

Summer 2019: Tribute to Valparaiso University Law School (1879-2019)

Thanksgiving for the Library: Proverbs 2:1-11 (NABRE)

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Recommended Citation

Mary Persyn, *Thanksgiving for the Library: Proverbs 2:1-11 (NABRE)*, 53 Val. U. L. Rev. 1157 (2019).
Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/vulr/vol53/iss4/28>

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THANKSGIVING FOR THE LIBRARY *PROVERBS 2:1-11 (NABRE)*

Mary Persyn, M.LS, J.D. – VU Law Library Director, 1984-2012

¹ *My son, if you receive my words
and treasure my commands,*
² *Turning your ear to wisdom,
inclining your heart to understanding;*
³ *Yes, if you call for intelligence,
and to understanding raise your voice;*
⁴ *If you seek her like silver,
and like hidden treasures search her out,*
⁵ *Then will you understand the fear of the LORD;
the knowledge of God you will find;*
⁶ *For the LORD gives wisdom,
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
⁷ *He has success in store for the upright,
is the shield of those who walk honestly,*
⁸ *Guarding the paths of justice,
protecting the way of his faithful ones,*
⁹ *Then you will understand what is right and just,
what is fair, every good path;*
¹⁰ *For wisdom will enter your heart,
knowledge will be at home in your soul,*
¹¹ *Discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you.*

Christopher Columbus Langdell, the first dean of Harvard Law School and the founder of modern legal education, once said: “The work done in the library is what the scientific men call original investigation. The library is to us what a laboratory is to the chemist or the physicist, and what the museum is to the naturalist.”

What we tried to do in the Library was to develop a collection of materials—first mostly in paper and later mostly electronic—that supported the education of the students and the research of the professors. Second, we tried to teach our students the research skills that they would need to be successful attorneys.

The Library changed tremendously from when I came to VU in 1984 until today. In 1984 the library and law school were in old Wesemann, now—with an addition added after the law school moved out—Kretzmann Hall. For those of you who have visited the business office in Kretzmann, that was the main floor of the law library.

We moved into this building in the summer of 1986 and it was a wonder – high ceilings, enough space. The building went from 25,000 or so square feet to 93,000. The faculty all had real offices. The library staff all had offices. There was a locker room for the students with 426 lockers in it. There was a women’s restroom near the classrooms with more than 2 stalls in it. We went from a courtroom and 2 classrooms to a courtroom and 6 classrooms.

The library was put on the side of the building facing the grove. The architect told me that he’d been told that studying law was hard, so he wanted the students to have a calming view when they were studying – some of the faculty were not pleased.

We got some new library furniture and some new book stacks. Some of you faculty and staff may have had in your office the black early-American chairs with a previous VUSL logo on them, or you students may have sat in one of those chairs when visiting faculty offices. Those were the library chairs in old Wesemann.

You may have noticed that the ends of the arms on all those chairs were scarred. That was because the height of the arms of the chairs were not measured and compared to the height of the tables before they were purchased. The tables were too low for the chairs.

When I first came, we had a dedicated Lexis terminal with an acoustical coupler to access Lexis. The database (singular) we were searching was federal case law and we searched using Boolean search methods. You connected through the coupler over a phone line to Lexis, input your search, and then went for a cup of coffee while the search ran.

I remember when we installed the first word processors in the library. Another wonder.

The developments in technology and the digitization of legal materials were the most significant change in my years as a law librarian.

The Law Library space, except for a couple of memorable floods when water pipes froze and then burst, served us well.

I am sorry to see all the materials disposed of, but I hope that the University is going to repurpose Wesemann, under whatever name, to continue to serve the University in the future.