It is easy for the organization to develop visions and goals around tangible features of legal information. However, focusing on the core concept of legal literacy as the heart of the law librarian profession would provide the holistic view to encompass all law librarians and ground their work in a solid foundation.

48. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR LEGAL RESEARCH COMPETENCIES [1] (2013), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/mm/Publications/products/pslrc-brochure.pdf>.

49. AM. LIBR. ASS'N, INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (2000), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/Documents/Leadership-Governance/Policies/policy-legal-rescompetency.pdf>.

50. Am. Ass'n of Law Libraries, *supra* note 19.

51. *Id.*

¶34 Legal literacy is a broader concept than legal information literacy. Focusing only on the role of legal information literacy creates a self-imposed limitation on the work of law librarians. The broader concept of legal literacy encompasses the entire profession and creates a powerful statement of purpose. It is hoped that a strong statement of purpose will enable law librarians to successfully counter the challenges facing the profession.

Professional Sentiment

¶35 A systematic survey is necessary to establish a consensus regarding adopting legal literacy as the purpose of law librarianship. However, three reasons that law librarians may be reluctant to adopt legal literacy as the purpose of law librarianship are (1) because the concept may seem too basic or obvious and therefore lacks the air of professionalism needed to function within the legal profession; (2) because law librarians perceive a different purpose to law librarianship; or (3) because law librarians so clearly know that this is the purpose of law librarianship that it is not worth discussing any further. The problem is that although law librarians have not made the field of legal literacy a primary topic of professional conversation, others have.

¶36 An individual's interpretation of legal literacy is entirely based on the prevailing view of legal literacy within his or her professional realm. As previously discussed, legal scholars have addressed the definition of legal literacy in broad terms. Other discussions of legal literacy have put law librarians in the cross-hairs. Law faculty have directly attacked traditional legal research instruction as focusing on "finding" as the primary topic of instruction within print resources.⁵² Ellie Margolis and Kristen Murray assert that "legal researchers are increasingly going directly to the web to conduct their research. Most legal research courses have not yet caught up to this reality, however and devote substantial time to teaching legal research in print materials."⁵³ After a blistering assault on traditional legal research instruction, the authors acknowledge that the AALL had, at that point, already engaged a task force to develop legal research competency standards, which would later become the *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*.⁵⁴ The authors then analyze the document and conclude that "these Principles can provide both a framework for legal research pedagogy, and a tool for assessment."⁵⁵ (Well, of course they can, that's why they were developed!) The problem is not the analysis of the usefulness of the competencies but the clear disconnect between law librarians as legal research instructors and their development of the competencies. In essence, the authors failed to acknowledge that law librarians in their role as legal research instructors have kept abreast of the needs of legal research instruction and developed tools to address those needs. Again, law librarians are not viewed as integral parts of legal information literacy, let alone the broader field of legal literacy. Law librarians

52. Ellie Margolis & Kristen E. Murray, *Say Goodbye to the Books: Information Literacy as the New Legal Research Paradigm*, 38 U. DAYTON L. REV. 117, 119 (2012).

53. *Id.* at 125.

54. *Id.* at 129.

55. *Id.* at 130.

must take action and assert themselves as leaders in legal literacy and make sure that the legal academy, law firms, the courts, and other parent institutions know it.

¶37 The American Bar Association (ABA) has been working with legal literacy issues for decades in ways too numerous to list here. The ABA has been instrumental in creating resources for children. A few examples are *Daring to Dream: Law and the Humanities for Elementary Schools*, intended for the classroom in the 1980s,⁵⁶ and a contemporary collection of books for children intended to introduce them to legal situations and help them understand situations they may encounter in real life.⁵⁷ In addition, the ABA has resources to help lawyers use legal literacy tools in a variety of settings.⁵⁸ These few examples are in addition to pro bono, legal aid, and access to justice programs that promote legal literacy and are sponsored by the ABA. There is not a clear connection between law librarians and the ABA to promote legal literacy, but the opportunities are wide open.

¶38 Similarly, non-law librarians have been active in literacy campaigns. Literacy campaigns have a history dating back to the sixteenth century, and although early campaigns focused on reading and writing, more recent campaigns have focused on basic literacy and subject-specific literacy.⁵⁹ For example, legal literacy is an element in a statewide literacy campaign in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Library Association has created a literacy initiative called PA Forward, which focuses on improving the five “types of knowledge essential to success”: Basic Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic and Social Literacy, Health Literacy, and Financial Literacy.⁶⁰ PA Forward relies on a network of libraries, librarians, and partner organizations to promote the five literacies highlighted by the initiative. Legal literacy is an integral part of the work of the Civic and Social Literacy team on which the Judicial Independence Commission of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is a key partner.⁶¹ PA Forward is changing the landscape for libraries and literacy in Pennsylvania and could become a model for other states and countries. The mission statement of the PA Forward initiative is inclusive to all libraries and librarians.⁶² Law librarians, especially those in Pennsylvania, should learn more about the work being accomplished by PA Forward and consider working with PA Forward as an extension of their work.

