

# **NEWSLETTER**

**A Publication of the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association**



## A Column of Content

<b>Member News</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Spring Luncheon</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Binding Leadership Beyond Libraries</b>	<b>6</b>
By Britiny Hommey	6
<b>Mansmann Library Hosts Law Librarian Association</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Summer Camp for Genealogists</b>	<b>9</b>
By Linda Tashbook	9
<b>AALL Highlights</b>	<b>10</b>
By Britiny Hommey	10
<b>Put Pen to... Email?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>From the Shelf</b>	<b>12</b>
A Selection of Recent Reads	12
<b>Last Call for Comment</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>WPLLA Contacts</b>	<b>14</b>

---

# Member News

As spring shifts to summer there's a buzz in the air - a hum of excitement - as days become longer than our TBR lists. The anticipation for things to come is almost tangible. Will my library be the one to win this grant? Will my proposal be accepted for the upcoming conference? Will I get that board seat? How much did I check off my 'to-do' list today? Can I get my inbox down to zero unread emails? No matter the size of your goal, I hope you put in as much effort as you can.

- April was National Poetry Month. Also within April was National Library Week - April 6th-12th! The theme for this year was, "Drawn to the Library," and many patrons were asked what 'draws' them in - the answers were many:
  - "You can't find this book online!"
  - "The database service on the computers is incredibly useful."
  - "I'm just looking for a quiet space at the moment."
  - "I'm returning my public library book - can I do that here\*?" "Yes!" \*totally dependent on the library/system
  - "I'm looking for legal help. How can I contact an attorney?" "Here are some local legal resources that can help."
- The Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association gives an AALL Scholarship every other year to a newer WPLLA member. This scholarship has officially been renamed "The Debra May AALL Conference Memorial Scholarship" in remembrance of Debra May Pfeifer's legacy to WPLLA, as we lost her this past year.
- WPLLA was recently informed about a \$250 donation for 2025 AALL Conference expenses provided by Joel Fishman. If there's someone in WPLLA who is attending AALL **this year** in Portland, Oregon and is interested, please send an email to WPLLA President Britiny Hommey by **June 27th**. Note the conference dates are July 19th – 22nd.
- The deadline to respond to the Volunteer Sign-Up for WPLLA's Pittsburgh Prison Book Project packing session is **June 20th** - volunteers can sign up at the following link:  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfW2sPOcFqkJwru2LiAxTWfZ-vqUu2DeXfZXIspZBcEzi-fzA/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=101771287380929523739>

Enjoy the issue. Thank you, again, to everyone who's assisted. Here's to many more. - Britiny

# Spring Luncheon

WPLLA held its annual Spring Luncheon on May 22nd at McCormick & Schmick's in Pittsburgh which was sponsored by Thomson Reuters. TR representative Jane gave some great insight into what's new with Thomson Reuters and what to expect down the road, especially regarding CoCounsel and its recent integration with Microsoft's Copilot.

In addition to hearing from Jane, McCormick & Schmick's provided a delicious array of food with a bevy of options. In closing, the election results for the WPLLA Board for the 2025-2026 year were announced! Below are some images from the event. For anyone who was not able to attend the Luncheon this year, or if you missed the email, here are the election results:

- President- Britiny Hommey, Beaver County Law Library
- Immediate Past President- Victoria Swindle, Steptoe & Johnson PLLC
- Vice-President/President-Elect- Daniel Parker, 3rd Circuit Court
- Secretary- Shannon Barron, Allegheny County Law Library
- Treasurer- Jamie Knizner, Washington County Courts
- Member- At-Large- Katie Lynch, Thomas R. Kline School of Law, Duquesne University



Pictured: Jane Lippman presenting at the front of the room. Title slide reads: CoCounsel 2025 Roadmap. Wide angle to show participants.





Pictured: Close up of Jane presenting at front of house.



Pictured from L-R: WPLLA Board (2025-26) Vice-President- Daniel Parker, Immediate Past President- Victoria Swindle, President- Britiny Hommey, Secretary- Shannon Barron, Treasurer- Jamie Knizner



Pictured: Salmon on a bed of ancient grains, walnut and feta salad with a vinaigrette, and to top it off, coffee accompanied by crème brûlée & berries (though I heard the cheesecake was delicious too!)

