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Law Library: 1859-2017

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LAW LIBRARY

1859–2017

The University of Michigan Law Library is a comprehensive legal research library with one of the finest collections of works on domestic, foreign, comparative, and international law in the United States.

Collection areas of special depth include foreign and comparative law; public and private international law; collections on the legal status of Native Americans and other indigenous peoples; pre-Soviet Russia; early American session laws and court reports; current and superseded annotated statutes for all US states and the federal government; and Roman law. The Law Library became the first depository for European Union documents in an American university in 1957. It is also a selective depository for US government publications and collects law-related documents of many international organizations such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and Organization of American States.

Rare law books are found in the Jackier Rare Book Room. The oldest book is a first edition of Johannes Nider's *De contractibus mercatorum*, circa 1468, and the oldest manuscript is Johannes Calderinus's *De ecclesiastico interdicto: distinctiones decretalium (also a series of Questions disputed by Calderinus at Bologna between 1330 and 1346 and similar disputations of Paolo Liazari, canonist at Bologna)*.

As of July 1, 2015, the Law Library's collection held 1,036,578 volumes in print and 517,968 digital titles. Collections consist of a mix of print, microform, and electronic formats; the entire print collection is housed in the closed stacks of the ten-story Legal Research Building and the three-story Allen and Alene Smith Addition, popularly known as the "Underground Law Library." The library's print collection is noncirculating.

BUILDING THE COLLECTION: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW¹

The Law Library was established in 1859 as part of the Law Department and continues to be "maintained and administered as a part of the instruction and research operation of the Law School."²

The library has been considered the "apparatus" of the Law Department³ and "the lawyer's laboratory."⁴ Indeed, this underlying view led the library to build a comprehensive collection that would provide "the means necessary for original investigation"⁵ and "permit scholars to do research work in any field of law, regardless of country or period."⁶ The collection development policy—to collect primary sources of law: statutes, civil law codes, court opinions, regulations, as well as books and treatises about the law for all countries of the world in the original, official languages—remains consistent with this view.

The development of the Law Library from a small collection of 350 volumes housed in one room maintained by a law student⁷ to a major global collection of over a million volumes took place in distinct historical phases.

The Early Years

Between 1859 and 1924, the dean and faculty of the Law School were deeply involved in decisions about the collection⁸ and they focused on building a comprehensive collection of US state and federal court reports, statutes and administrative regulations, as well as on expanding the library's holdings of major legal treatises and textbooks.⁹ The first foreign law materials were added to the collection in the 1890s but were limited to court reports and legislation for major common law jurisdictions—Great Britain, Canada, Ireland, and



Fig. 158. Legal Research Building. Photo by Law Library staff.

Scotland.¹⁰ The library began adding public and private international law materials to the collection in 1919 followed by the earliest Roman and comparative law acquisitions in 1923.¹¹

As faculty interest in other areas of law developed and the curriculum of the Law School broadened during this period, the collection expanded to support new areas of study and instruction.

The Foreign Law Years

The next phase of the Law Library's collection building took place between 1925 and 1960 through the collaborative work of Henry Moore Bates—who served as Law School dean from 1910 through 1939—and Hobart R. Coffey—who joined the Law School in 1924 as a law professor and served as law librarian (1926–44) and director of the Law Library (1944–64).¹² Bates is credited with the vision that led to the development of the Law Library collection into one of the foremost foreign, comparative, and international law collections in the United States.¹³ Coffey turned Dean Bates's vision into reality.¹⁴

[Hobart Coffey's] first and primary concern was with building the collection, and the Michigan Law Library today stands as a memorial to his towering achievement. The figures tell some of the story: about 80,000 volumes in 1928 when he

came—a modest, primarily American collection; 350,000 in 1965 when he retired, comprising one of the great legal research collections of the world.¹⁵

During his tenure, Coffey, who was fluent in six languages,¹⁶ worked tirelessly to identify and acquire foreign, comparative, and international law books; primary sources; and the documents of international organizations. His “tools” included advice and assistance from the Law Department faculty, the work of Law Library staff, travel abroad, advice and assistance from foreign book dealers, gifts and exchanges, and his own research.¹⁷

1960s to 1980s

By 1960, Coffey's major retrospective building of the Law Library collection had been completed and the main responsibility for selecting materials for the collection was transferred to reference librarians who were assigned jurisdictional selection responsibilities¹⁸ (e.g., Anglo-American law, civil law and mixed jurisdictions, public international law). Collection development continued to be handled by reference librarians with law degrees and expertise in different jurisdictions and areas of law.

By the early 1970s, as collection building was

routinized, the Law Library turned its attention to considering alternative formats such as microform to preserve the collection.¹⁹ By 1990, the Law Library had embarked on its "Preservation in Context" initiative under the leadership of Director Margaret Leary to both preserve the collection and stabilize its size to avoid the need for offsite storage.²⁰ During the ensuing two decades, the library replaced print volumes with microfiche and succeeded in opening up much needed shelving for new primary and secondary material that could not be so replaced.

