

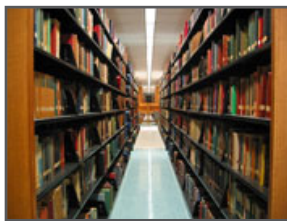


Feature

Becoming a Law Librarian

By Charisse Dengler

Love the smell of legal texts in the morning? Maybe you should consider becoming a law librarian! Law librarians work in law schools, law firms, and government law libraries; and even though the word "librarian" may also bring to mind the word "boring," the job of a law librarian is anything but dull.



Trained in legal research (including the use of online databases such as Westlaw, Lexis, and Dialog), administration, legal information systems, bibliography, and the organization of legal resources, law librarians are the well-trained professionals working behind

the scenes on every major court case, for every major corporation, and at every law school across the nation.

Often overlooked, these talented individuals know just about everything there is to know about legal research; and if utilized to their full potential, they can be extremely helpful to attorneys and law students alike.

How, exactly, do you become a law librarian? The most common way is to get a library science master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). Some law librarians also have J.D. degrees, and some programs even give students the option of earning a J.D. and a library science degree at the same time.

While you don't need a J.D. to work as a librarian in a law firm, corporation, or government library, you do need one if you aspire to be the director of the law library at a law school. Also, reference librarians at law schools are sometimes required to have J.D.s. You should check with the particular school you are interested in working at for more information. Simply having a J.D. will not qualify you for all law librarianship positions.

Some of the common library science degrees are the Master of Library and Information Science (M.L.S.) degree, Master of Library and Information Studies (M.L.I.S.) degree, Master of Science in Information Systems (M.S. in I.S.) degree, and Master of Arts in Library Science (M.A. in L.S.) degree. Any of these degrees would satisfy the basic requirements for becoming an entry-level law librarian.

If you are considering becoming a law librarian, it's important to begin by getting some experience actually working in a law library. Not only will this help you make certain this is a career you want to pursue, but it will also give you the experience you will need if you aren't planning on getting a J.D. The profession of law librarianship requires extensive knowledge of legal terms, citations, and abbreviations, in addition to general librarian skills. For this reason, you should either intern at a law library or, if your program offers them, take some law librarian courses in addition to your required library science degree requirements.

All in all, there are 51 ALA-approved library science programs to choose from. The top three, according to the 2007 *U.S. News and World Report* directory entitled *America's Best Graduate Schools*, are at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Syracuse University in New York. If you'd like more information on these and other programs listed in the directory, you can purchase it here:

http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/lib/brief/lib_brief.php.

When applying to library science programs, you should check the individual schools' admission requirements. Generally, you will be required to have a bachelor's degree and at least a "B" grade point average. Some schools also require you to earn a certain score on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). However, some schools will accept LSAT test scores in the place of GRE scores, and some schools do not require you to take any entrance exams at all. You may also have to provide letters of recommendation or take part in entrance interviews.

When enrolling in a library science program, you should be prepared to spend at least one year in school at full-time attendance. Many programs can be completed in this amount of time. There are some, however, that take two years to complete, and some even require a thesis. You should check



Feature

with different schools regarding their requirements and the length of time you will have to commit to their programs before making your final decision.

When it comes to finding the time to take part in a library science program, it may be a good idea to consider attending as a part-time student instead of as a full-time student. If you attend school part-time, it may take you longer to earn your degree, but it will be helpful if you are working full-time

while going to school. Also, you can look into distance learning opportunities offered by various library programs.

When it comes to financing your library science degree, there are a number of scholarship options available. The American Association of Law Libraries, the Special Libraries Association, and the ALA all offer scholarships to library science students. More information on these scholarships can be found on the associations' websites.

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.