A huge thank you to everyone who voted, sponsored, or supported WPLLA this past year. Enjoy the summer and we'll meet back up in September.



---

# Binding Leadership Beyond Libraries

By Britiny Hommey

## Beginning

In May of 2025 I was fortunate enough to attend the Director's Institute in Harrisburg through the Pennsylvania Library Association's Academy of Leadership Studies. With just under 30 participants and mentors from all across Pennsylvania, the setting was quant, open, and welcoming.

One aspect about the program that I was very excited about was learning more about our CliftonStrengths®. Prior to attending the program, each individual was required to take a strengths test through Gallup® (known as the Clifton StrengthsFinder®). The top five results were then discussed at the Director's Institute with the lovely Jolene Pickens. Jolene did a fantastic job at informing us about utilizing our strengths individually and as a team.

## Breakdown

Before I explore my results, I'd like to note that each strength is part of one of four themes: Relationship Building, Influencing, Executing, and Strategic Thinking. The purpose of the assessment was to see what our strengths are, how we can better our leadership skills and, ideally, implement actionable strategies for more favorable team outcomes.

My number one strength is Harmony® which means that I "look for consensus," and "don't enjoy conflict and would rather seek areas of agreement." I also have the Learner® strength in my top five which means that I "want to continuously improve." And "The process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites you." The others in my top five are: Input®, Intellection®, and Consistency®. Three out of my top five traits are within the Strategic Thinking domain, one is in Relationship Building, and another is in Executing.

While I'm not turning a blind eye to my weaknesses, I did notice that none of my top five strengths were in the Influencing category, which did not feel like a huge shocker to me. It would be ideal to have people on your team be strong in areas that you lack so the group can be as well-rounded as possible.

## Thoughts

One of the questions that Jolene asked during the program was, "What was your idea of a leader growing up?" Truthfully, my initial answer was someone who was loud – someone that others

listened to when they spoke. So, growing up, I never envisioned myself as a leader due to my quiet, overlooked nature. As a confident adult, I know that you don't need to be loud to be a leader. In fact, anyone (yes, anyone!) can be a leader, but the question should be: *how* do you lead?

If you've never taken the assessment, I'd highly recommend giving it a go. You may find that some make sense, or you could surprise yourself. Maybe you find that your favorite strength is also the one that could drive others crazy or even envious. I found that having the Harmony® strength made sense in my case because I try to find solutions for a group that appeases all parties. I've often found that my brain is guided with logic, so it felt 'on brand' for me to have a majority of traits be under the Strategic Thinking theme. My Consistency® is utilized on a daily basis. Having a routine is a necessity. I've established a standard approach for most procedures, but if a wrench is thrown into the plan, I'm able to adapt and shift after a moment of consideration – that's where my intellection and input come into play.

When I thought about my library's mission in relation to all this newfound information about me, it felt like a reframing of how I work within my own library. While my team may be miniscule, I can still show examples of leadership to those in other departments and stakeholders around me.

# Mansmann Library Hosts Law Librarian Association

Members of the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association (WPLLA) took a field trip to the Joseph F. Weis, Jr. United States Courthouse in Pittsburgh on April 17th, 2025. During their visit to the courthouse, members toured the recently completed and newly dedicated Carol Los Mansmann Library. Victoria Swindle (Steptoe & Johnson PLLC) WPLLA's Past President commented, "The Mansmann Library is a beautiful, modern law library that I hope many will take advantage of as a valuable resource."



The group later watched a short [biographic film](#) about the life and jurisprudence of Judge Mansmann, had a round table discussion of current topics in law librarianship, and enjoyed a dessert reception hosted by the Third Circuit's Pittsburgh librarian, Dan Parker.



---

# Summer Camp for Genealogists

By Linda Tashbook

A month or so ago, I heard from an office at Pitt that I never knew existed: Event Services. Apparently, they make arrangements with outside groups that want to host national conferences or other experiences on our campus. This summer, they have contracted to host the National Genealogical Society's GRIP Genealogy Institute which includes a one-week immersive course in Legal Research. The folks leading the legal research course met with me to arrange for their students to spend an afternoon at the Barco Law Library.