The Digital Turn

The Law Library was an early subscriber to sophisticated full-text electronic legal research tools. In 1970, the Law School participated in an experiment initiated by the Mead Data Central Corporation, the creator of the LexisNexis database, to compare the use of computers with the use of standard print law digests to conduct case law research.²¹ The library eagerly embraced this new technology as databases, notably Lexis and Westlaw, became available by license in the late 1970s to provide both legal research training to law students and invaluable legal research tools to librarians and the law faculty. The Law Library continued to add new electronic finding aids and electronic resources to its collection throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including the European Union's Celex database.

The advent of the World Wide Web in the 1990s and its dramatic growth as a source of legal materials triggered the next stage of the library's digital collection building. Today, the library provides web-based access to more than one thousand electronic databases and thousands of electronic journals and books.

While electronic resources have become a major part of the collection, the Law Library continues to collect primary sources of law, treatises, and journals in tangible formats to enable legal scholars to meet the requirement of citation to the official sources of law; to archive official versions; to ensure preservation of the laws of jurisdictions experiencing political or other instability or where

digital preservation is not assured; and to provide access to materials not yet available electronically. This is especially important for foreign law materials, as a vast number of publications and sources are not yet available in stable, citable digital formats, and many are not yet available in any electronic form.

While digital sources have not replaced tangible formats, the library continues to add both free and for-fee web-based resources to the collection. These selections include foreign and domestic governmental websites that publish court opinions, legislation, and documents; websites of international organizations and associations that publish law and law-related documents and studies; full-text journal collections; historical full-text treatise collections; modern e-books; electronic journal indexes; and new electronic resources as developed. Reference librarians identify, vet, and select electronic materials.

The Law Library's comprehensive collection continues to attract students, lawyers, researchers, and scholars from all over the world, and its continuing work to enhance and maintain the collection in support of the Law School's educational and research mission remains paramount.

DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF LAW LIBRARY FACULTY AND OTHER SERVICES

While collection building was an ongoing priority, the Law Library was also in the forefront of developing services for Law School faculty. It was the first academic law library in the United States to provide faculty document delivery services in 1966. This service was enhanced in 1984 by Director Margaret Leary who added a comprehensive research component to the service to increase support for faculty research and teaching.²² This innovative research service began with two law students supervised by a dual-degreed reference librarian. Over the next fifteen years, the service grew and expanded so that today, a full-time reference and faculty services librarian with the

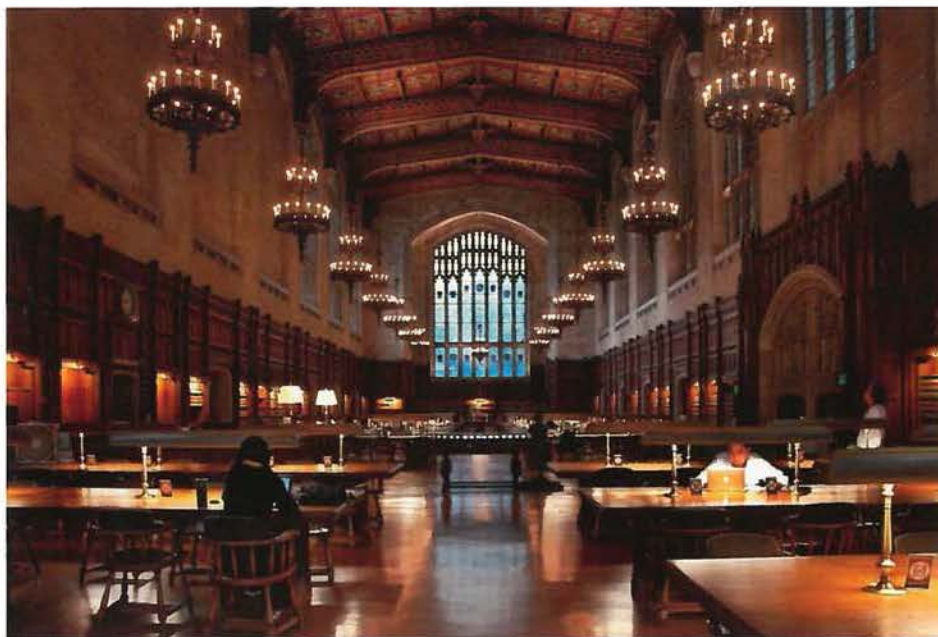


Fig. 159. Reading Room, Legal Research Building. Photo by Law Library staff.

assistance of six law students support the Law faculty via customized, expert legal and nonlaw research.

The library's dual-degreed²³ librarians and law students also provide legal reference services to researchers during the library's open hours in person, online, and via email. The librarians, moreover, offer individualized research consultations and group legal research training, as well as online research guides.

Other service initiatives include the in-house creation and maintenance of web-based resources such as the website listing *Publications of the University of Michigan Law School Faculty* since 1859²⁴ and the more recent creation of the *University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository*²⁵ that provides global access to Law faculty scholarship, the Law School's eight student-edited journals, and other Law School publications.