56. *DARING TO DREAM: LAW AND THE HUMANITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS* (Lynda Carl Falkenstein & Charlotte C. Anderson comps. & eds., 1980) (sponsored by the ABA's Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship).

57. *See Book Series Introduces Kids to Legal Literacy*, AM. BAR ASS'N (May 8, 2014, 2:26 PM), http://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2014/05/book_series_introduc.html.

58. *See, e.g.*, ANTHONY H. BARASH, SUE ENCHERMAN & STEVEN B. SCUDDER, LEGAL LITERACY FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION, POLICY ADVOCACY, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MORE, http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/directories/pro_bono_clearinghouse/ejc_2014_063.auth_checkdam.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2015).

59. *See generally* NATIONAL LITERACY CAMPAIGNS: HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES (Robert F. Arno & Harvey J. Graff eds., 1987).

60. *What Is PA Forward?*, PAFORWARD.ORG, <http://www.pafoward.org/Home/PoweringProgress/WhatisPAForward.aspx> (last visited Aug. 13, 2015).

61. *The Power of Resources to Move PA Forward*, PAFORWARD.ORG, <http://www.pafoward.org/home/partnersupporters/partnerorganizations.aspx> (last visited Aug. 14, 2015).

62. *How Will PA Benefit?*, PAFORWARD.ORG, <http://www.pafoward.org/Home/PoweringProgress/HowwillPABenefit.aspx> (last visited Aug. 14, 2015).

¶39 Law librarians should affirm that the purpose of law librarianship is legal literacy and embrace the work being done in the field of legal literacy. By expanding their view of their work and, by extension, others' view of their work, law librarians will prove that they are leaders in legal literacy. Law librarians will be proactively taking a leading role in a field in which they are already experts.

How to Embrace Legal Literacy

¶40 The ways in which law librarians can embrace legal literacy are as varied as the individuals working in law librarianship and the jobs they perform for their parent institutions. Individuals must embrace the concept of legal literacy and use that concept as a framework to explain their work and show their value within the institution. In addition, the profession must shape the conversation and promote legal literacy as a core concept and as the "heart of the profession."

¶41 One way law librarians can embrace legal literacy is to acknowledge the ways law librarianship has already contributed to legal literacy. As an advocate for the profession,⁶³ the AALL is an excellent resource for information about law librarians. One item in particular, the *AALL History in Brief: A Chronology*, is an abbreviated history of the professional organization.⁶⁴ A nonexhaustive list of events related to legal literacy in the last few years includes the following:

- April 28, 2004—AALL leadership advocates at the national level for the right of citizens to no-fee access to government information.⁶⁵
- July 15, 2005—The Strategic Directions 2005–2010 document includes education as a strategic direction of the organization.⁶⁶
- May 2006—The AALL Speakers Directory is launched in support of continuing education programs.⁶⁷
- April 20–21, 2007—The AALL Summit on Authentic Legal Information in the Digital Age includes attendees such as judges, state government officials, attorneys, and leaders of AALL and the ABA to discuss the status of primary legal sources.⁶⁸
- November 5, 2011—The AALL Executive Board approves the creation of an AALL Caucus on Consumer Advocacy.⁶⁹
- October 31, 2012—The AALL bylaws are changed to eliminate the requirement that an active member work in a library or information center.⁷⁰
- July 12, 2013—The AALL Executive Board adopts the AALL *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*. This document improves legal research best practices in law schools, law firms, and CLE program development.⁷¹

63. Am. Ass'n of Law Libraries, *supra* note 19.

64. Houdek, *supra* note 21, at 13.

65. *Id.* at 31.

66. *Id.*

67. *Id.* at 32.

68. *Id.* at 32–33 (thus highlighting the purpose of law librarians to educate other legal professionals).

69. *Id.* at 35.

70. *Id.* at 36 (reinforcing the idea that the work of librarians is not tied to a location or entity).

71. *Id.*

This short list of examples enumerates only a few of the many individual legal literacy initiatives already underway.