I went into this online video meeting prepared to offer them a dedicated reference desk at which I would efficiently search in some of our great electronic resources like dockets, property records, people finders, congressional and regulatory public hearings, etc. But, no. They want their students to look in old books. On top of that, they want me to present a lesson showing how we use law books for historical research. I thought of exactly one example during this meeting. It was an inquiry from two years ago that came in a phone message from an elderly woman in Philadelphia who had just learned that her sweet gentle daddy had, in 1927, served a thirty-day sentence at the Allegheny County Workhouse for vagrancy and she wanted to know what that was all about. I did find some contextual materials, like annual reports from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, in print here, but most of what I collected for this caller came from microfiche and databases.

Here's what makes this a WPLLA story: After the meeting, I thought of another example. Back when the gas companies started entering into fracking deals with landowners around Western Pennsylvania, a lot of people had to prove their connections to property. In response to a high demand for birth and death records and other evidence of family ties, the Washington County Law Library (WCLL) developed a significant specialization in genealogy research. That'll be a great second scenario for this group. I reached out to Jamie Knizner asking for copies of research guides that the WCLL might still have on file from that time and she quickly sent me the library's genealogy brochure.

My plan, at this point, is to put together a scavenger hunt in which the researchers will look for decisions in the Labor Arbitration Reports and the Pennsylvania District & County Reporter, a proclamation in one of the Pennsylvania Legislative Journals, Lobbyist content in the Federal Register, historical lawyer facts in Martindale Hubbell, citizen testimony in Pittsburgh's Municipal Record, and maybe a jury verdict or settlement. The genealogists won't be here until mid-July and I'm writing this article in late May, so if any others of you have some sources or examples to recommend, I would greatly appreciate it!

---

# AALL Highlights

By Britiny Hommey

A Message from the AALL President regarding the Institute of Museum and Library Services:

- AALL recently put out a survey to better understand the impact of IMLS funding on our members. Among the responses received, few reported receiving direct IMLS funding, and several indicated they partner with libraries that benefit from such funding. While these responses reflect some involvement with IMLS-supported initiatives, they suggest that the broader impact on our membership remains modest. We also recognize that IMLS funding has been restored for several libraries.
- Under the proposed federal budget currently awaiting Congressional approval, IMLS would receive \$6 million in funding, a significant decrease from the \$313 million allocated last year.
- Furthermore, for IMLS to continue operating, Congress must reauthorize the Museum and Library Services Act of 2018. At this point, the two court cases and even an amicus brief will not have an impact on the future of IMLS.

Renew your membership for AALL by July 31st for the 2025-2026 year. If you have any professional development proposals you can submit a webinar topic or share a coffee chat idea with AALL's growing community of experts. Thoughts and/or questions can be directed to [elarning@aall.org](mailto:elarning@aall.org).

The Foreign, Comparative, & International Law (FCIL-SIS) community is hosting a webinar titled: Effective Strategies for E-Resource Management in Academic Law Libraries: A Kenyan Perspective on **June 26th**. To learn more and register for the webinar, you can find the link [here](#). If you're a member of AALL, consider joining a Special Interest Section to expand your network.

Current AALL President Cornell Winston was recently featured on [Episode 292 of the LawNext podcast](#). Titled, "Why Librarians Should 'Be Bold,'" the episode fits right in with the 2025 conference theme (Be Bold). Winston discusses challenges and how critical it is for law librarians to, "have a seat at the table."

AALL invites all members to share their insights and experiences through the New Voices project. If you'd like to contribute your thoughts on any aspect of the legal information profession—including anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, and equity topics—please send your submission to Heather Haemker, director of marketing & communications, with the subject line "New Voices Project."

- Submissions should be between 100 and 600 words. Accepted posts are shared on Members Open Forum, in the Monthly eNewsletter, and on AALL's social media accounts (X, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram).

# Put Pen to... Email?

The past year was filled with association meet-ups, luncheons, a tour, and plenty of video conferences. WPLLA breaks for the summer and will resume monthly meetings come September. If there are suggestions as to what types of programming you'd like to see and experience (a meet up with GPLLA? A tour of another PA library? A webinar about preservation of resources? etc.), reach out to the WPLLA Board.

For those attending the 2025 American Association of Law Libraries Conference in Portland, Oregon: have fun, eat some great food, gain those connections, and especially share your experiences! If you're considering attending the conference next year, take some time to reflect on any AALL scholarships that could assist with expenses.

