

MINUTES
Connecticut Judicial Branch
Law Library Advisory Committee
September 28, 2007

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Library Advisory Committee met on Friday, September 28, 2007 at the Quinnipiac University School of Law Library, 275 Mount Carmel Avenue, Hamden, Connecticut in the law library conference room, LL241.

Present

Hon. Joseph P. Flynn, Chair
Hon. William J. Lavery
Hon. Peter E. Wiese
Mr. William H. Clendenen, Jr.
Mr. Robert Cooney
Ms. Ann DeVeaux
Mr. Blair S. Kauffman
Ms. Darcy Kirk
Mr. William P. Yelenak

Absent

Hon. Jon C. Blue
Hon. Theodore R. Tyma

Other Attendees

Ms. Faith P. Arkin
Ms. Maureen D. Well

The chair of the committee, Judge Flynn, called the meeting to order at 1:25 p.m. He introduced the two new committee members, Judge Lavery and Judge Wiese.

I. Approval of Minutes.

Minutes from the May 11, 2007 Law Library Advisory Committee meeting were approved without any changes or corrections. Judge Lavery abstained from the vote because he was not present at the May meeting.

II. Public Service and Trust Commission.

Ms. Arkin provided a brief report on the Public Service and Trust Commission that was appointed by Chief Justice Rogers. A copy of the press release was included as a handout in the meeting packet. The following was highlighted.

The Commission is chaired by Appellate Court Judge Alexandra DiPentima and consists of a diverse panel of forty-two individuals. It is charged with creating a Strategic Plan for the Judicial Branch that will guide it through the upcoming years.

The Strategic Plan will include a vision for the future of the Judicial Branch, a revised mission statement, and specific and measurable outcome goals. The Plan will lead to improved services and ultimately enhanced public trust. This initiative is another measure taken by the Chief Justice to fulfill her vision of an open, transparent, and accountable judiciary.

As stated in the press release, the Commission has been asked to:

- Examine public perceptions of our state judicial system,
- Conduct scientifically-valid opinion research to determine the level of satisfaction of people who use the court system,
- Hold public hearings throughout the state to obtain citizen input; and
- Conduct focus groups of court personnel, lawyers, and others who are involved with the court system.

The *focus group* is just one of several approaches designed to ascertain the wants and needs of the Branch's stakeholders. Stakeholders are the public, lawyers, victims, non-profits, community-based agencies, other state agencies, law enforcement officials, legislators, etc. Judicial Branch staff and judges are also stakeholders and will participate in focus groups, but the primary emphasis is on improving services to the public. Ms. Arkin noted that to date, over 20 focus groups have been conducted.

Judge Flynn asked that the attorneys who are members of the Law Library Advisory Committee be invited to a focus group. He also mentioned the importance of "focusing on cases."

Judge Flynn then stated that Sandi Phillips, Hartford Law Librarian, will be leaving state service in October to take a position with the federal court. He requested a motion to commend Ms. Phillips for her outstanding service to the bench and bar, and he asked that she be given a resolution expressing the Law Library Advisory Committee's appreciation for her dedication and commitment. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

III. Law Library System User Survey.

Ms. Well indicated that a Law Library System User Survey was conducted from July 2 through September 14, 2007. It was noted that this survey began before the Chief Justice announced her initiative. The New Haven Law Library received the highest number of returned surveys. (The librarians there were very proactive about requesting that library patrons fill out the survey form). Although 518 or 92% of the "in-library" users rated the overall service that they received as excellent, Ms. Well found that the user comments were even more valuable than

the quantifiable results. Although the survey is not scientifically valid, the results are very informative. Now that the survey period has ended, Ms. Well will meet with staff from each of the law libraries to review the suggestions made and have a dialogue about library operations. Attorney Clendenen noted how very important the law libraries are to solo practitioners. Ms. Well added that the treatise collections and other secondary sources are invaluable to the smaller law firms who often lack these resources.

