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The Newsletter of  
The Law Library of Louisiana

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## *In This Issue*

Supreme Court Historical Society Annual Meeting	3
Upcoming Exhibit: John Adams [Law Day]	4
LA Office of State Lands	5
Bryan Garner	6
150 Years of GPO	7
Serendipity II	8



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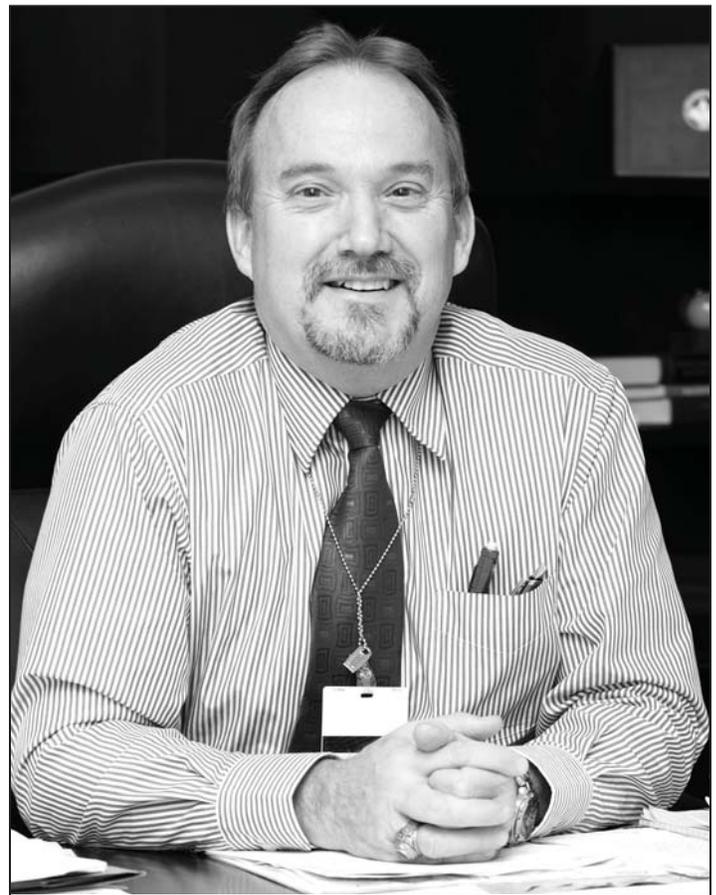
## WELCOMING BACK TIM AVERILL

*by Katie Nachod*

On November 22, 2010, the Louisiana Supreme Court announced that attorney Timothy F. Averill had been selected to serve as Judicial Administrator of the Court, a position made vacant by the retirement of Dr. Hugh Collins after thirty-six years of service. Tim had worked under Dr. Collins for twenty years in the position of Deputy Judicial Administrator/General Counsel, so he brings a vast amount of experience and knowledge to his new job. He left that position in the summer of 2008 to start a one-year fellowship in the United States Supreme Court Fellows Program in Washington, D.C., and at that time, we bid him farewell with a mixture of sadness and pride.

Tim is the kind of person you really hate to see depart, because he is a leader who brings so much to the table. He is intelligent, honest, competent, and a heck of a nice guy. However, we wished him well in his new endeavor, knowing what an honor it was to be one of the select few chosen for such a fellowship.

Tim's fellowship was based in the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, the agency that provides program management, legal counsel, legislative services, and administrative support to the federal courts. Assignments



for fellows in this office have included: analyzing legal and policy issues associated with the judiciary's use of information technology; studying and reporting on litigation and proposed legislation affecting federal court proceedings; drafting educational publications for the bench and the public; developing programs to support the federal judiciary's international judicial

relations program; and researching topics such as civil justice reform, federal-state judicial relations, the jurisdiction, structure, and governance of the judicial branch, and the impact of growth on the federal courts.

During his time in Washington, Tim participated in many of the duties described above.

*continued on page 2*

## TIM AVERILL

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Some specific projects involved helping to write an inventory of federal magistrate judges' duties, and writing white papers on topics such as judicial discipline, judicial independence and accountability, court security, the budget process, and the indigent defender system.

