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2018 ABA Tech Show Review

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Recommended Citation

2018 ABA TECH SHOW REVIEW by Brian Detweiler

I enjoyed attending the ABA Tech Show last March in Chicago. As a second time attendee, I knew what to expect and was looking forward to sitting in on several programs in the show's "Academic" and "Core Production Tools" tracks.
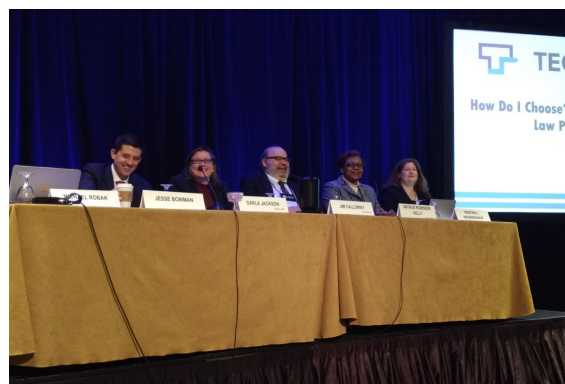
The opening Academic Track session, "Virtual Reality: Opportunities for Teaching and Using it in Practice" provided an interesting look at how three U.S. law schools have incorporated virtual reality technology into their curriculums through the use of 360° videos and piloting an app to allow students to practice their public speaking skills in a virtual courtroom or boardroom. This session was of particular interest to me since we are hoping to start a similar program here in Buffalo, but anyone with an interest in legal technology would likely have enjoyed the discussion from some of the librarians who are at the forefront of bringing this technology into our law schools.

The second Academic Track session, "How Do I Choose? Selecting and Implementing Law Practice Technology" provided an insightful glimpse into how faculty at Northwestern and Georgia State law libraries decide which types of software they want to incorporate into their legal technology courses, and how they teach these skills to their students.

The Core Production Tools sessions on PowerPoint and Microsoft Word offered several helpful tips on software I have used for years. The first talk reinforced that PowerPoint is best suited at trial to rehearsed presentations like opening and closing statements, and less appropriate in support of direct or cross-examination because of the unpredictable nature of witness testimony. Presenter Paul Unger also walked us through how to insert videos and create call-outs to highlight sections of documents or photos in a slide.

In the second presentation, Word expert Barron Henley showed attendees how to format an appellate brief, which is something first year law students at UB and across the country struggle with every spring. Henley demonstrated several timesaving tips, including how to format a document using styles, how to build a Table of Authorities, and how to prevent awkward page breaks between headings and text using the "Keep with next" option under the Line and Page Breaks menu.

I also attended sessions on courtroom technology; document security; and how to create and edit PDF documents, all of which were very enlightening. My only complaint about the Tech Show is that the organizers generally schedule an hour of "down time" between each session. I realize this is intended to allow attendees time to speak with vendors in the Exhibit Hall, but over a two-day conference, this amounted to over five hours, at least three of which I feel could better have been spent in additional sessions. Nevertheless, I would recommend the ABA Tech Show to anyone interested in learning about the important and rapidly evolving field of legal technology.

Caption: *Panelists discuss how they evaluate and teach legal technology software during the 2018 ABA Tech Show in Chicago.*