



## member to member

### What strange, silly, or embarrassing situation happened early in your career?

"It's my first year as a law librarian. I'm working in a great Financial District law firm, and I want to impress everyone with my enthusiastic 'I can do anything' approach to the job. One of the big partners comes to see me. He has learned that he is featured in an upcoming *American Lawyer* story, and he wants to be the very first person in San Francisco to read it. Problem: He does not want to wait for it to arrive in our library. He asks me to drive to San Francisco International Airport that night and wait for the shipment from New York to arrive at the American Airlines freight terminal! When the shipment arrives, I am to beg, borrow, or steal a copy for the big partner. I politely decline and I am quite certain that my days at the firm are now numbered."

—**Mark E. Mackler**, supervising librarian at the California Department of Justice Office of the Attorney General Law Library in San Francisco

"Even with full-text of *California Code* on the California Legislature Web site, court personnel and police officers still routinely refer people to us to find out the code that they are charged with, and we read the caption to them over the phone.

"One night, I got a call from a woman who wanted to know her charge for California Penal Code Section 647f. I looked up and read to her the caption:

"Prostitution; accusatory pleading; previous sex offense conviction; blood test AIDS positive; felony."

"She was livid and shocked and insisted that I was joking. I told her I wasn't, and she hung up.

"It took me a while to figure out she must be calling for California Penal Code Section 647(f)—Disorderly Conduct/Public Intoxication—but omitted the parentheses over the phone. To this day, I still use this example to emphasize the importance of punctuation in legal research."

— **Wei-Yau Huang**, acting director of the Santa Clara County Law Library in San Jose, California

"Early in my career as a law librarian within a law firm, the managing partner asked me to stay late and retrieve every published case opined by a particular judge. It sounded simple enough; I formulated a search and ran his last name using the judge field. Finding about 50 cases, I printed all of them out and highlighted each, making sure the name and initials were correct. Feeling confident

that my work was complete, I left the materials on his chair (as requested) and left for the evening.

"At about 3 a.m., I received a call at home from the managing partner who proceeded to holler at me for 15 minutes questioning my results. The main reason for his tirade was that the cases I gave him covered more than 100 years. Unless the judge lived to be 150 years old, there is no way a single jurist can hear all of these cases.

"After recovering from the phone call, (and the ringing in my ears from his screaming), I left for the office, (probably the earliest I ever went to work in my life). Once at the office, I re-ran the search and contacted Westlaw to figure out what happened. They could not explain it either. Then I got the brilliant idea to check the



Mark E. Mackler

*Almanac of the Federal Judiciary* and learn about the judge. As it turned out, the judge of interest did sit on the bench for many years, however, his immediate predecessor was his father who shared the same exact name (without the Jr.). There was no way to determine from the results that there were two different judges!

"Upon finding this result, I waited outside of the partner's office until he arrived in the morning (about 6 a.m.) and explained the reason for the problem, with an apology. He was very impressed that I came in early, worked on the problem, and found the explanation. Later on in the day he announced to the partners and associates during a litigation meeting of the amazing abilities of the library and that they should use this resource more often. That's one way to market the library!"

— **David S. Byrne**, senior legal information specialist at a major international corporation and PhD candidate at the Long Island University School of Library and Information Science

"I cringe the most at memories of the time I taught an entire class with (unbeknownst to me) a big rip in the back of my pants, exposing my gaudy striped boxer shorts to the horrified students. Luckily I moved out of town a few months later."

— **Paul D. Healey**, senior reference librarian and associate professor of library administration at the University of Illinois At Urbana-Champaign Albert E. Jenner Memorial Law Library

"At age 26 I started my career in law librarianship as the acquisitions librarian at the University of Southern California Law Library. Within the first few months of my arrival, I was involved with answering the part of the ABA questionnaire pertaining to the collection. I was having difficulty with some of the questions and decided that the library director, Albert Brecht, could best help me.

"With questionnaire in hand, I knocked on Albert's office door. He welcomed me in, and after handing him a copy of what I was looking at, I proceeded to ask my question: 'Daddy, I don't understand the reasoning behind question X. Could you explain to me how we've answered this question in the past?' A smile brightened

across Albert's face and he just looked at me without answering. I did not initially realize what I had said. Then suddenly my brain woke up, and I realized that I had just called my boss 'Daddy'!

"Feeling totally humiliated and embarrassed, I apologized profusely. Albert was gracious and said, 'I've been called various names in my life, but this is the first time one of the librarians has called me "Daddy."'"

"What makes this even more ridiculous is that Albert and I are not that far apart in age. It's possible to interpret my slip of the tongue through Freudian or Jungian analysis, but I think it's best that we don't go there."

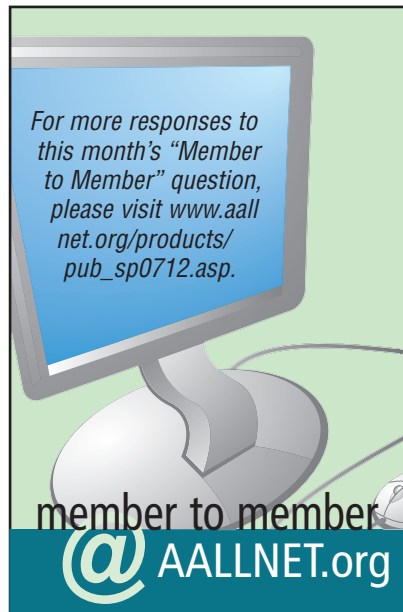
— **Leonette Williams, associate director of the law library for collections and technical services at the University of Southern California Barnett Information Technology Center and Call Law Library in Los Angeles**

"Early in my career an item that was missing from our shelves caused one of

the particularly volatile attorneys to blow up. She gave me the choice of losing my job or providing another copy of the book immediately. I made a call to the nearest source for the loose-leaf book—about five blocks away. The interlibrary loan person agreed to meet me outside the building. I sprinted across a bridge, jaywalked through traffic, and cut through an alley to arrive at the revolving door at the same time as the lending library's representative. I reversed the process on the return trip, but I wasn't as lucky jaywalking. I was hit by a city bus.

"Bouncing off the bus after the impact with the bumper, I managed to get across the bridge, go up the elevator, and bring the book to the attorney. I grabbed ice from the kitchen and checked for structural damage to my knee when I returned to my desk.

"When my boss saw me and heard what happened, she gave me some cash, told me to take a cab home, and said I didn't have to come in the next day. My rookie mistake wasn't getting hit by the bus. My rookie mistake was that I came into work



the next day even though I had a dispensation."

— **David Rogers, currently public services librarian at Sidley Austin LLP Library and Research Services Department in Chicago**