In addition, he helped author and edit a 25-chapter publication on administrative policies in the federal courts, which featured information on such matters as judicial retirement, judicial ethics and discipline, pay and benefits, and also covered such discrete matters as procuring office furniture and choosing law clerks. In conjunction with a statistics project he was involved with, Tim had occasion to speak with John Roll, the chief federal judge of Arizona who was tragically gunned down in Phoenix on January 8, 2011. He commented on how helpful the judge had been, and what a fine man he appeared to be.

Since Tim had such a depth of experience in judicial administration when he started his fellowship, he needed little training and was able to hit the ground running. He gained valuable exposure to the Administrative Office's records management system and to the federal courts' Case Management Electronic Case Files (CMECF) system, which has been implemented in the federal courts, but which is still a work in progress in state courts such as ours. The federal court system certainly has more resources than our state court system, and is more centralized, but staff there face many of the same challenges that staff in the state courts do. He was assigned to the Office of Judges' Programs, where he dealt with issues relating to Article III judges, who are the judges at the U.S. Supreme Court, the

thirteen federal courts of appeal, the ninety-four federal district courts, and the U.S. Court of International Trade. All of these courts are established under Article III of the U.S. Constitution.

In addition to his work in the Administrative Office, Tim also was called upon to make presentations at the United States Supreme Court. He guesses that he gave about forty speeches to visiting foreign judges and dignitaries, helping educate them on the work and procedures of the Supreme Court and the federal court system generally, and on the rule of law. He also made presentations at the Administrative Office, including an address to a group of Latin American judges on the subject of state judicial disciplinary procedures. An interesting incident occurred during a presentation he gave at the Supreme Court to a group of Tajikistan judges. He was discussing the recent case of *Kennedy v. Louisiana* (554 U.S. 407, 2008), a decision that involved the constitutionality of capital punishment for rape of a juvenile. One of the visiting judges raised his hand during Tim's explanation of the case to ask if a person could be stoned to death if he so requested. Tim, in a moment of culture shock, had to explain that stoning was not possible under our federal and state constitutions and laws. Needless to say, Tim came away from this experience questioning whether his talks were really sinking in.

While at the court, Tim had no direct role in the work of the Justices, but he did meet them at various events and programs. He heard Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Antonin Scalia sing at the Court's Christmas party, which is something he says he won't forget. He also heard

Chief Justice Roberts speak at the meetings of the Judicial Conference of the United States and other events, and he was impressed by Justice Roberts' skills as an administrator and by his likeable personality.

At the end of Tim's year-long fellowship, he was offered a permanent position with the Administrative Office, which he respectfully declined. The offer was a great honor and a testament to the excellent work he had provided to the Supreme Court Fellows Program, but Tim knew he wanted to return to Louisiana. His wife and children had stayed in Louisiana during the year of his fellowship to avoid uprooting the kids from their schools and friends. However, after consulting with his wife and promising her that he would come home every other weekend, he did agree to extend his fellowship for a second year. He was one of only a few people in the history of the fellowship program, which started in the 1970s, to serve for two years. This is not surprising to anyone familiar with Tim's abilities and work ethic, and he kept his promise to his wife, spending lots of time in airports and on planes that second year as well. He found it immensely satisfying to continue working on several projects that he had started in his first year, and he was pleased to be able to contribute to the federal court system and also to learn more about judicial administration, much of which will be transferable to his work in our court. He said the experience was one he will never forget, and he worked with some people who will now be lifelong friends and colleagues.

After Tim returned to Louisiana in August 2010, he began practicing law with retired Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Pascal F. Calogero, Jr. In

addition to working with Justice Calogero during his two decades at our court, Tim also had clerked for Justice Calogero in 1986. During this recent collaboration, Tim worked on numerous issues, including bar discipline matters and other appeals, and he expected to continue doing that for a while. Then when Dr. Collins announced his retirement, a new path presented itself. After being selected as Dr. Collins' replacement, Tim returned to the Court on December 13, 2010, to begin his new term of service here.

