

“[W]e felt that a “what you need to know” list would have more credibility if it came from frontline firm librarians instead of the law school librarians the students were so used to hearing.”

## THE TOP 10 THINGS FIRM LIBRARIANS WISH SUMMER ASSOCIATES KNEW

BY KELLY BROWNE<sup>1</sup>

*Kelly Browne is Head of Reference Services at the University of Connecticut School of Law Library in Hartford.*

For our first “Bridge the Gap” session here at the University of Connecticut School of Law (presented in conjunction with the Career Services office), we decided to grab the summer clerks’ attention by beginning the hour-long class with a graded “pre-test.” If all went as planned, they would fail the pre-test and then be so desperate to know the right answers that they would fall all over each other to hear what we had to say. In essence, we hoped to generate our own “teachable moment.”

In developing the pre-test, we felt that a “what you need to know” list would have more credibility if it came from frontline firm librarians instead of the law school librarians the students were so used to hearing. So I posted a message to law-lib, the law librarians’ discussion list, asking firm librarians for the “top 10 things” they wished their summer associates knew. The list was fairly easy to compile because most of the responses were eerily similar.<sup>2</sup>

### The Top 10

In true Letterman style, here is the countdown on the “top 10 things law firm librarians wish summer associates knew.”

**Number 10... Computerized research costs money.** “I had a summer associate print out the Taxpayer Relief Act from LEXIS last year when we had several copies in the library and he could

have gotten it off the Web for free. Westlaw and LEXIS have many different pricing plans—tell them to find out in the first three days which plan their firm has.”

**Number 9... Looseleafs are great resources.** “Tell them when to use looseleafs instead of Westlaw or LEXIS. Tell them how to use them, e.g., tell them there’s a difference between a page number and a paragraph number.”

**Number 8... Saying thank you to the support staff and librarians is a great way to be remembered** (“and helped out when you are in a jam or trying to get something done yesterday”).

**Number 7... Don’t be afraid to ask questions**—of the firm librarian and the assigning attorney. “The only stupid question is the one you don’t ask. Sometimes you don’t even know enough to ask, that’s why you go learn something and come back and ask more questions.”

**Number 6... Librarians are your friends,** your “information partners,” “on your side,” “here to make you look like stars,” “helpful and knowledgeable and willing to help.”

**Number 5... Know about the state administrative code** (“What is it? How does it relate to the state’s version of the *Federal Register*?”) and state legislative history (“Know how to do it.”).

**Number 4... Not everything is online;** LEXIS and Westlaw do not hold all the answers. So “know how to use the books!”

**Number 3... Practice guides are fantastic,** but “there are few forms written exactly the way you want to them. Use your common sense.”

**Number 2... Don’t forget administrative law decisions.** Know what they are, how they are published, and who publishes them.

And, if I may have a drum roll, please . . . the number one thing firm librarians wish summer associates knew . . . **How to use the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).** “Know what it is, how it is laid out, and how it is updated. Know how CFR sections relate to the *Federal Register*, to statutes, and to administrative agency pronouncements. Finally, know the difference between a statute and a regulation.”

<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank the following librarians for their contributions to this article: Steven Anderson, Gretchen Asmuth, Carol Bean, Laura Bell, Donna Cavallini, David Clark, Cynthia David, Nanna Frye, Melanie Kelley, Mindy Klansky, Peg LaFrance, Victoria Lynch, Mary Mahoney, Lynn Merring, Sheryll Rappaport, David Rogers, Barbara Selby, Staci Steadman, Carrie Utterback, and Cindy Weller.

<sup>2</sup> The “Research Skills Pre-Test” that we developed with the assistance of these responses is included as an appendix to this article.

## Honorable Mentions

Never let it be said that librarians don't have a sense of humor (or of the absurd). Herewith, the "top five honorable mentions."

*Number 5* ... "Pizza does not make a good bookmark!"

*Number 4* ... "Joining the Century Club by getting 100 Zagat stars in restaurant reviews sounds like fun ... but gets noticed every year."

*Number 3* ... **Golf**. "It may be the key to your success. Learn the lingo, learn how to lose to the partner by two strokes."

