In this day of upheaval in the library and information world, many law librarians have found ways to reaffirm their value to their parent organizations. They have created and now sustain relationships for their institutions—law schools, law firms, government entities, and other organizations—because they have the common good of the institution in mind and are there to stay. The purpose of this article is to inform, inspire, celebrate, and provide concrete examples for other libraries to follow. Library initiatives can lead to benefits for the institution that are larger than the library itself. They also reinforce the value of the library and especially its librarians.

In the fall of 2009, I queried law librarians on various online discussion lists and asked them to provide examples of what they had done for their institutions beyond the expected. The numerous examples below are gratifying and exemplary—and hopefully will encourage other librarians to find ways to help move their institutions “outside the box” of normal activities.

**Partnerships Outside of the Institution**

Willamette College of Law Library is part of a consortium/partnership between academic and judicial/executive/legislative users. As one of the four libraries that form The Hatfield Library Consortium, it provides academic and Oregon state executive, judicial, and legislative users with coordinated access to library resources. The goals of the consortium include support for public/private initiatives formed to engage in public policy research and law reform in Oregon. The Hatfield Library Consortium seeks to build mutually beneficial ties between Oregon state government and the Willamette University community. (For more information, visit http://library.willamette.edu/hlc.)

Suffolk Law Library has been involved in archiving the webcasts of oral arguments before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Librarians have participated in the planning, management, and administration of the program from the beginning, working with deans at the law school, justices at the court, and administrators from across the university and the court system in setting up the process to live-webcast the arguments, tag them with keywords for searching, add abstracts, and archive them for viewing.

Several years ago, St. Louis University Law Library worked with a local magnet high school to build and organize a library for its use in learning basic civics and street law, using donations as well as duplicates and discards from the law library to help build the collection.

New York University Law Library manages Starr Foundation grant projects started under the leadership of Kathie Price and now administered by Radu Popa. They have created an international network of law librarians with a special focus on emerging countries.

Cornell Law Library shipped duplicate American law books to the
French Supreme Court (Cour de cassation) and offered ongoing reference services for the court. This created an institutional relationship that led to multiple opportunities for the law school, including a formal dedication and plaque in that library honoring Cornell Law School, as well as the creation of the Cornell Law Clerk Program (at the Constitutional Council in 2008 and at the Conseil d’État in 2009). The relationship also further strengthened the already existing faculty and student exchanges.

The Cornell Law Library also shipped other American law duplicate books to the library of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, which led to a partnership with that school. As a result, I had the opportunity to teach a course on U.S. legal research, the library hosted a conference in Paris, and an ENS professor came to Cornell to give a lecture.

All the academic law libraries in Florida co-fund the digitization of the Florida Supreme Court records and briefs. Faye Jones, director and professor of law at Florida State University (FSU), states that this benefits her school as the host because that collection of records and briefs is the most heavily used part of the school’s website. Thanks to FSU’s proximity to the court and its excellent working relationship with court staff, there is no other entity that could have created and maintained this for the common good.

Librarians write and speak to outside groups and publications, participate in state and local bar association activities, chair bar committees, speak at CLE programs, and write for bar publications. A group of academic, law firm, and government librarians worked with the Virginia State Bar on the committee to select and subsequently renew an online legal research system for members of the bar.

The AALL Publishing Initiatives Caucus (www.aallnet.org/caucus/pic/index.htm) has helped librarians with ideas and contacts to spread the word of librarians’ expertise. The caucus encourages members to write articles for legal journals and publications, which helps to create a higher profile for law librarians in their communities. In Wisconsin, for instance, law librarians regularly publish in the Wisconsin Lawyer, and a law firm librarian has a regular column in the state bar association’s Inside Track newsletter.
A number of other chapters work with their local bar associations in the same manner. The law librarians in Wisconsin coordinated with the State Bar of Wisconsin and did several training courses, called “Internet Bootcamps,” that were held at the state bar headquarters. They also offer presentations on a variety of topics at the state bar conventions.