The next newsletter issue is expected to be published in late September, but note that submissions will not open until July. The editor will send an email to the WPLLA email list when submissions are open.



---

# From the Shelf

A Selection of Recent Reads<sup>1</sup>

- *Blood Over Bright Haven* by M.L. Wang
  - Britiny's thoughts: The beginning chapter is just as intense as the final chapter. This fiction book is reflective, diverse, sad, and fast-paced. Our main character for this story is a female magic user in a world full of predominantly male mages. There's character development paired with amazing storytelling. A truly unique novel with magic, outcasts, and archmages.
- *Ripe* by Sarah Rose Etter
  - Britiny's thoughts: When I finished this audiobook I knew I'd go out and buy it almost immediately. This book is very dark and incredibly sad and has a great representation of anxiety and depression. Cassie, a millennial, is a year into her dream job in Silicon Valley, CA and finds herself struggling with the reality of toxic bosses, poverty, drugs, and more. Accompanied by a black hole as long as she could remember, it feeds on her distress, growing and shrinking as Cassie's life progresses. It pulls Cassie closer as the world around her unravels.
- *Waking Up* by Sam Harris
  - Anonymous' thoughts: This nonfiction read is penned by *New York Times* bestselling author and neuroscientist, Sam Harris. *Waking Up* is part memoir and part exploration of the scientific underpinnings of spirituality. No other book marries contemplative wisdom and modern science in this way, and no author other than Sam Harris - a scientist, philosopher, and famous skeptic - could write it. The chapters are broken up nicely by sections which make this under 300-page book a swift read.
- *Failing Forward* by John C. Maxwell
  - Goodreads Description: The major difference between achieving people and average people is their perception of and response to failure. John C. Maxwell covers the top reasons people fail and shows how to master fear instead of being mastered by it. Listeners will discover that positive benefits can accompany negative experiences-if you have the right attitude. Chock full of action suggestions and real-life stories, *Failing Forward* will help men and women move beyond mistakes to fulfill their potential and achieve success.

---

<sup>1</sup> If you would like to suggest a book you have read recently (fiction, nonfiction, audiobook, etc.) send an email to Britiny Hommey; include in the subject line: **WPLLA Newsletter Book Suggestion**.

# Last Call for Comment



Just a couple librarians hanging out at the courthouse. Dan Parker and Dr. Joel Fishman attended a special presentation of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's President's Award to Hon. D. Michael Fisher at the Weis Federal Courthouse on June 12, 2025.

## June Job Highlights:

- We are delighted to report that we are hiring for two library faculty positions at the Thurgood Marshall Law Library at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. The Executive Director of Data & Educational Technologies (a new position reporting to the Associate Dean for Library & Technology, Kristina Alayan) and the Associate Director of Instruction, Research & Reference (reporting to the Executive Director of the Library, Liz Graham). Please share this with your networks and anyone who may be interested. Any questions can be sent directly to Kristina Alayan ([kalayan@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:kalayan@law.umaryland.edu)).
- Are you seeking to bring your talents to the heart of advocacy and public service? The Charles N. and Hilda H. M. Mason Law Library at the University of the District of Columbia's David A. Clarke School of Law is offering an exciting opportunity to join our team as an Access Services and Reference Librarian.

For future offers and information, consider subscribing to the WPLLA email. Contact WPLLA Webmaster for more information.

# WPLLA Contacts

Members: consider becoming an active part of our organization by assisting with the newsletter, or serving on our social media team. We promote our profession every day through educational events, forums, social events, and more.

## WPLLA Board and Committees 2025 - 2026

### President

Britiny Hommey

### Vice President

Daniel Parker

### Secretary

Shannon Barron

### Treasurer

Jamie Knizner

### Member-at-Large

Katie Lynch

### Immediate Past President

Victoria Swindle

### Webmaster

Linda Tashbook

### Newsletter Committee

Britiny Hommey (editor)

Daniel Parker

Victoria Swindle

A Column of Content is published online, quarterly, by the Western Pennsylvania Law Library Association

1 S. Main St. Ste. G004  
Washington, PA 15301

Authors submitting work to ACoC grant WPLLA a non-exclusive right to distribute the work.

Copyright remains with the author. Authors agree not to publish the work prior to publication in A Column of Content and agree to cite WPLLA's ACoC when publishing or sharing the work elsewhere.