

LLAM NEWS



LAW LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND
A Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries

President's Message

The end of this Millenium and the beginning of a new one provides plenty of fodder for editors and commentators, this year's LLAM President included. Such an event allows us some introspection into both ourselves and our social history. Years ending in double and triple zeros conveniently mark this history like bookends or parenthesis, enclosing their contents with some measure of finality. Therefore, I'd like to turn to a brief examination of some of the social and technological marvels that have brought our profession to its whereabouts today in hopes of setting before us the direction in which we should continue.

At the beginning of this Milienium, human beings weren't doing very well, by any social measurement of today. The Dark Ages were indeed rather dim, as disease, poverty and political instability were widespread. A few literate male monks penned single copies of books which were read only by those few other literate male clerics. There was little breadth or variety to the content of these works, consisting of a few "classics" and a great deal of religious (read "Christian") scholarship. Whatever delight the average person could glean from information or knowledge was carried by word of mouth, a rich and artistic tradition to be sure, but not a form of communication that lent itself especially well to the growth of librarianship. Civil law was also undeveloped. Communal justice was dispensed by priests, kings, and courtiers, rather than elected judges or legislatures. Because there were few books and little law, we in the law library profession literally could not have existed in 1000 CE. If we were time travelers, we quickly would have to find another way to support ourselves and our families.

At the beginning of this current Century, society was doing much better. Many people were literate and large public libraries were established in major cities, open to many of the public. Publishers valued their social freedoms and printed books on a wide variety of topics. Librarianship was in its infancy. Law librarianship was merely a tiny specialty, without the backing of a professional organization, but the future looked bright overall. Law, too, had developed into both a potent social force and an organized profession, very similar to how it stands today. Still, 1900 lacked much of the technology we now take for granted, from air conditioning and airplanes to online catalogs and global computer networks. The bigoted America of 1900 also lacked social cohesion, and both law and nascent information science tended to blindly support hegemonic ideology. If we ventured back in time somehow, we would find that our skills set and places of work have changed significantly since then. Fewer of us these days catalog books, type on manual typewriters, insert catalog cards into files, or, in fact, have much of anything to do with books.

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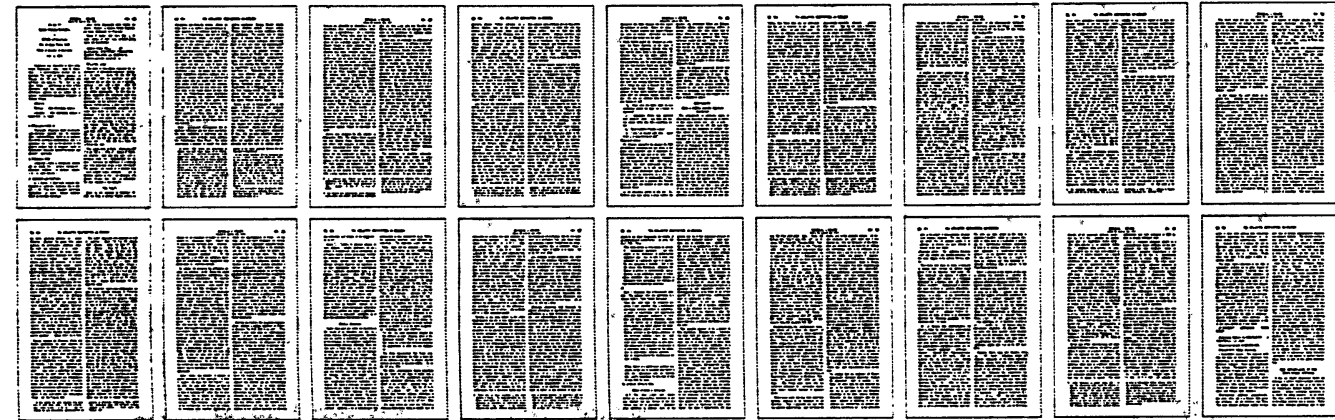
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