Three Cornell librarians were invited by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), in Arusha, Tanzania, as United Nations consultants to provide advice on handling the tribunal’s archival materials. The request originated with a phone call received from the ICTR—a Google search revealed that Cornell Law Library had a Nuremberg collection, and the tribunal felt it might benefit from the library’s experience. The consultation turned into an advocacy effort urging the judges to organize, preserve, and donate their papers to sustain the legacy of the genocide trials. It also led to the judges and prosecutors being invited to Cornell to speak to law students and alumni.

What started as a library initiative became a beneficial relationship for the entire law school and university. Librarians who write blogs have a positive effect on their institution in the form of additional exposure and outreach to students, lawyers, and librarians who comment on the blogs. Some libraries host websites for organizations, e.g., Cornell Law Library hosts the website for the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL). Other librarians use their professional library association connections to secure speakers for AALL and other associations—in one instance, speakers included a librarian’s managing partner, a paralegal, and a client.

Librarians have a special ability to bring people together. Because of her interest in legal history, Georgia D. Chadwick, director of the Law Library of Louisiana, encouraged the publication of a new edition of *Jefferson's Louisiana* by Professor George Dargo. She organized an event in the Rex Room of Antoine’s Restaurant during the American Association of Law Schools meeting in New Orleans, bringing professors, archivists, librarians, and the publisher Lawbook Exchange together to celebrate its publication.

**Partnerships within Institutions**

The University of South Carolina Law Library has created a law school archive that contains records of the public life of the law school. One of the largest users has been the school development office seeking information on alumni from when they were students.

Several librarians have taken a larger role in development work, including library tours, alumni reunions, and other activities. Ruth Bird, law librarian at Oxford University’s Bodleian Law Library, has worked closely with the law faculty in wooing law firms to fund and support library initiatives. She is a member of the Law Faculty Development Council, which is made up of managing partners of leading global firms and several judges, as well as two law lords and several barristers. She has obtained ongoing funding for law library initiatives totaling a substantial sum of money per year.

In our global environment, the library can play a crucial role in guiding the research experience of international students and faculty for the benefit of the international reputation of the law school. Blair Kauffman, director of the law library and professor of law at Yale Law School, had lunch with one of the school’s visiting law professors from Europe who told him that he and most of his European colleagues were attracted to U.S. universities and law schools primarily for access to their libraries—all else was incidental. In other words, while they can talk with their American colleagues at conferences and elsewhere, the ability to do extended research in our rich libraries is the strongest draw for their visits.

Three Cornell law librarians worked as United Nations consultants to provide advice on archival materials to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The result was a mutually beneficial relationship between the law school and the tribunal. Pictured above from left to right: Ayodeji Fadugba, chief information and evidence support section, ICTR; Thomas Mills, head of collections/lecturer in law; Stuart Basefsky, information specialist, Industrial and Labor Relations School; Sir Dennis Byron, President, ICTR; and Claire Germain, Edward Cornell law librarian and professor of law.

**Involvement in Other Departments**

Librarians stretch themselves to make the institution look good. They sustain the organization’s ability to be effective. Both law firm and academic librarians write that they increase their value to their organizations by helping on projects and activities outside the traditional library. The following activities show some parallel between academic and law firm librarians, who might benefit from learning more from one another’s practices. Law firm librarians are integrated into the practice teams, an idea that might encourage academic librarians to integrate more fully into the law school’s institutes and centers.

**Law Firms**

Assistance to the firm beyond the library includes integration into the practice teams. Library staff are assigned to specific practice groups, attend their meetings, and provide them with the
information they need in a proactive rather than reactive manner. On a number of occasions, the special skills that are part of a librarian’s job skill set—e.g., organizational skills, personnel management experience, and technology skills—translate to different departments of their organization, broaden their horizons, and enrich their work experience, engagement, and value to the firm.

