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Harris County Law Library

Mariann Sears, Director

February 25, 2019

American Association for State and Local History
Attn: Awards Committee
2021 21st Ave S., Suite 320
Nashville, TN 37212

RE: Critical Review of the Effect of the Summer 2018 Issue of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society Journal

Dear AASLH Awards Committee Members:

I write today to offer my critical assessment of the effect the Summer 2018 issue of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society Journal (“Journal”) has had and will continue to have at the Harris County Law Library (“Law Library”), a public law library located in Houston, Texas. The Law Library assisted more than 60,000 Harris County residents in 2018. Most of the Law Library’s patrons are self-represented litigants. Many are indigent. The Summer 2018 issue of the Journal, nominated for AASLH’s Award of Excellence, focuses on the past and present contributions of African-American judges in Texas. The Harris County Law Library is among the many constituencies the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society and its Journal serve. Although my credentials only tangentially lend themselves to a critical review of the scholarship involved with the publication of the Summer 2018 issue, as the director of one of the oldest and most storied public county law libraries in Texas, I believe my credentials qualify me to offer an assessment of the impact that issue has had and will continue to have on this institution and, by extension, on the numerous other public law libraries in Texas.

Although each of the articles in the Summer 2018 issue were impactful, one in particular left a lasting impression on the Law Library. In his *A Personal Remembrance of the Unforgettable Justice Henry Doyle*, the Honorable Murry Cohen, Retired Justice of Houston’s First Court of Appeals of Texas, recounts how fellow Justice Henry Doyle successfully sued Harris County in

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The Harris County Law Library is part of the Office of Vince Ryan, Harris County Attorney.





the mid-1950's to enjoin the County from excluding African-Americans from the basement cafeteria located in the Harris County Courthouse. Significantly, a few years earlier in 1951, a similar suit was filed against Harris County by Robert W. Hainsworth, a contemporary of Henry Doyle. Hainsworth, a practicing attorney in Houston, challenged the segregation practices of the Harris County Law Library. At the time, African-American attorneys were permitted to use the Law Library and its resources, but they were required to sit at a single table designated by a sign that said "Colored." Hainsworth's challenge against the Law Library's segregation practices failed in the Harris County District Court, and he pursued all appellate remedies in state court. Ultimately, on May 12, 1954, the Texas Supreme Court denied his writ of error, finding no reversible error in the lower court rulings. The Texas Supreme Court's denial of Hainsworth's writ came at a time when the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was still the law of the land. On May 17, 1954, however, just five days after the Texas Supreme Court denied Hainsworth's writ, the United States Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned *Plessy*. Hainsworth thereafter filed a petition for certiorari with the United States Supreme Court, but the petition was denied without comment.

Despite this obvious injustice, Hainsworth continued his work towards equality. In 1955, Hainsworth, Henry Doyle, and several other African-American attorneys founded the Houston Lawyers Association, an association of African-American lawyers who were denied admission to the Houston Bar Association because of their race. The Summer 2018 issue of the Journal has profoundly influenced the Law Library by weaving together the inspiring stories of Texas African-American jurists and attorneys, both past and present. As a consequence of the information contained in the articles of this issue, the Law Library has begun gathering materials from its collection and the Harris County Archives to create a physical exhibit and a digital exhibit that will highlight the contributions of Justice Doyle, Robert Hainsworth, and other founding members of the Houston Lawyers Association. The exhibits will launch in May 2019, near the 65th anniversary of the issuance of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Because it has inspired action on the part of the Law Library to make the history of African-American jurists in Texas more accessible to all of its patrons, the Summer 2018 issue of the Texas Supreme Court Historical Society Journal is deserving of the AASLH's Award of Excellence. Inspiration to action seems to me to be the very definition of excellence.

I have enclosed my résumé for your reference. Please let me know if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mariann Sears". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 's'.

