

UB Law Forum

Volume 9
Number 1 *Winter 1996*

Article 13

1-1-1996

Law Library Adds Electronic Instruction Rooms

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (1996) "Law Library Adds Electronic Instruction Rooms," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 13.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol9/iss1/13

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LAW LIBRARY ADDS ELECTRONIC INSTRUCTION ROOMS

The Charles B. Sears Law Library now provides students with two new instruction rooms where they can learn to use the Internet and other electronic sources of legal information. The Electronic Information Services Room is on the main floor and is designed for personalized instruction and reference work. Students can search the Internet using Netscape, or they can search for information on CD-ROMs such as Law Desk, EPA DOC (Environmental Protection Agency documents), and IRIS PRO (Immigration and Research Information Service). The reference librarian works with students to search online databases such as LRS (New York's legislative database) and QL (the Canadian equivalent of Lexis or Westlaw).

Law students receive group instruction in electronic sources in the new Electronic Classroom, located on the Law Library's sixth floor. The classroom features twelve student stations, one instructor station, and an overhead video projector. The classroom is used for 1L training in LEXIS and WESTLAW and in searching the UB library catalog, called BISON. Drop-in clinics on advanced searching techniques are regularly scheduled, and specialized sessions tailored to particular courses are also held there. Some faculty members have developed heavily computer-dependent courses and use this classroom as their regular meeting place.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities while in law school. "Few people, if any, will have free access to such training and information after graduation," says Amy DuVall, a first-year student who also works as the student consultant in the instruction rooms. "Everyone should learn how to utilize these services while they can do so easily and without being charged. With the increasing dependence on electronic information, most graduates will eventually be faced with the need for these skills. Taking the time to learn them now can only save time and money once they begin practicing."

Conducting a job search is one example of how the Internet can be helpful to both law students and practicing attorneys. "More and more law firms are beginning to show up on the World Wide Web," notes DuVall. "Their home pages provide a personalized look at the dynamics of the firm, some even using photographs to accompany biographical sketches of each partner and associate."

"Not only is this information right at your fingertips through the Internet, but it's also available on a round-the-clock basis—no more waiting for certain offices to open before your research can be conducted."

The electronic instruction rooms were funded through a combination of alumni donations, benchmark funds designed to support the New Curriculum, and funds from the University Library system. ■

SUE MANGOLD Fighting Family Violence

Among the several new faces joining the UB Law School faculty this year, Susan Vivian Mangold's is the most familiar.

Mangold has been an adjunct assistant professor at UB Law since the spring of 1993, becoming active in the School's Family Violence Program and teaching two courses she developed — Child Advocacy and the Law, and Evidence and the Child Victim.

Now, having joined the faculty full time this academic year, Mangold is continuing to develop her research and teaching in the areas of family violence and children and the law.

A particular interest, she says, is studying the interrelationship between domestic violence (between adults) and child abuse.

The legal system, she says, is fraught with difficulties in dealing with the 40 to 60 percent of domestic violence cases that also include child abuse. According to one estimate, there are 810,000 families nationally in which there is a concurrence of spousal and child abuse.

"The child protective system has always trumped the domestic violence system," Mangold says, "and this can lead to unfortunate circumstances." As an example, she cites New York State judges who have ruled that, in cases where a man batters both his wife and his child, the woman is culpable because she didn't protect the child from the abuse.

"That creates a disincentive to bring charges against the abuser that is very hard to remove," Mangold says. And there are many instances of families in which the cycle of abuse plays itself out in another tragic scenario: Dad hits Mom, and Mom abuses the kids.

The point, Mangold says, is not to just blame