For example, one law firm librarian has coordinated a number of data conversions following the first successful major conversion in his library, which gives him more visibility in his law firm. Another has made himself indispensable in becoming the “go to” person for anything having to do with delivering value-added information through the firm’s Microsoft SharePoint platform and has developed a variety of applications, including internal corporate forms, precedent databases, wikis, blogs, and team sites, effectively growing a knowledge management capability from the ground up.

Several librarians are at the forefront of business development/competitive intelligence within their law firms, even when there may be a marketing department, and they do research for their organizations beyond the expected. They provide briefing information and analysis on prospective clients, industry and competitor information and analysis for the firm’s executives, confidential research/setting up information systems for the firm, corporate and litigation profiles, industry news monitoring, and delivery of “filtered by librarians” news directly to the lawyers.

“We developed a ‘Litigation Watch Initiative’ in which we are using a text search utility to scan dozens of HTML newsletters for any hit on our top 250 clients, mostly as a client relationship tool,” says John Harbison, director of information resources and supports more than 33 practice knowledge management. In one instance, the organizational skills of librarians are tapped for the common good of the institution, especially when they volunteer to take on the additional responsibilities that others might not. It pays off in excellent relations between the library and other important offices.

Librarians also chair committees for their law schools or firms, e.g., the building committee, website redesign, or the American Bar Association (ABA) Self Study Committee. Several mention that they have served in their university faculty senate or campus committees, a service that benefits both the law library and the law school, and others have served on committees of national groups, such as the ABA or AALL.

Some develop and host conferences, and their individual librarians’ initiatives and projects have led to large benefits for their institution and for the profession. Janis Johnston, director of the law library and professor of law at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and Frank Y. Liu, director of the law library and professor of law at the Duquesne University Center for Legal Information, co-chaired the first-ever AALL conference in China on legal information and law libraries that built relationships with more than 30 law schools in China.

Carl Yirka, professor and library director at Vermont Law School in South Royalton, has been project director for seven years for two U.S. State Department grants funding law school work with a Russian law faculty. Other activities bring the law school community together, such as celebrating books published by faculty, sponsoring a book talk series in a local bookstore, or hosting a film series.

**Your Turn**

You may wonder what constitutes “beyond normal activities”? It could be that the activities mentioned here are

(continued on page 27)
recommends are also reflective of the discussions in Scottsdale.

The final recommendations from the Critical Issues Summit have been posted at www.equippingourlawyers.org. Plans for further efforts in this area are underway and will be posted periodically on this website. It was suggested that this model of investigation and discussion be conducted at the state level by legal educators, CLE providers and regulators, and the practicing bar. Law librarians should remain alert to the possibility of being involved if or when this discussion becomes local. We have knowledge of most of these topics and offer a broad and sophisticated point of view that would strengthen local discussions.

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beyond the expected—continued from page 13

part and parcel of what law librarians can offer to their institutions, depending on the culture, needs, and inclinations. Some of these activities may become part of the “normal activities,” but if they have positive outcomes for the institution and the librarian, the result is a win-win situation.

These examples show what good outcomes are possible for institutions when librarians are proactive in stretching beyond their original job descriptions. Hopefully they will inspire you to seize opportunities to use your special talents for the benefit of your organization, whether it is your organizational skills, experience in personnel management, foreign language abilities, or technology skills. You may start by familiarizing yourself with the big picture of your organization and reflect on how you fit in and what you can contribute beyond the expected. Yes, you have to stretch yourself, but that is what makes life interesting.

Law librarians should remain alert to the possibility of being involved if or when this discussion becomes local. We have knowledge of most of these topics and offer a broad and sophisticated point of view that would strengthen local discussions.

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washington brief—continued from page 6

of American Scientists, this will mean the elimination of the permanent classification of the President’s Daily Brief, which the CIA has consistently asserted is classified. The executive order also restores language that directs agencies to err on the side of openness if there is doubt about whether to classify, and it makes clear that “no information may remain classified indefinitely.”

In the coming months, we will follow the implementation of this important executive order to make sure agencies follow through on its requirements.

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