As for the future, Tim has several issues he would like to work on that involve our courts, e.g.: court security, which was very advanced at the U.S. Supreme Court and the Administrative Office, and which is a matter of renewed concern in light of recent violent incidents such as the one in Phoenix in January; information technology, focusing on the integration of the best technology practices while not diminishing the human aspect of the judicial system; educating the public about how difficult, complex, and important the role of judge is in our system of government; and assisting the Louisiana Supreme Court Justices in advancing the administration of justice.

Tim Averill was a great asset to this Court for two decades, and we are very fortunate to have the new improved (if that is possible) version of him, with all the experience and knowledge he has gained from the United States Supreme Court Fellows Program. The library staff members are especially glad that he is back, because he loves books and does much of his own research here in the library. We expect to see him often sitting at his regular library table near the Louisiana acts.

Welcome home, Tim!

## SUPREME COURT OF LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2011 ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

by Georgia Chadwick

Members of the Historical Society met on Wednesday, January 19, at the Louisiana Supreme Court for their annual business meeting. Board President Donna D. Fraiche opened the meeting by calling for reports, and Board Member Louis D. Curet reported on his committee's efforts to recruit new members, which resulted in twenty-nine new members joining the Society in 2010. Efforts to identify those who might wish to join will continue. Treasurer Amelia W. Koch reported that the Society is on sound financial footing.

President Fraiche gave members an update on Society activities for the past year. During 2010, the Society co-sponsored two free CLE programs -- one in April and one in December. The April program, which was co-sponsored with the Law Library of Louisiana, was entitled "Civil Law Codification Experience in Louisiana" and was presented by Agustin Parise of the LSU Center for Civil Law Studies. The December program, entitled "Early Bird End-of-the-Year CLE," was co-sponsored with the A. P. Tureaud Inn of Court. Over 120 lawyers arrived for coffee and welcoming remarks by Justice Bernette J. Johnson. Justice Johnson then introduced speakers Bobby J. Delise, who presented a one-hour professionalism session, and Clare Jupiter, who gave a one-hour ethics presentation. Participants started off in the Law Library of Louisiana for a one-hour session on library resources presented by the library staff. In October, Donna Fraiche addressed judges attending the Annual Fall Judges' Conference in New Orleans, telling them about the Society's recent activities.



*Historical Society President Donna D. Fraiche  
with Honorable James F. McKay III*

Before the meeting concluded, Board Secretary Professor Paul R. Baier reported that the Historical Society had been awarded a 2010-2011 Jock Scott Community Partnership Panel Grant by the Louisiana Bar Foundation. The grant will be used to print color copies of his play about Justice Edward Douglass White, *Father Chief Justice*, to be distributed to the audience at the March 8, 2011, presentation of the play at the Library of Congress' Coolidge Auditorium. The play is being presented there to celebrate the centennial anniversary of White becoming Chief Justice of the United States on December 19, 1910. Copies of the play and a recent article from the *Loyola Law Review* will also be distributed throughout the year at events in Louisiana marking the centennial. Professor Baier thanked the Foundation for their generous support, and he also

expressed his gratitude to Law Librarian of Congress Roberta I. Shaffer for arranging for the use of the Coolidge Auditorium and for taking on the role of Fanny Holmes in the Washington D. C. production.

After the conclusion of the business meeting, Donna Fraiche introduced Robert J. Cangelosi, Jr., president of Koch and Wilson Architects. Mr. Cangelosi, an architectural historian and an architect specializing in the rehabilitation of historic structures, had been invited to talk about the French Quarter in the early 1900's and the construction of the New Orleans Courthouse. He co-edited the two latest volumes of the Friends of the Cabildo's acclaimed New Orleans Architecture series, Jefferson City and The University Section, and is currently working on The French Quarter.

In his lecture, Mr. Cangelosi gave a fascinating description of life in the French Quarter around the turn of the twentieth century. As other areas of New Orleans expanded, the French Quarter was in severe decline. Faced with a need for adequate facilities to house city and state courts and other repositories of the City of New Orleans, the City Council proposed replacing the Cabildo and the Presbytère with new structures to house the courts and other offices. Fortunately, that proposal was rejected, and a few years later the efforts of the State Bar resulted in another site being chosen.

