



2002

So You Want to Be a Writer

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AALL Spectrum, July, 2002, at 32.

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December 2009

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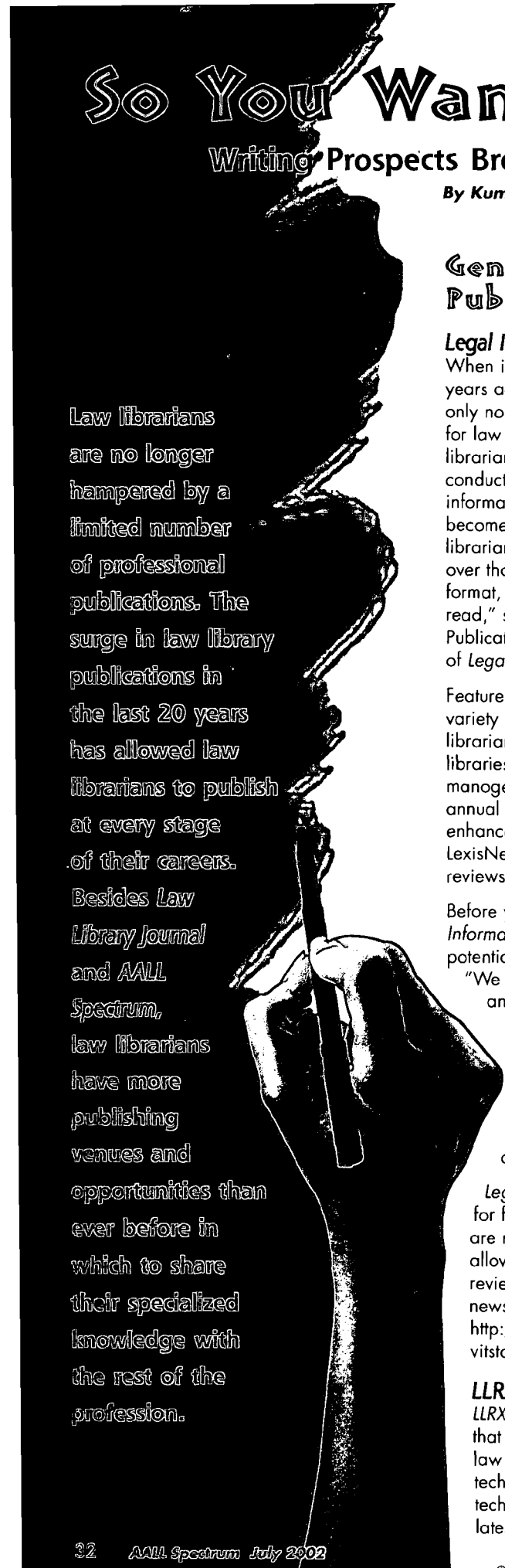
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So You Want to Be a Writer

Writing Prospects Broaden Among Law Library Publications

By Kumar Percy, Ted Potter and Miriam Murphy



Law librarians are no longer hampered by a limited number of professional publications. The surge in law library publications in the last 20 years has allowed law librarians to publish at every stage of their careers. Besides *Law Library Journal* and *AALL Spectrum*, law librarians have more publishing venues and opportunities than ever before in which to share their specialized knowledge with the rest of the profession.

General Interest Publications

Legal Information Alert

When it started publication more than 20 years ago, *Legal Information Alert* was the only non-association publication designed for law librarians. Targeted toward law librarians and anyone who regularly conducts legal research or manages legal information centers, the newsletter has become a staple publication among law librarians. "Our readers tell us over and over that they appreciate the newsletter format, because it is portable and quick to read," says Danna Tuke Heroy of Alert Publications, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Legal Information Alert*.

Feature articles have covered a wide variety of topics important to law librarians, such as legislation affecting libraries, research techniques and management. *Alert* also publishes an annual review of additions and enhancements made to Westlaw and LexisNexis™ as well as book and product reviews.

Before you submit an article to *Legal Information Alert*, Heroy suggests that potential writers discuss topics with her.

"We prefer that authors contact us with an idea or interest in writing.

I like to talk to potential authors first to get a sense about the idea,"

Heroy says. "I always have a handful of ideas that

I want explored for our readers, but some of our best ideas have come from the authors themselves."

Legal Information Alert pays authors for feature articles. Although reviewers are not paid, the authors are usually allowed to keep the products they review. For more information, visit the newsletter's Web site at http://www.alertpub.com/vitstat_lia.html.

LLRX.com

LLRX.com is a free Web-based journal that works with nationally renowned law librarians, attorneys, information technology specialists and legal technology consultants to provide the latest news on Internet research and

technology-related issues, applications, resources and tools.

Launched in 1996 by law librarians Sabrina I. Pacifici and Cindy L. Chick, the webzine includes feature articles and commentaries on technology and legal research; news on congressional activities that involve technology, research and libraries; international and comparative law guides by authors worldwide; technology-training resources; seminar materials and presentations from leading legal and library-related technology conferences; and "LLRX Buzz," a weekly column on legal research resources. The site also publishes reviews of software and online legal applications and database services; resources for intranets, Web sites and knowledge management systems; and books on legal technology and library technology topics. *LLRX.com* also provides daily news updates on technology, legislation, search engines, e-government initiatives and new online services.

