Law Libraries as Publishers

Faculty Bibliographies

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For this quarter's column, I'd like to discuss a type of publishing project many law libraries do to some extent: bibliographies of faculty publications. Developing a faculty bibliography supports scholarship—one of the core functions of academic law libraries—and requires thoughtful information retrieval and organization.

There are a number of reasons for a library to compile and maintain a bibliography of faculty scholarship. First, as a unit that supports research, the library is a sensible place to collect and track the law school's scholarly output. Second, a bibliography is a record that describes part of the school's history and legacy. Third, professors can use the bibliography to learn about their colleagues' interests and to inform applications for tenure and promotion, grants and awards.

In looking at faculty bibliographies, I noticed a great variety of scope and treatment. A bibliography can range from a simple list of recently published articles to a comprehensive catalog of faculty works from the date of the institution's founding. This flexibility allows a library to start small and then expand the scope of the bibliography according to interest and resources.

As you start, revitalize or expand your library's bibliography, here are some questions worth pondering. The answers to these questions will depend a great deal on your institutional context.

Function

What is the bibliography's purpose? Your answer to this existential question will inform all your later decisions about the bibliography's scope and how you will distribute it.

At my law school, faculty have a profile page on the school's web site that lists their publications. Faculty also have to complete an annual report for their personnel files, and discussions are ongoing about implementing an institutional metrics program to track the university's productivity. If our library compiled a faculty bibliography, it would be the fourth place where research products are cataloged. Wouldn't it be easier if the bibliography could extract the publication lists from faculty annual reports, or vice versa? Maybe, but we should be careful about sharing information

that is used for different purposes and has different criteria.

For instance, sharing information from a bibliography to faculty web site profiles is efficient and presents the bibliography to an external audience. The University of Iowa Law Library uses its bibliography to automatically populate faculty research profiles (like this [example](#)). However, if information from a bibliography is shared with personnel files or tenure dossiers, then the library may be subject to criteria it would not choose for its research and historical purposes. Therefore, I suggest making the function of a faculty bibliography clearly independent from tenure or other personnel decisions.

Scope

Whose work will be included? "Tenured/tenure-track professors currently employed" seems like a clear choice, but you might also consider professors who have moved on, retired, or passed away. There are plenty of people in roles other than teaching and research faculty who produce scholarly works—librarians, academic administrators, legal writing instructors, clinical faculty, and adjunct professors—that might also be included. The librarians at the University of Nebraska decided to include works by professors who served for three or more years, but did not include adjuncts. Their [bibliography](#) (described in this [AALL Spectrum article](#)) is the most comprehensive I've yet seen.

What types of works will be in the bibliography's ambit? Academic books and journal articles are easily selected, but other materials, such as reports, works for the popular media, blogs, and court briefs, could reasonably be included as well.

From my discussions with librarians who maintain faculty bibliographies, what works to list can be a touchy issue. Some professors may regard a work's inclusion as a sign of importance, and thus an omission

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may be regarded as a slight. I see two main approaches to addressing this problem. One option is to develop a

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policy that clearly sets out the bibliography's scope. The criteria for inclusion should be as objective as possible (for instance, only works published by academic publishers or law schools) to avoid the appearance of the library

judging the "scholarliness" or "importance" of faculty work. Another option is to simply let each author decide what they think warrants listing. This reduces the chances of unpleasant disagreements, but it isn't very helpful if you want to compile the works of professors who are unavailable to state their preferences. I'd suggest using a clear set of criteria, but err on the side of including something and give great deference to an author's wishes.

Presentation

How will the end result be presented? It could be as simple as an email circulated to the faculty or as extensive as the University of Nebraska's bibliography, which was designed by an academic press.

The more widely you expect the bibliography to be distributed, the more you should invest in production. There are countless ways to format these publications in print and digital form, and as far I can tell, there is plenty of experimentation and no single general standard practice exists. This means when collecting information for the bibliography, flexibility for later uses is crucial. Don't just type everything into a Word document; that will make it difficult to rearrange or re-categorize the information later. Rather, structure the information in some sort of database so you can export it in a variety of ways—such as a list of a specific author's oeuvre for her web site, or a PDF that enumerates the entire school's production. A structured database will also be easier to update in the future.

Compiling a faculty bibliography can be an ambitious, long-term project. Giving thoughtful consideration to the project's purpose, scope, and

potential presentation formats will increase the chances that the bibliography will become a valuable resource.

If you have any thoughts on publishing faculty bibliographies or other issues in law library publishing, please contact me at bkeele@indiana.edu.