A five-member Courthouse Commission was created by the Louisiana Legislature to select a site and to oversee construction and maintenance of a courthouse for New Orleans. The Commission chose another location in the French Quarter, the 400 block of Royal Street, and two squares were demolished. From that space rose the Beaux Arts marble and terra cotta building known as the New Orleans Courthouse, completed in 1909. The Louisiana Supreme Court sat for the first time in their fourth floor courtroom in October 1910. At the end of Mr. Cangelosi's talk, the audience showed their appreciation with enthusiastic applause.

Following the program, a reception was held in the Louisiana Supreme Court Museum, affording Society members and guests a chance to view the Law Library of Louisiana's exhibit on the construction of the Courthouse.

The Society welcomes new members, and anyone interested in joining should contact Georgia Chadwick at [gchadwick@lasc.org](mailto:gchadwick@lasc.org). δ

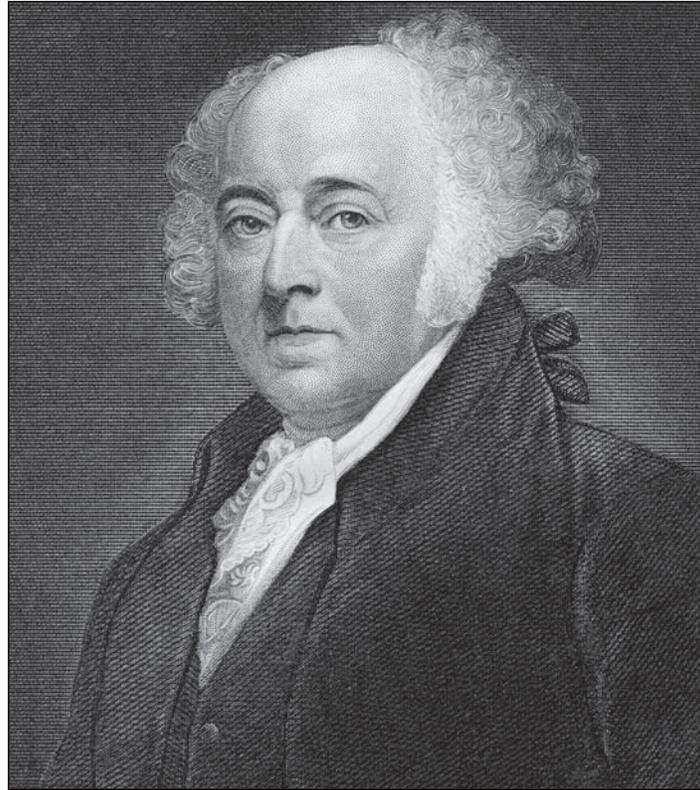
## UPCOMING LAW DAY EXHIBIT: JOHN ADAMS

by Georgia Chadwick

Law Day was the creation of American Bar Association President Charles S. Rhyne, who saw the need for a special day for Americans to celebrate our legal system. Rhyne wrote in 1958 that May 1 had been appropriated by world Communist leaders as a day to celebrate their achievements and show their might. Rhyne suggested that Americans set aside that same day, May 1, to reaffirm their faith in the rule of law and of the importance of the law in the lives of all free people.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued a proclamation establishing a tradition that from then on May 1 would have a different significance in the United States – that of Law Day. Congress passed a resolution in 1961 designating May 1 as Law Day, USA – “a special day of celebration by the people of the United States – in appreciation of their liberties and the reaffirmation of their loyalty to the United States and of their rededication to the ideals of equality and justice under law in their relations with each other and other countries; and for the cultivation of the respect for law that is so vital to the democratic way of life.” (36 U.S.C.A. 113) The President is requested to issue a proclamation yearly calling on citizens of the United States to celebrate their commitment to the rule of law and to reexamine the fundamental principles enshrined in our founding documents. All Presidential Law Day Proclamations, starting with that of President Eisenhower in 1958, are available on the Law Library of Congress Law Day Research Guide at [www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/law-day.php](http://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/law-day.php)