Pacifici, managing editor/publisher and Web manager of *LLRX.com*, and Chick, co-editor and co-publisher, accept completed original articles and work with authors to fine-tune content, such as suggesting additional sources and links. The journal releases two issues each month, on the first and 15th. Because of its demanding bimonthly publication schedule, "We are very flexible in terms of quick turnaround for articles on breaking issues, innovative services, and issues of importance to the community," Pacifici says. For more information on *LLRX.com*, go to <http://www.llrx.com>.

Subject-Specific Publications

Legal Reference Services Quarterly

Legal Reference Services Quarterly is a scholarly journal that addresses the day-to-day problems and issues law librarians encounter in reference and public services. While most articles are written in an academic journal style with citations, *LRSQ* also publishes humorous, critical, and nuts-and-bolts articles.

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LRSQ regularly publishes thematic issues. Previous topics have included emerging solutions in reference service, public services issues with rare and archival law materials, and teaching legal research. Future thematic issues will include collection development in the digital age and a 50-state survey on per-statehood legal research.

The journal also includes practical professional tools for reference services, such as bibliographies, research guides, book reviews, and question-and-answer columns.

"I'm always looking for good articles, research guides, etc.," says Michael Chiorazzi, editor of LRSQ. "Feel free to contact me about article ideas." He invites authors to send him early drafts and ask him about writing for LRSQ. For more information about LRSQ, go to <http://www.haworthpressinc.com/store/product.asp?sku=J113>.

Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing

Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing is a newsletter for legal research and legal writing instructors and law firm and law school librarians.

"[The newsletter is a] multidisciplinary forum for discussing the teaching of legal research and writing, focusing on research materials, tools and theories," says Mary Hotchkiss, editor of *Perspectives*. "*Perspectives* encourages collaboration among teachers of legal research and writing, whether they are librarians or law faculty." The newsletter has covered trends in electronic legal research, solutions to legal research problems, and recently published legal research and writing resources. It also publishes regular columns about thorny issues in curricular design, teachable moments for students, writing tips and technology for teaching.

All articles in *Perspectives* follow "an informal prose style," rather than a "dense, law review or academic journal style," according to its style sheet. The newsletter's author's guide and style sheet are available on the Web at <http://www.westgroup.com/customerservice/newsletters/articles/perspectives/perstyle.asp>.

Hotchkiss welcomes inquiries from authors who want to discuss ideas for future articles. For more information about this publication, go to the *Perspectives* Web site at <http://www.westgroup.com/customerservice/newsletters/perspectives/>.

Research Advisor

Research Advisor is a newsletter that covers research techniques and tips aimed at legal practitioners. Unlike its sister publication *Legal Information Alert*, *Research Advisor* does not assume that the readers have the skills and knowledge of professional law librarians. Topics include research tips, pointers about information management, and review of legal research tools. *Research Advisor* is always looking for writers to submit professional product reviews. For more information about this publication, go to the *Research Advisor* Web site go to <http://www.alertpub.com/hpra.html>.

AALL SIS Publications

AALL's 13 Special Interest Sections are each devoted to a specialized area of law librarianship. Every SIS publishes a newsletter featuring short practical and theoretical articles. In addition, the publications often include editorials and report on conferences, meetings, and SIS events. For more information about each of the Special Interest Sections, go to <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/>.

Local and Regional Publications

AALL Chapter Publications

AALL also sponsors 31 local and regional chapters, and most publish newsletters. The newsletters often feature short practical articles and longer theoretical pieces related to legal and library issues of that region. These local and regional publications are also interested in reports from library conferences and other educational events. For more information about AALL chapters, go to <http://aallhq.org/public/chapters.asp>.

Competitions

The library profession sponsors several writing competitions that recognize valuable professional writing. For example, the AALL/LexisNexis™ Call for Papers Awards honor three authors of scholarly papers with a cash prize of \$750 each. (Co-authors of winning papers share the award.) Winners get the opportunity to present their papers to their colleagues at the AALL Annual Meeting. The winning papers are also considered for publication in *Law Library Journal*. For more information about the competition, go to http://www.aallnet.org/about/award_call_for_papers.asp.

Other Suggestions and Considerations from Editors

The most common question about publishing is how to pick a topic. Read as much professional literature as possible — it's the best way to learn about new issues in law librarianship and see examples of good writing, says Frank Houdek, editor of *Law Library Journal*.

Many editors suggest that authors consult them before writing about a topic and keep in contact while writing their articles. Editors can help potential authors select and refine their article ideas. During the writing process, editors guide authors to ensure that their articles meet the needs of the publication and its audience.

Editors also suggest that librarians start their publishing career by submitting short pieces to newsletters, such as the AALL SIS and chapter publications. Potential writers may want to consider writing reports on conferences and reviews on products, books and research guides for these newsletters. Or librarians may want to consider publishing short news pieces during the process of writing a large research article. For example, if a newsletter publishes a short overview of an ongoing research project, the feedback from the shorter piece could help the author publish the final article in a scholarly publication.

Regardless of the topic and publication, authors should always submit their articles by the assigned deadline, Heroy says.

Sharpen Your Pencils

The ever-increasing number of publications in law librarianship makes it possible for new or experienced law librarians in any field to be published. Whether it's a first-person account of making the transition from library student to law librarian or a scholarly paper on the problematic citing of Web sources in law review articles, venues exist for publishing compelling articles on law librarianship. So sharpen your pencil and prepare to write that first draft.

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