A New Chapter for WSLL

The Washington State Supreme Court named Rob Mead as the new State Law Librarian in late 2016. Rob replaced long-time librarian Kay Newman, who retired in July. Rob joined the Washington State Law Library (WSLL) from the New Mexico Supreme Court, where he was Deputy Chief Public Defender and previously, the State Law Librarian for eight years.

Prior to his work for the New Mexico Supreme Court, Rob worked at a variety of other law libraries, served as an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico (UNM) School of Law, and spent time in private practice.

Rob has been getting settled at WSLL and his new home state, and familiarizing himself with Washington State’s legal community. Get to know Rob more here in his own words:

Tell us more about yourself and how you got started in law librarianship: I grew up in New Mexico with a father who was a chemical engineering professor and a mother who was a science teacher and school counselor. I didn’t inherit their math skills, and opted for history and high school debate instead. I attended UNM as an undergraduate, majoring in history and political science, and later earned my J.D. from the same university. When my wife was pregnant with our oldest son, I had a solo law practice litigating special education, elder law, and social security cases. We didn’t have health insurance, so I took on a second job working on the reference staff at the UNM law library. I quickly fell in love with libraries and later earned a master’s degree in Library Science from Emporia State University. I worked as a law librarian at UNM and the University of Kansas before joining the New Mexico Supreme Court Law Library.

What’s one “fun fact” you’d like us to know about you? I dabble as an amateur legal historian, writing about lawyers in the American West and the history of legal publishing.

What’s the coolest thing you’re working on right now? I’m working with library staff to integrate WSLL into Washington’s Access to Justice movement, to help ensure that the citizens of the state have reliable access to the legal information they need.

What’s the best thing about working in a law library? It’s hard to pick between the opportunity to help people solve problems and the chance to chase down interesting topics through the library’s collection.

One of the greatest challenges in law libraries today is: We’re past the fulcrum point in the transition between print and digital resources with the pricing of print resources forcing the substitution to digital subscriptions.

What’s your favorite book? Umberto Eco’s Name of the Rose. It’s an outstanding literary mystery set in a 14th century Italian monastery where the abbey’s library itself is a major character and the librarian the villain.

What’s the best way to get in touch with you? Call me at 360-357-2156, or email me at rob.mead@courts.wa.gov.

Library Closure

WSLL will be closed on Monday, February 20, 2017, in observance of President’s Day. Changes to the law library’s schedule can be found on the WSLL website at: http://www.courts.wa.gov/library/.
Listen Up: Librarians Recommend Legal Podcasts

According to a report from Edison Research, podcast listening grew 23 percent between 2015 and 2016, and is set to experience further growth this year. Podcasts, which are a form of digital media—typically in the form of an audio series—that can be downloaded to a computer or mobile device, are a great way for busy people to stay on top of trends or learn about a topic, since you can multitask your listening.

*Fun fact:* One in four Americans ages 12-54 listened to at least one podcast a month in 2016, with weekly podcast listeners consuming an average of five shows per week. (Source: Edison Research with Triton Digital)

The iTunes podcast directory lists 60,000-plus active podcasts, with many new podcasts launching every month. The category with the most launches between June 2014 to 2015? News and politics, which includes legal news and other law-related podcasts.

Here are some of our recommendations for legal podcasts. Happy listening!

- **Serial**, which reinvestigated a 1999 murder, there have been a spate of new true crime podcasts. In **Accused**, Cincinnati Enquirer reporter Amber Hunt looks into the 1978 unsolved murder of Elizabeth Andes. Reporter Madeleine Baran’s (American Public Media) **In the Dark**, is an eight-part series about a 27-year investigation into the abduction of Jacob Wetterling. If you enjoy listening to Serial, Accused or In the Dark, try **Breakdown** from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, in its second season, or **Finding Tammy Jo** from the Democrat & Chronicle (Rochester, N.Y.)

- **Undisclosed** “investigates wrongful convictions and the U.S. criminal justice system,” and started in April 2015 as a follow up to Serial.

- **Amicus**, hosted by Dahlia Lithwich, is a podcast about the law and those who interpret it. Lithwich, a courts reporter for Slate.com, interviews lawyers, law professors, and other legal experts for Amicus. Presented by Radiolab, the podcast **More Perfect**, launched in June 2016, “tells the stories behind some of the Supreme Court’s biggest rulings,” including **Baton v. Kentucky, Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl**, and **Bush v. Gore**, to name a few.

- The podcast **Life of the Law** discusses a legal concept in the context of people’s lives, giving a “real world” spin on legal theory. One episode, for example, looks at copyright issues through a discussion of comedians stealing jokes. **This Week in Law** covers breaking issues in technology law.

- Looking for podcasts that aren’t all about the law, but might give a fresh perspective on legal issues from time-to-time? Try **Hidden Brain, Revisionist History**, or **Stuff You Missed in History Class**.

FYI: WSLL News

We have a new research guide on Using the State Law Library.

**Save the date!** National Library Week will be held during the week of April 9-15.

We can borrow materials from other libraries on behalf of state employees and WSBA members for use in the scope of their employment. Copy requests can be sent by email; WSBA members must pick up print materials in person. Call or email the law library with requests or questions.