

OLA Annual Report 2017-18

OLA Unit:

Legal Reference Round Table 2017-18

Division, RT, Committee Board Members:

Chair: Sue Ludington, Washington County Law Library

Vice-Chair: Rebecca Sherman, US Courts Library, 9th Circuit

Overall goals and responsibilities of your unit:

To improve the quality of legal reference service in all types of Oregon public libraries, by opening up lines of communication and increasing professional interaction between Oregon public law library and non-law public library reference staff.

Specific objectives and activities planned for the 2017-18 OLA membership year:

Advocacy: In accordance with the Advocacy Continuum, continue to bring increased awareness of Oregon county law libraries and their unique services to library workers (and, indirectly, their patrons) through periodic posts shared via Memberclicks (and Libs-Or) and news updates submitted to the Hotline. Again, attempt to submit one legal reference- or Oregon law-related article to the OLA Quarterly.

Education: Sponsor and/or coordinate one educational program related to law librarianship, legal reference, or civics/government/current legislation at the 2018 OLA Conference.

Leadership: Continue to review and revamp the LRRT website, with special emphasis on analyzing what content is most desired and helpful to the broader OLA membership. Identify one or more Oregon-specific legal research tools (eg bibliography of online legal sources or statewide directory of legal assistance) for development and promotion.

Collaboration: Team up with RRT and Answerland partners to create, coordinate, and implement an Oregon Reference Summit (an expanded version of Answerland's previously successful Virtual Reference Summit) which will be held in Spring 2018. Continue talks surrounding the future of the Oregon Legal Research blog and website, and come up with realistic action plan.

Progress made toward goals for 2017-18:

Advocacy: While the LRRT as a unit did not submit any particularly meaningful articles or announcements to the OLA Hotline or Libs-Or mailing list, members of the RT were enormously involved with OLA's legislative advocacy work that occurred during January-March 2018. Facing HB 4097 (which would have permitted all state courts to claim dedicated county law library funding for their own use), select members contributed significantly relevant data and narrative input to assist OLA's lobbyist, who spoke in opposition of the bill.

Longtime chair of LRRT, Sue Ludington, contributed an article on county law libraries for the Fall 2017 issue of the OLA Quarterly. With a theme on "rural libraries," Sue's comprehensive article (titled "Oregon's County Law Libraries: Providing Legal Information and Reference Assistance Across the Miles") provided background information on how Oregon's public law libraries are funded, acknowledging that rural counties receive smaller appropriations. She then highlighted innovative programs and services that several rural law libraries have successfully launched despite limited funds, which have increased public awareness of the law library and its perceived relevance.

Education: At the 2018 OLA Conference, the LRRT and Reference RT (RRT) co-sponsored a 90-minute session titled “Spotlight on Justice: How Small and Rural Counties Support the Legal Information Needs of the Public” (a program idea which emerged from the aforementioned OLAQ article). With presneters from 4 different non-Portland metro counties speaking to nearly 40 attendees, the program was terrifically successful at showcasing the many positive efforts and popular trends being led by Oregon’s public law libraries.

The LRRT also co-sponsored the 2-part (40-minutes each) session titled “A Ray of Light in Dark Times: Immigrants, ICE, and Public Institutions.” The first part coordinated by LRRT featured two speakers: an Oregon immigration attorney and coordinator from CAUSA-Oregon. Both presented overviews of complicated immigration laws and current interpretations, which were very well-received by the audience.

Leadership: Unfortunately, again, members did not find time this year to conduct a thorough review of the LRRT website, as has been a goal for the last two years. Perhaps 2018-19 is the year it gets done!

Collaboration: In collaboration with Answerland, the State Library, and the RRT, LRRT helped put together and execute (and was recognized as a sponsor of) the inaugural Oregon Reference Summit, a 1-day conference in Corvallis focused on reference services held Spring 2018. With 75-100 attendees, Summit organizers considered the event to be a great success.

Goals for 2018-19:

Advocacy: Continue to seek new ways to bring increased awareness of Oregon county law libraries and their unique services to library workers (and, indirectly, their patrons), including through Memberclicks, Libs-Or, and the Hotline. Explore more involvement with Answerland in terms of legal reference contributions via the QuestionPoint service. Stay abreast of potential legislation that may further impact county law libraries.

Education: Sponsor and/or coordinate one educational program related to law librarianship, legal reference, or civics/government/current legislation at the 2019 OLA-WLA Annual Conference. Consider Washington partnerships and topics of relevance to this broader audience.

Leadership: In addition to continuing to review and revamp the LRRT website for relevance and utility, investigate the development and possible implementation of a legal reference training model for use with public library employees, one that could be customized based on specific needs.

Collaboration: Anticipate partnership with Answerland and RRT for the 2019 Oregon Reference Summit. Put concerted effort into coming up with solution for Oregon Legal Research blog and website, perhaps seeking out possible collaboration with Oregon Council of County Law Libraries.

Comments: The LRRT membership has stayed stagnant and possibly decreased this past year, primarily due to job changes for several members. However, after a successful OLA Conference program featuring several county law library colleagues, LRRT leadership is hopeful other county law libraries will consider joining OLA and this unit. In addition, as the 2019 LRRT Chair is also OLA’s Conference Committee Chair this year, it’s anticipated her leadership role could be a catalyst for bolstering the LRRT membership roster!