The American Bar Association selects a theme for annual Law



*This engraving of John Adams from Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography was done from a portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart while Adams was president.*

Day events and celebrations. This year the theme for Law Day, USA is “The Legacy of John Adams: From Boston to Guantanamo.” A description from the ABA Law Day webpage: “The 2011 Law Day theme provides us with an opportunity to assess and celebrate the legacy of John Adams, explore the historical and contemporary role of lawyers in defending the rights of the accused, and renew our understanding of and appreciation for the fundamental principle of the rule of law.” John Adams is one example of lawyers who have defended the rights of the accused, even when the client is unpopular or the matter involved is controversial. The passage of time brings historical and legal perspective to a situation which was surrounded by highly charged feelings and passion in its day.

The Law Library of Louisiana is preparing a Law Day exhibit

on the life of John Adams (1735-1826), political activist, constitutional theorist, patriot, advocate, and diplomat, who in 1797 became the second president of the United States and its first lawyer-president. Since John Adams's presidency, twenty-five presidents have been lawyers.

Adams, who practiced primarily as a trial lawyer for twenty years, is best known for his defense of British officer Captain Preston and his seven soldiers accused of murder in the 1770 Boston Massacre trials. This was just five years before the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. Other notable high-profile political cases Adams took on were defending John Hancock, whose ship *Liberty* was seized for smuggling wine, and defending a seaman named Michael Corbet, who killed a lieutenant from a naval press gang in self-defense.

Adams was born to a farmer in Massachusetts in 1735 and pursued a teaching career after his graduation from Harvard College in 1755. A year later he began to read law with James Putnam and in 1758 Adams was admitted to the Suffolk County bar. As he became politically active, Adams used his legal skills as Boston citizens resisted efforts by Britain to enforce customs duties and other taxes on the colonists. Adams made many contributions to the legal and political theories that justified American independence from Great Britain, served as a delegate to both the first and second Continental Congress, and was a member of the team who framed the Declaration of Independence.

As Minister to France, the Netherlands, and as the first American minister to Great Britain, Adams made singular contributions to his country, and while his diplomatic service kept him in Europe when the federal constitution was written, his ideas nonetheless shaped the creation of that document. When Adams drafted a constitution for Massachusetts in 1780, he applied his theories about checks and balances and separation of branches of government, concepts which later proved central to the nation's new constitution. Adams served as vice president for two terms to George Washington before his own election as president in 1796. In addition to being our first lawyer-president, Adams was the first president to live in the White House in the new capital city of Washington, and he was the first president to have a son also serve as president.

We welcome visitors to the Law Library to come view our 2011 Law Day, USA, exhibit which will be on display for the May 1 celebration. δ

## LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STATE LANDS: HISTORICAL LAND TITLE RECORDS



by Tara Lombardi

The Louisiana State Land Office (SLO) was created in 1844 for the purposes of selling state owned lands and maintaining the records, documents and plats of its sales. This office also functions as a permitting, surface, and mineral leasing agency for state owned lands and waterways. Other duties have been assigned to this office in more recent years including the State Land and Building System Inventory Sub-Program, promulgated by L.R.S. 39:11, 13, 14, where the SLO is charged with maintaining a database of state owned buildings (some 10,000) in addition to land.

For the purposes of this article, we are focusing on the Historical Land Title Records Sub-Program (L.R.S. 41 Chapters

1-6) that has recently been made available on the SLO's web site. The historical land documents consist of official U.S. and state historical land title information including original land claims pursuant to Spanish, British, and French Land Grants; all severance documents of U.S. and State public lands; all U.S. Official Township Survey plats and field notes; the U.S. and State Tract Books - which are an index of all the other documents mentioned; Section 16 School Lands; State Patents; and numerous related documents. These records make up the source of title for every acre of land in Louisiana, whether privately or publicly owned. The SLO has recently scanned a major portion of the records and made them accessible to the public on their web site for retrieval, viewing, and printing.