IV. Operations Update.

Ms. Well reported on the operations of the Law Library System. With the resignation of Sandi Phillips, authorization was requested and approved to fill the vacancy. A classified ad will appear in the Sunday, September 30, Hartford Courant. Also, interviews will commence on October 1 for a vacant Stamford Law Librarian position. There is one other vacancy at the Norwich Law Library. Coverage is being provided by rotating staff.

Ms. Well discussed the average usage statistics per year for the Law Library System (handout IV.a.). The website is heavily used, receiving 480,000 visits per year. “In-house patron use” has declined over the past 15 years, but the “traffic count” still averages 250,000 per year. The E-Research Tower averages 400 hours of usage per week (Monday-Friday). Judge Flynn requested that the usage statistics be sent to Judge DiPentima so that they can be shared with the members of the Public Service and Trust Commission.

Ms. Well reviewed a snapshot of the Judicial Branch website usage report for the law library pages which is produced by WebTrends (handout IV.b). The visits, page views and hits trends have all increased significantly over the past two years.

Ms. Well discussed the reference survey (handout IV.c.) which was conducted during a two week period in September, 2007. It was noted that questions from private attorneys have decreased since 1998, while questions from pro se litigants and members of the public have increased. During the 2007 sample period, 1,696 questions were answered. E-mail reference has now become a part of the daily workload of law librarians, whereas staff did not have this component in 1998.

Attorney Clendenen observed that fewer private attorneys are physically in courthouses these days because there has been a major shift downward in the number of reasons why an attorney must appear in court. More matters are “non arguable,” so fewer attorneys are required to go to the courthouse. One committee member mentioned that parking is often a problem for those going to court. Mr. Kaufmann added that on the federal level, there is less traffic in federal

courts, in part due to the availability of online access to court documents. Attorney Yelenak mentioned that the Judicial Branch's Civil Commission has recognized that as technology advances, fewer people will need to physically travel to a courthouse. In addition to the impact on law libraries, this trend has also had the cumulative effect of diminishing the relationships between Clerk's Office staff and attorneys.

Ms. Well then reviewed the Law Library System's budget (handout IV.d.) and thanked Judge Lavery for his strong support. Attorney Clendenen remarked on the wonderful job that has been done by Judge Support Services administrators who advocate for adequate funding for the libraries.

Ms. Well discussed the educational programs that are being offered in three courthouse locations this fall entitled, "Connecticut Legal Research and Courthouse Resources for New and Experienced Attorneys." To date, 78 individuals have registered to attend either in Hartford, Bridgeport or Norwich.

Ms. Well highlighted the calendar that was designed last year as a marketing tool for some law libraries. All of the libraries will make the calendar available in 2008. Lastly, Ms. Well described an initiative undertaken by Janet Zigadto, a Law Librarian in New Haven, who heard a news report about the establishment of a Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance Hotline. She called the Banking Department to let the hotline staff know that the law libraries have foreclosure information at their website, as well as in their collections that can assist the public with this particular problem. The hotline staff were most appreciative, and were sent library brochures plus other material about the libraries.

V. Strategic Plan.

Judge Flynn announced that he will be meeting with the Chief Justice next week and will take this opportunity to discuss the work of the Advisory Committee and the law libraries. He asked whether the committee had any other suggestions for amendments to the Minimum Collection Standards or the Strategic Plan. The Advisory Committee unanimously agreed to adopt the revised Strategic Plan and the Minimum Collection Standards, including the two bibliographies (criminal and civil). Judge Flynn requested that a resolution be drafted for vote by the Supreme Court to approve the Strategic Plan and Minimum Collection Standards.

IV. New Business.

No new business was discussed.

VI. Future Meetings and Adjournment.

Ms. Well was asked to work with Ms. DeVeaux to establish meeting dates in February, May and October. It was agreed that Friday afternoons worked best for members of the committee. The last item was a suggestion to explore whether a newspaper, such as the Hartford Courant, might be interested in doing a story about the excellent services provided by the law libraries. Judge Flynn acknowledged the suggestion.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen D. Well
Secretary