¶42 Law librarians can leverage the prior work of their professional colleagues and use existing tools to promote legal literacy as the heart of law librarianship. Specifically, the *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*⁷² is a primary document on which to rely when teaching legal information literacy to professionals. In addition, it would be possible for these principles to be simplified for application to the broader spectrum of legal literacy. By expanding these principles for a larger audience, law librarians show their value in promoting legal literacy beyond the needs of parent institutions, providing proof of the social value of the profession beyond its integrated function within, and exclusive to, an organization.

¶43 The other area in which law librarians promote legal literacy is by providing access to law libraries for indigent or pro se patrons. Although the past focus has been primarily on access, this work is closely tied to and somewhat encompassed by the access to justice movement.⁷³ Much has been written about how law libraries can promote access to justice, what obligation law libraries have to permit and promote access to justice, and how law librarians can provide services to pro se patrons as an aspect of access to justice.⁷⁴ While all of this work focuses on providing access and services to those who would not otherwise have access to legal materials and services, merely opening the door to them does not solve the problem. To adequately promote access to justice, law librarians must help these patrons learn how to use legal materials. Law librarians will not deliver actual legal services to these patrons, but by permitting access to the libraries and materials, which have been intentionally curated and presented to help patrons understand the law, and by offering reference assistance in navigating the materials, law librarians are providing legal literacy instruction to those who fall on the lower end of the spectrum of legal literacy. Again, law librarians are already doing this work but are not discussing or promoting it in terms of legal literacy.

72. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *supra* note 48.

73. One could argue that there is a meaningful difference between providing access to law libraries and providing access to justice. However, describing this work as part of the access to justice movement provides a clear statement of purpose that simply providing "access to a library" does not. Perhaps in this respect one should look to Canada as a model. See Daniel Poulin, *Free Access to Law in Canada*, 12 LEG. INFO. MGMT. 165 (2012).

74. Lynn Foster, *Access to Academic Law Library Services: A Survey*, 84 LAW LIBR. J. 741 (1992); Deborah K. Hackerson, *Access to Justice Starts in the Library: The Importance of Competent Research Skills and Free/Low-Cost Research Resources*, 62 ME. L. REV. 473 (2010); Amy Hale-Janeke & Sharon Blackburn, *Law Librarians and the Self-Represented Litigant*, 27 LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q. 65 (2008); Merrilee Harrell, *Self-Help Legal Materials in the Law Library: Going a Step Further for the Public Patron*, 27 LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q. 283 (2009); Amy Kaufman, *A Different Question of Open Access: Is There a Public Access Right to Academic Libraries in the United States and Canada?*, 103 LAW LIBR. J. 379, 2011 LAW LIBR. J. 24; Connie Lenz, *The Public Mission of the Public Law School Library*, 105 LAW LIBR. J. 31, 2013 LAW LIBR. J. 2; Deborah L. Rhode (for the Consortium on Access to Justice), *Access to Justice: An Agenda for Legal Education and Research*, 62 J. LEGAL EDUC. 531 (2013); Karen Westwood, "Meaningful Access to the Courts" and *Law Libraries: Where Are We Now?*, 90 LAW LIBR. J. 193 (1998); Joseph A. Schouten, Note, *Not So Meaningful Anymore: Why a Law Library Is Required to Make a Prisoner's Access to the Courts Meaningful*, 45 WM. & MARY L. REV. 1195 (2003-2004).

¶44 Law librarians are engaged in legal literacy every day. They need to leverage their technological and teaching skills with tools such as the *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*⁷⁵ and the *Economic Value of Law Libraries*⁷⁶ to rebrand the profession as experts in legal literacy. To find the “heart of the profession,” law librarians must make a collective decision on what it should be. As Robert Berring writes, “In the information wars, the law librarians wear the white hats. We have to make sure that they know it.”⁷⁷ We have to make sure everyone knows that the purpose of a law librarian is legal literacy.

Igniting the Conversation

¶45 Law librarians must initiate and lead the conversation with each other, with legal professionals, and with the public. In the field of communications, there is a theory regarding developing *idioms of practice*, which relates to a discussion of creating a sustained conversation about legal literacy within the field of law librarianship. Ilana Gershon argues that “the medium is part of the message.”⁷⁸ She explains:

The medium shapes the message in part because people have *media ideologies* that shape the ways they think about and use different media. Media ideologies are a set of beliefs about communicative technologies with which users and designers explain perceived media structure and meaning. That is to say, what people think about media they will use to shape the way they use media. . . . People do not concoct their media ideologies on their own; they develop their beliefs about media and ways of using media within *idioms of practice*. By idioms of practice, I mean that people figure out together how to use different media and often agree on the appropriate social uses of technology by asking advice and sharing stories with each other.⁷⁹

What does this mean for law librarianship? Law librarians can use media in a way that supports and promotes law librarianship. They simply have to take action.