The historical land title records would be particularly helpful to people interested in their Louisiana genealogy because it traces land ownership all the way back to pre-statehood. It may also be useful for those involved in succession work. Within the database, users may begin their search by choosing a document type from a pull down

menu of forty titles/categories that range from primary legal documents like the American State Papers to handwritten ledgers entitled "Bearing Trees," "Choctaw Documents," "Land Grants," and "State Surveys." Users may also search by land district, township, range, section or surveyor if they have that information. Otherwise, they may search by original owner.

Once a record is found, users may view it in its entirety as it appeared in print, in most cases, as the SLO scanned in the original documents. Therefore the handwritten pages from the original documents have not been retyped, which makes them somewhat difficult to read, but there is an enlarging tool that acts as a magnifier.

In order to view these historical documents, follow this link to the State Land Office: [www.doa.la.gov/SLO/](http://www.doa.la.gov/SLO/). Then choose "Document Access" followed by "Historical Records." While visiting the SLO site, users may also access a "State Water Bottoms GIS" database, a "State Land Sales" database, a "Right-of-Way" database and a "Tax Records" search feature for adjudicated property. δ

## N.O. ARCHDIOCESE UNVEILS NEW ONLINE DATABASE

On Tuesday, February 1, 2011, the Archdiocese of New Orleans made available to the public previously unpublished sacramental records of births, deaths, and marriages dating to Louisiana's colonial era. The records have been digitized as PDFs of the original documents and are available for downloading at <http://www.archdiocese-no.org/archives/sfpc.php>. The Archdiocese plans to release more records online at a later date. The first batch of

records relates to individuals baptized in the Catholic Church without surnames, which means most of the records are for slaves and people of color of low status. The lack of surnames made it impossible to index the newly available records. A well-known index for individuals baptized with surnames was created in 1970. Digitizing these records has opened up genealogical research to families all over the country with ancestors from Louisiana.

Dedicated offices to record births, deaths, and marriages were non-existent in colonial New Orleans. Such record-keeping was done by the Catholic Church. French colonial law required slaves to be baptized in the Catholic faith. By custom slaveholders raised their slaves in the faith, which produced sacramental records tracking the slaves' life cycles. The newly digitized records offer a detailed glimpse into colonial life in New Orleans. According to Emilie Leumas, δ

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\$25.00 per search

Archdiocesan archivist, the records contain an account of how Père Antoine saved the Church records in the great fire of 1788, as well as accounts of children born to slaves being freed upon baptism. The records are a unique and fascinating resource that will provide researchers with a trove of historical and genealogical information. δ

# A HALF-DAY WITH BRYAN GARNER



by Marie Erickson

Last November, Bryan Garner hit town with his Advanced Legal Writing program, which I was lucky enough to attend. If you want to improve your writing, or just find out how bad your writing really is, sign up for the next seminar. You'll earn three hours of CLE credit, too.

## THE LIBRARY'S E-RESOURCES

BNA Labor &  
Employment Law

Gale LegalForms

HeinOnline

LegalTrac

Lexis Congressional

Lexis Shepard's

LexisOne

Loislaw

NFPA Standards

Nineteenth Century U.S.  
Newspapers

PACER

Westlaw/WestPack

WilsonWeb's Index to  
Legal Periodicals

For those of you who haven't heard of him, Mr. Garner is the top expert in usage, grammar, and legal writing. He got his J.D. from the University of Texas Law School in 1984, where he was the associate editor of the *Texas Law Review*. He studied English and Latin as an undergraduate at Texas, followed by two years of similar study at Oxford. When he discovered that no law school was interested in the kind of legal writing he wanted to teach, he started Law Prose. He roams the country from his Dallas headquarters, giving seminars to lawyers and training judicial clerks.

You'd think three hours of grammar and usage would be a real snore to anyone but a grammar geek, but Mr. Garner was as entertaining as he was informative. We corrected sentences, heard all about the differences between em-dashes and hyphens and when to use each, and drafted motions. Even the breaks had a changing assortment of on-topic quotations projected on screens. The seminar was fast-paced and we didn't waste any time.