*Number 2* ... "If you are **ironing your own shirt**, work inward from the corner of the collar to avoid odd wrinkles."

And the most frequent response to any discussion list survey ... *Number 1* ... "I'm doing a similar seminar. Can you please summarize the results of your survey for the list?"

## Conclusion

We may have to revise our idea about the pre-test. There are enough issues in item number 10 alone to fill up the hour we have scheduled for our session. But the exercise does show that there is a desperate need for some sort of training to "bridge the gap" between what our students learn in first-year legal research and writing classes and what they need to know in order to practice law effectively.

## Appendix

### University of Connecticut School of Law Library Success on Your Summer/Permanent Job

#### Research Skills Pre-Test

- A search on Westlaw costs:
  - Approximately \$4 per minute
  - Depends whether pricing plan is flat rate, transactional, or hourly
  - Depends on which database you run the search in
  - All of the above
- A reference to 85 Lab. L. Rep. (CCH) 187 is a reference to a:
  - Page number
  - Headnote number
  - Paragraph number
  - None of the above

3. Before you leave the assigning attorney's office, you should know the following about your assignment:

- How much time to spend on it
- What format it should be in
- When it is due
- Whether you can use LEXIS or Westlaw
- Which jurisdiction controls
- All of the above

4. Your best friend in a law firm is:

- The other summer associates
- The hiring committee
- Your senior associate mentor
- The librarian(s)

5. The *Federal Register* is to the *Code of Federal Regulations* what the:

- Statutes at Large* is to the U.S.C.
- GSCA is to the Conn. Pub. Acts
- Conn. Agencies Regs. is to the Conn. L.J.
- None of the above

\*\*\*\*\*

1. Final Connecticut state agency regulations first appear in/on:

- Connecticut Law Journal*
- Connecticut Law Tribune*
- Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies*
- Westlaw and/or LEXIS

2. Match the following items of legislative history with the sources in which they appear:

- |                             |                                                                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a) Hearings                 | 1) <i>U.S. Code Congressional &amp; Administrative News</i> <sup>®</sup> |
| b) Floor debates            | 2) CIS microfiche                                                        |
| c) House and Senate reports | 3) <i>Congressional Record</i>                                           |

3. The best place to do research on Connecticut state legislative history is:

- UConn School of Law Library
- The Internet
- The Connecticut State Library
- LEXIS and/or Westlaw

.....

4. If you were stranded on a desert island but knew you were going to have to appear in a Connecticut state court tomorrow (a magic carpet will transport you there and back after your appearance) and could only choose one set of books to have with you, would it be:

- a) West's Connecticut Practice Series
- b) Connecticut Practice Book Annotated, with Forms
- c) Official Connecticut Practice Book
- d) Connecticut Legal Forms

5. Federal administrative decisions can be found in/on:

- a) LEXIS and/or Westlaw
- b) The Internet
- c) Official agency reporters
- d) Commercial reporters

© 2000 Kelly Browne

# PERSPECTIVES

Teaching Legal Research and Writing

All articles copyright 2000 by West Group, except where otherwise expressly indicated. Except as otherwise expressly provided, the author of each article in this issue has granted permission for copies of that article to be made for classroom use, provided that (1) copies are distributed at or below cost, (2) author and journal are identified, (3) proper notice of copyright is affixed to each copy, and (4) the editor of *Perspectives* is notified of the use. For articles in which it holds copyright, West Group grants permission for copies to be made for classroom use under the same conditions.

The trademarks used herein are the trademarks of their respective owners.  
West Group trademarks are used herein under license.



© 2000 West Group

9-9343-8/7-00  
1-791-700-5



Yes, I would like to start receiving *PERSPECTIVES* — Free.

Yes, I would like to change my *PERSPECTIVES* distribution.



Account number \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)  
(first nine digits on your mailing label)

Name *(please print)* \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SEND ADDITIONAL **FREE** COPIES OF *PERSPECTIVES* TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL(S):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE **REMOVE** THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL(S) FROM THE MAILING LIST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_