

# Bridging the Information Gap: Librarians Offer Sources To Satisfy Topical Needs

by Gail F. Zwirner

Librarians frequently hear suggestions from patrons about gaps in legal literature. We've tackled many researchers' needs and requests. Not long ago, only a couple of decades of Virginia's court decisions were available online. Researchers now take database content for granted. Virginia's librarians strongly encouraged LexisNexis and Westlaw to add comprehensive case law coverage for the commonwealth and led both vendors to expand coverage nationwide. Attorneys practicing in regulatory areas worked without a code until 1995. Librarians spearheaded that project, too. This issue of *Virginia Lawyer*, which features articles written by law librarians, responds to some of those researchers' requests for topical information.

As more practitioners become comfortable with Internet searching, a frequently asked question at the reference desk is "Where can I find such-and-such title on the Web?" Online and Internet sources are no longer new to legal researchers, but the expectations for accessibility and delivery are expanding. Publishers responded by offering access to many research tools in multiple formats, but as the Internet has become the standard for delivery, the days of totally free access to Web sites are over. These articles suggest options for access. Lyn Warmath's survey of Virginia legal research sources responds to a question frequently asked by many library patrons: "Isn't everything free on the Web?"

Hazel L. Johnson returns to *Virginia Lawyer* with an article entitled "Locating and Identifying Expert Witnesses."

Rodney A. Smolla, dean of the University of Richmond Law School, suggested that many attorneys have a "science knowledge gap" when faced with complex litigation, and he provides guidance in this research area.

Paul Barron from the University of Mary Washington reviews online science sources and suggests ways to refine Internet "surfing" skills.

Kent C. Olson outlines employment law sources. This is an area of law where Virginia practitioners contribute significantly to the literature through the Virginia Law Foundation's continuing legal education series.

Virginia environmental law research is covered by Jennifer Sekula. She shows how to combine print and Internet research for the most effective approach in this specialty practice area.

Our feature article is an interview by Gail Warren, Supreme Court of Virginia law librarian, with Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell Sr. He shares his thoughts on the court's responsibilities to disseminate legal information. Warren has worked on other information accessibility issues, including the court's development of its Web site at <http://www.courts.state.va.us/scv/home.html> and, more recently, the Virginia State Bar's project to provide online legal research access to Virginia practitioners.

We hope you benefit from our contributions. If you have suggestions for future articles, please send them to me at [gzwirner@richmond.edu](mailto:gzwirner@richmond.edu).



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