Most of the courts had been posting their opinions years before the article went into effect. The Supreme Court, which publishes all its opinions, started posting them to [www.lasc.org](http://www.lasc.org) in 1996. There are links

The materials contained a multi-step example of a pleading, which started off with many pages of legalese and wound up, after the fourth draft, with one comprehensible page with every substantive issue on it. The section was a stellar example of how not to write a pleading, and then how to fix it. The materials were full of useful examples and exercises, and Garner's discussion, which he managed to make two-way in spite of the number of attendees, was full of useful tips, presented in a way that made them memorable.

The most fascinating part of the whole seminar was the "whirligig" -- a four-armed diagram with secondary arms radiating from the primary ones, and tertiary ones radiating from the secondary. The idea is to put four main thoughts on the four primary arms and then put sub-thoughts connected to those thoughts on the secondary arms, and so on. The goal is to keep you from worrying about what goes with what, so you can get your thoughts down in a stream-of-consciousness way with some sort of order. This provides an alternative to the

traditional outline, which forces you to fit ideas under topics in a hierarchical way. I found that Garner's method of organizing a brief, letter, or any document really did free up my thoughts.

The library owns all of Mr. Garner's books. One for general use is *Garner's Modern American Usage*, which is a compendium of usage (possessive pronouns, irregular verbs, commas) and definitions. All the entries are witty as well as clearly-written. You'll have fun just opening and reading sections at random, as well as putting it to practical use.

Another of Garner's books the library owns is *The Redbook: A Manual on Legal Style*. It's a compact, thorough guide to legal grammar and usage, reasonably-priced and spiral bound, so it lies (NOT "lays" -- Bryan would give you grief over that!) flat while you're using it. It gets a lot of use in our library.

Check out the library's catalog at [www.lasc.org](http://www.lasc.org) for the rest. To get to the catalog, click "library catalog" under "Law Library" at the upper left. δ

## APPEAL COURTS' OPINIONS AVAILABLE ONLINE

by Marie Erickson

On August 15, 2006, La. Code of Civil Procedure article 2168 went into effect, requiring the Louisiana Supreme Court and Louisiana Courts of Appeal to post their unpublished opinions on their websites, which "may be cited for authority." Because La. Civil Code article 1 says "the sources of the law are legislation and custom," these (and the published opinions) are secondary authority.

Most of the courts had been posting their opinions years before the article went into effect. The Supreme Court, which publishes all its opinions, started posting them to [www.lasc.org](http://www.lasc.org) in 1996. There are links

on the Supreme Court's site to the websites of the five Courts of Appeal, all of which have posted their opinions on their websites for some time. The 1st Circuit has opinions going back to 2006. The 2d Circuit has opinions going back to 2009, and is planning to load opinions back to 2000 soon. The 3d Circuit has opinions going back to 2003, while the 4th Circuit has published and unpublished opinions going back to 2001. The 5th Circuit has published and unpublished opinions going back to 2002.

The link for opinions appears on the homepage of each website. The electronic opinions,

released the same day as the paper slip opinions, are usually not available until several hours after the release of the paper due to the time it takes to load the opinions on the court's website. Some court websites are more user-friendly than others. On some, you have to open the opinion to see if it's published or unpublished. The majority of the sites organize the opinions by month, except the 4th circuit, which organizes opinion by year. Additionally, the sites for the 4th and 5th circuit allow searches by party name or docket number. In spite of the site differences, one thing is the same: all contain pdfs of the opinions, for free, and from an authoritative source. δ

# 150 YEARS OF THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

by Miriam Childs

On June 23, 2010, the Government Printing Office (GPO) kicked off its sesquicentennial anniversary celebration. GPO's primary mission is keeping America informed, which means ensuring the American public has access to information produced by the federal government. GPO is the government's central resource for producing, providing, authenticating, and preserving published government information in all forms. GPO maintains its responsibility to distribute federal information to the public through the Federal Depository Library System and by providing free online access to government information.

As long ago as the First Continental Congress in 1774, Congressional proceedings were printed for the public's benefit. Thomas Jefferson appointed Robert Aitken as the

Congressional printer in 1776. Dunlap and Claypoole printed the United States Constitution, thereby becoming the first official printers for the government. The use of commercial printers for printing Congressional proceedings continued until the establishment of GPO. Early commercial printers were usually newspaper publishers who owned printing plants that had enough capacity to take on Congressional printing jobs.