¶46 By utilizing the best practices reported in *The Economic Value of Law Libraries*,⁸⁰ law librarians are creating their own *idioms of practice* to shape the conversation about law librarianship. These best practices give law librarians the framework to build a strong system of communication between themselves and their administration. While this report tells law librarians how to convey their message, it fails to articulate what the message should be. The core message to administration must include legal literacy as the primary role of law librarians.

¶47 Law librarians should also develop communication strategies designed to address common misperceptions about the purpose of law libraries, what law librarians do, and how they are a vital part of the improvement of legal literacy. This conversation would differ slightly from the communications outlined in *The Economic Value of Law Libraries*,⁸¹ which highlights the value of law librarians to the

75. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *supra* note 48.

76. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *supra* note 22.

77. Berring, *supra* note 2, at 12.

78. ILANA GERSHON, *THE BREAKUP 2.0: DISCONNECTING OVER NEW MEDIA* 3 (2010).

79. *Id.* at 3, 6.

80. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *supra* note 22.

81. *Id.*

parent institution. These strategies should use cutting-edge social media as a way to reach out to various users (students, lawyers, and the public). It is hoped that by highlighting the relevance of the profession in a sophisticated and contemporary way on social media,⁸² some misperceptions about law librarianship being tied to books will disappear. This will require a combination of appropriate content and strategic placement in various social media platforms.

¶48 The future of the profession is at stake. Law librarians must proactively shape the conversation. If law librarians know their purpose, they can make stronger arguments asserting their value to their parent institutions and can strategically market themselves on social media in ways that show their value and purpose.

Counterarguments

¶49 At this point one must consider the counterarguments to branding the purpose of law librarianship as legal literacy. There is a potential risk that the legal academy will feel threatened by the assertion that legal literacy is the heart of law librarianship. It may assert that law librarians are attempting to launch a coup on legal education rather than seeing law librarians as the integral partners they are. Perhaps that is overstating, but as academic law librarians know, some law faculty are not shy about making sure that law librarians know their place in the law school hierarchy. Even so, any such argument is unfounded and based in a persistent misunderstanding of what law librarians do. Opening and sustaining channels of communication about the purpose of law librarianship will help these concerns fade.

¶50 There is an argument to be made that law librarians should be relegated to the narrower field of legal information literacy rather than the broader field of legal literacy. While this appears to be a strong argument, especially for those who actively engage in teaching and other instructional activities, it is not expansive enough to include all aspects of law librarianship. In addition, one could argue that, in fact, legal information literacy is identical to legal literacy because becoming literate in a topic requires understanding information in that subject. Therefore, to say that one is legally literate implies a degree of skill in legal information literacy. However, defining the purpose of law librarianship as legal information literacy has the potential to unnecessarily restrict the role of the law librarian. Defining the purpose of law librarianship with the more limited term of “legal information literacy” also has the potential to undermine the good work being done by all law librarians. By using the broader concept of legal literacy, there is no confusion about whether a law librarian must be engaged only in instructional activities.

¶51 Adopting legal literacy as the core purpose of librarianship may not be an easy change to make. However, one must also consider the alternatives. If law librarians do not come together in a proactive way to alter the view of law librarianship, then the profession is at risk. When considering the risk versus benefit

82. See Holly Ricco, *Getting the Most from Major Associations, Publications, and Conferences*, in *LAW LIBRARIANSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE*, *supra* note 7, at 282–84 (for a short discussion on getting started with social media).

equation, Bill Crowley argues that one must consider the double standard proposed by Garrett Hardin, which suggests, “New proposals can be rejected over a single flaw, while the status quo will continue to be accepted despite numerous problems ‘while we wait for a perfect proposal.’”⁸³ So the question is, should any counterargument prevent law librarians from uniting and declaring their purpose? No, there is no counterargument for sustaining the status quo.

Conclusion

¶52 Law librarianship has an undeserved reputation for being rooted in the costly world of print resources and not adapting to the evolving digital world of legal information. The profession must be proactive in reshaping these beliefs to highlight the actual work being done by law librarians across a myriad of law libraries. Law librarianship must create a clear and powerful message of purpose to counter inaccurate beliefs that jeopardize individual jobs and the entire profession. Legal literacy is the core mission that encompasses all law librarians. We need to unite and carry that message forward, loud and clear, promoting what we already do for professionals and nonprofessionals with the goal of improving legal literacy, one person at a time.

83. Bill Crowley, *Advancing Professionalism in Library, Information, Knowledge, and Archival Services in the “New Normal World,”* in *DEFENDING PROFESSIONALISM*, *supra* note 43, at 201.