

LEADER PROFILE

TRIPLE THREAT

Kincaid C. Brown works as the University of Michigan's law library assistant director—and with a U of M undergrad, JD, and MSI degree, he is also a three-time alumnus.

Kincaid C. Brown had always been interested in the law—both of his parents are attorneys—so after earning a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Michigan in 1994, Brown pursued a JD at the school.

Like many students in law school, he gained on-the-job experience handling case-related tasks at summer legal jobs. During the school year, Brown, who'd worked at his local library in Westchester County, New York, in high school, helped out with a broad array of projects at the University of Michigan Law Library.

The part-time academic position was a welcome change—so much so that as graduation approached, Brown realized he enjoyed the document delivery and research work he was doing more than anything a firm might offer.

After a lunchtime discussion with the law library's head of reference and its director, Brown concluded he wanted to seek a career in library services and planned to pursue his next University of Michigan degree, a master of science in information (MSI).

"They were supportive of it being an excellent opportunity for people who may not be sold on practicing law," said Brown. "When I graduated law school, I still took the bar and went straight into library school—I've been here ever since, for 18 years."



Brown, who was originally hired to supervise the faculty document delivery service, be a reference librarian, and do collection development work, now serves as the law library's assistant director. In his role, he manages scholarly publishing, electronic services, and acquisition efforts at the library.

Since joining the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in 1997, Brown has participated in several Special Interest Sections (SIS) and committees, including serving as chair of the Computing Services SIS and Indexing of Periodical Literature Committee. He belongs to the Michigan Association of Law Libraries

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chapter and is a member of the American Bar Association and the State Bar of Michigan.

We recently spoke with Brown about his nearly 20-year tenure in an academic environment, technology's impact on the industry, and the way professional development has helped shape his career.

How has your job changed over the years?

When I started in the mid '90s, everything was still print-centric. As time has gone by, electronic services and materials have become more important. A lot of my focus, as my career has progressed, has been on electronic formats, resources, and services.

How would you describe the University of Michigan Law Library's audience?

Our primary audience is law faculty and law students, and then other folks like pro se

patrons. Different patrons have different needs and interests. We're trying to provide information to suit all patrons, as they need it.

Have there been any challenges sharing information with the library's audience electronically?

I would say the biggest challenge is making people see it. There are so many avenues that you can't possibly cover them all; and even if you do, people can only read so much—they will miss things. Try to disperse as much as possible, and also repeat the process to catch people you didn't grab the first time.

How have you kept up with technology?

I read quite a bit, as many librarians do. I read listservs, go on websites, and listen to what other people are talking about. Also, trying things out—figuring out how things work—is something I've always done.

A lot of our focus now is on mobile technology and tools. Ten years ago, it was a lot more desktop-centric, and now it's a lot more iPad- and iPhone-centric. People are still figuring out the best way to utilize all of the technology they have to do their jobs. It's a different device, but still the same process.

What's a typical day in the office for you?

I oversee several different units in the library—so I spend a fair amount of my time in managerial meetings and discussions with my administrative hat on. I also spend time working on projects focused on reworking procedures and the way things are done in the library, implementing technology to make us more efficient, and collection development issues. A third big chunk of time is spent administering the institutional repository.

Every winter term, January to May, I teach Advanced Legal Research. The previous director also taught the class. I've always wanted to teach because it's a good way to understand law students and what their needs are. When the class was restarted after a few years on hiatus, I was able to get involved, and I've enjoyed it.

I co-teach the class with another librarian, and the central focus now is to make it a practical legal research class. Back in the day, a lot of advanced legal research classes were more

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- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW LIBRARY
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QUICK HITS WITH KINCAID C. BROWN



iPhone or Android?
Android

e-books or print? Print

Text or phone call? That depends on what I need to accomplish.

Did you upgrade to Windows 10? I have at home.

Phone order or GrubHub? I do both, depending on the restaurant.

Favorite type of takeout?
Korean

Scrabble or Words with Friends? I prefer number games because I deal with words all day.

Favorite app? Untappd—I'm a bit of a beer snob. You can use it to track the beer you drink and look up information about beer and breweries.

bibliographic/librarianship focused. A lot of complaints about law schools have been that attorneys that come out of them aren't ready for practice; and legal research has been a big complaint from law firms. We have tried to incorporate more real-world legal issues so students can take the class and learn actual hands-on research methods.

Are there any professional development opportunities you'd suggest for students and for law librarians just starting out?

I'd recommend that they not limit themselves necessarily to libraries; there are other groups you can be involved in that can help broaden your horizons. For instance, I've been involved in the State Bar of Michigan Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications Committee. That's been beneficial because half of the people on the library committee are also practicing attorneys. Also, for people at universities, there are university-wide opportunities and non-work nonprofit opportunities that all help you deal with people, problem-solving, and collaboration.

What professional development opportunities have you found helpful?

I've taken advantage of several AALL professional development opportunities—not just the educational offerings where you learn about new things and how other librarians are doing [things] in different ways. There have been tons of leadership opportunities I've been able to take advantage of. That's a big reason why I've

progressed in my career. I've presented and coordinated programs, and I've been on the board of an SIS. These are opportunities that build skills; not just problem-solving, but leadership, collaboration, and writing.

How would you recommend law librarians continue to obtain new skills throughout their career?

Depending on the faculty status of librarians at a particular university, you can also participate in university-wide athletics or student relations committees. Also, being involved with other libraries at a large university is another opportunity for broadening your horizons and working with new folks. Here at the University of Michigan, there are several electronic resources committees that work with other libraries on campus; that can be helpful in understanding alternate views of how resources can be managed and administered.

What other kinds of industry-wide changes have you seen in the past decade?

Within the legal sector, budgetary problems and bad press from the late 2000s, as well as the importance of providing services and resources that patrons or user groups need have been reinforced. You have to stay relevant, providing services your patrons can use so that they seek out your assistance in the future.

Everybody is a lot more mindful of providing services; but it's also important to provide value and assess what you're doing. It's definitely always a balancing act, in a collection sense—what things do we still need to subscribe to and what needs to be canceled so we can subscribe to other things? In a services sense, what are we providing and doing and do we still need to do that—or can we reallocate our resources to do something else that will help more patrons?

It's an iterative process we're constantly going through—assessing what we're doing, thinking about alternatives, and implementing new processes and services to help patrons.

What changes do you anticipate seeing in the industry in the next 5 to 10 years?

I'm guessing because of the cost of resources, at some point, there will probably be more open access resources available. Another thing that's rising is more tools that implement artificial intelligence technologies—this is especially true in lawyering more than in academic settings. ■