The proceedings and debates of the House and Senate were published in contemporary newspapers. *The Globe* was the first weekly newspaper that printed full reports of Congressional proceedings. Prior to 1819, printing for the government was done by contract and went to the lowest bidder. The printing work was largely unsatisfactory, made costly by delays and errors. To address these issues, Congress passed the Printing Act of

1819, which established printing prices and required both the House and the Senate to elect a printer for printing proceedings. Printers realized large profits as the volume of Congressional printing continually increased and improved printing technology worked in the printers' favor.

Congress attempted to address the high cost of printing by appointing the Select Committee on Public Printing in 1840. The Committee's charge was to find reasonable printing prices; report on the separation of government printing from newspaper publishers; and explore the possibility of a national printing office. The Committee concluded that only a government printing office could correct the flaws of the then-current printing system.

Congress switched back to a contract system in 1846, but by 1852 the system of appointing

a printer returned. An 1852 act established the Superintendent of the Public Printing, charged with supervising the work of Congressional printers. However, printers continued to become enriched at Congress' expense, even as quality declined. Scandals between some Superintendents and printers eventually mobilized the Congressmen who supported the creation of a government printing office. Signed by President James Buchanan, the Printing Act of June 23, 1860 (12 Stat. 118) provided for the establishment of the GPO on March 4, 1861, the same day President Lincoln was inaugurated.

In celebration of its 150 year anniversary, GPO will be unveiling an exhibit in March 2011. The exhibit will showcase documents printed by GPO that have a significance in American history, such as the Emancipation Proclamation and transcripts from the Watergate scandal. GPO launched a webpage devoted to its history at <http://www.gpo.gov/about/gpohistory/>. While celebrating its past, GPO is looking to the future with initiatives such as digital authentication of federal documents and the creation of FDSys, a digital content system for managing publications of the federal government. Please visit <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> to access federal government information and to learn more about GPO's activities and initiatives.

Sources: 100 GPO Years 1861-1961 : A History of United States Public Printing (Sesquicentennial ed.);

Introduction to United States Government Information Sources

8



The Government Printing Office building, 732 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC

De Novo  
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## SERENDIPITY II

by *Katie Nachod*

I wrote in the Summer 2009 issue of this newsletter about serendipity, the faculty for making desirable discoveries by accident. One of the reasons I enjoy being a librarian is that every day people ask me interesting and sometimes strange questions, and I have to look in interesting and sometimes strange places for the answers. While I'm looking in these places, I often find things that I wasn't seeking but which I am nonetheless very glad to have stumbled across.

A case in point is an article I found while researching something for a patron in our 1927 microfilm of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (our local newspaper, which we have in microfilm back to 1837). One of the most well-worn tropes is that life in days gone by was more carefree and less complicated

than in modern times, and that now we're bombarded with news stories that become more bizarre and ridiculous with every passing day. The following story, from Sunday, April 24, 1927, presented here in its entirety, lays bare the lie in that cliché:

“Menu of Goldfish as Party Contest Brings Divorce.’ Los Angeles. April 23. Her husband and guests held a goldfish eating tournament in her home, Mrs. Ruth Newton complained, in seeking a divorce from John K. Newton. John, she testified, challenged his friends at a party to a contest whereupon one guest swallowed four goldfish, which happened to constitute the piscatorial population of the Newton household. Then John sent out to a seed store and got a dozen more goldfish, which were placed in the family bathtub and the contest resumed.”

Sadly, the story ends there, leaving many questions unanswered. One is left to wonder, for instance, exactly how much alcohol was involved in this party? Were there children in the Newton family, and if so, what did they think when they woke up and found that their beloved goldfish had been eaten alive? Did Mrs. Newton go on to live a happy life with a second husband who wasn't prone to starting contests based around goldfish swallowing? Could the (uncredited) writer who managed to use the phrase “piscatorial population” in a filler piece of less than 100 words have gone on to bigger and better things?

Keep your eyes open for those happy accidents that might come your way, and enjoy them. You never know what you'll find!