LIBRARY BUILDINGS

The need for space to house the library's growing collection has had a significant impact on the construction of Law Library buildings. The first Law Library in 1859 was a room in "the old South Wing of University Hall."²⁶ In 1863, the

Law Library moved into the new Law Building (later renamed Haven Hall) near the corner of State Street and North University Avenue, where it remained until 1931. At this point the Law Library found a new home in the iconic Legal Research Building that was part of the recently constructed Law Quadrangle. The new building was constructed with money donated by William W. Cook to specifically hold the law library.²⁷ By the late 1970s, the collection had outgrown its space in the Legal Research Building, a development that led to the building's expansion in 1981 through the construction of the Allen and Alene Smith Addition.

The Law Library has long supported and accommodated the changing study and research needs of law students, law faculty, and scholars. When the Legal Research Building opened in 1931, it included eight "consultation rooms" to make it possible for law students to study together and engage in discussions without disturbing the quiet study and research atmosphere in the library.²⁸ As years passed, these rooms gradually fell into disuse and were subsequently converted into staff offices. However, by the early 2000s, demand for collaborative study space for law students once again led to the creation of consultation rooms—now called group study rooms. The

Fig. 160. Allan and Alene Smith addition. Photo by Barbara Garavaglia.



provision of quiet study and research space in the Law Library remains a critical priority.

EARLY LAW LIBRARY STAFF AND LIBRARY DIRECTORS²⁹

Until 1882, only law students who served in a custodial capacity staffed the Law Library. Two law students who held the position of “law librarian” were Isaac Marston (1861–63) and Levi L. Barbour (1865–67). As the collection grew in size and sophistication the Law School recognized the need for expert services, hiring its first professional librarian in 1883. The first librarian to hold the position of Law Library director at Michigan was Hobart R. Coffey. The library’s professional staffing needs changed throughout its history based on the increasing diversity and depth of the collection, format changes, and the development and addition of new services—including catalogers, librarians with extensive foreign language skills, dual-degreed reference librarians, electronic resources librarians, metadata librarians, and scholarly publishing librarians to name just a few.

Director	Years
Hobart R. Coffey	1944–64
Beverly J. Pooley	1964–84
Margaret A. Leary	1984–2011
Barbara H. Garavaglia	2011–16

CONCLUSION

The Law Library continues to evolve and change in response to and in anticipation of ongoing, rapid changes in legal education and the legal information landscape. Although formats continue to change, the need for effective access to legal information and instruction and assistance in its use remain critical, not only for law students and professors but also for a society that values the rule of law. Access to foreign and international law continues to increase in importance in response to globalization, making the early vision of Bates and Coffey to develop a comprehensive global collection truly prescient. Technological innovation will undoubtedly create new challenges and opportunities relating to law; the library is committed to

moving forward into the next two centuries with the same vision and commitment to excellence exercised by those who built this great law library.

Entry prepared by Barbara H. Garavaglia.

Opening hours: Reading Room 8 am–2 am, Smith Addition 8 am–midnight; hours vary during semester breaks. Email: askalawlibrarian@umich.edu

<https://www.law.umich.edu/library/info/Pages/default.aspx>

Notes

1. This section is based almost entirely on the comprehensive history of the Law School and Law Library by Elizabeth Gaspar Brown, *Legal Education at Michigan, 1859–1959*, 359–87, 920–30. It also borrows liberally from Margaret A. Leary's "Building a Foreign Law Collection at the University of Michigan Law Library, 1910–1960." The book and the article are based on extensive research in the Bentley Historical Archive, including comprehensive study of reports, proceedings, minutes, and correspondence relating to the Law collection and the role played by Law School deans and faculty in building the Law Library collection.
2. Regents of the University of Michigan, Bylaw 12.02.
3. Henry S. Frieze, 1871–1872 President's Report. Reprinted in Brown, 364
4. *Law Students' Handbook* (1957), 15. Reprinted in Brown, 382.
5. Brown, 368.
6. Nathan Fred, ed., *Book of the Law Quadrangle at the University of Michigan* (1934), 43. Excerpt reprinted in Brown, 387.
7. Brown, 926–27.
8. *Ibid.*, 360, 370.
9. *Ibid.*, 370.
10. *Ibid.*, 368.
11. *Ibid.*, 371
12. *Ibid.*, 927.
13. Leary, "Building a Foreign Law Collection," 397.
14. Leary, "Building a Foreign Law Collection," 403–9.
15. Pooley, 363.
16. *Ibid.*, 364.
17. Leary, "Building a Foreign Law Collection," 409.

18. *Ibid.*, 423.
19. University of Michigan Law Library.
20. Leary and Snow, 2.
21. "Computers and the Law: New Legal Research Methods," 3.
22. Leary, "Supporting Faculty Research," 1; and "Library Support for Faculty Research," 193.
23. Reference librarians at Michigan hold both the JD degree and the MLS/MLIS/MI degree. Many are also licensed attorneys.
24. Available at <http://www.law.umich.edu/library/guests/pubsfaculty/Pages/default.aspx>
25. Available at <http://repository.law.umich.edu>
26. Brown, 359.
27. Brown, 319; Leary, *Giving It All Away*, 169.
28. "World's Finest," 465, 467.
29. All information in this section is from Brown, 926–27.

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