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PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND EXPERIENCE

EMPLOYER: Harris County Law Library, a Division of the Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston, Texas

Position: Director

Dates: February 2012 to present

Responsibilities: Responsible for the overall administration of the Harris County Law Library, including long- and short-range planning; budgeting; acquisition of materials and technologies; supervision of the law library staff; enforcement of law library rules; promotion and marketing law library; oversight of training programs for patrons.

Accomplishments: Oversaw the law library's move in 2012 from the 17th floor of 1019 Congress to the 1st floor of 1019 Congress; negotiated the law library's digital and print subscriptions, including new subscriptions with WestlawNext and Lexis Advance; maintained and expanded the law library's relationship with relevant stakeholders, including governmental officials, attorneys, local bar associations, other law libraries, and the public; implemented the law library's succession plan with the hiring of a deputy director in 2014; revamped the law library's web presence and initiated its presence on social media; promoted the law library so as to more than double the number of patron visits from 2012 to 2014; planned and oversaw the law library's centennial celebration in 2015; maintained strong vendor relations.

EMPLOYER: Greenberg Traurig LLP, Houston, Texas

Position: Firm-wide Research Services Manager

Dates: February 2011 through January 2012

Responsibilities: Oversaw and managed all research and reference delivery for global law firm of more than 1700 attorneys with offices in more than 30 locations. Managed a talented research staff of 14 professionals across the country. Promoted the services of the research team to the attorneys and to other departments within the firm, including marketing and business development. Trained attorneys, staff, and new researchers as needed on various research resources. Analyzed, tested, evaluated, and recommended the purchase of new research products. Developed and implemented long-range strategic plans for the research team. Developed and oversaw the professional development programming for the research services staff.

Accomplishments: Perfected the excellent provision of research services in a virtual team environment. Strengthened skills relating to management of a large and diverse library staff. Provided unparalleled customer service to attorneys and other departments in the firm's domestic and international offices. Worked closely and effectively with firm's upper administrative personnel to promote the services of the research team and to further the firm's business goals and objectives.

EMPLOYER: Thompson & Knight LLP (pre-merger—Brown, Parker & Leahy, LLP)

Positions: Firm-wide Library Manager (October 2003 to January 2011); Houston Library Supervisor (June 1999 to October 2003); Library Director at BP&L (September 1997 to June 1999)

Dates: September 1997 through January 2011

Responsibilities: Responsible for the entire operation of all libraries in firm's 6 domestic offices: managed and developed \$3M annual budget; managed, administered, and evaluated all library services and materials; established internal operating policies and procedures; managed and oversaw full- and part-time library professionals, employees, and filing staff; managed collection development; negotiated vendor contracts; integrated and moved other law office collections into the firm's library; provided research and reference assistance to attorneys, paralegals, staff, and clients; provided formal and informal training on print and electronic services; developed internal databases for attorney and library use.

Accomplishments: Developed a team approach to librarianship. Learned efficient time-management skills. Provided unparalleled customer service to attorneys in the firm's domestic and international offices. Sharpened print and electronic research capabilities in all areas of law. Maintained strong vendor relations.

EMPLOYER: Andrews & Kurth LLP, Houston, Texas

Position: Senior Attorney, Appellate Division of Litigation Section

Dates: August 1988 through August 1997

Responsibilities: Researched and drafted appellate briefs, legal memoranda, pleadings, and motions involving wide-ranging, complex, and novel issues in all areas of civil law. Organized thousands of documents for production by asbestos manufacturers in large property abatement suits. Acquired extensive experience in computer-assisted legal research.

Accomplishments: Promoted from Staff Attorney to Senior Attorney in 1989. Honed research and writing skills and earned the respect of superiors for accomplishments in those areas. Learned defense strategies and the importance of being a team player in large, complicated, and multi-faceted litigations and appeals.

EMPLOYER: Court of Appeals for the Fourteenth Judicial District of Texas, Houston, Texas

Position: Briefing Attorney

Dates: May 1985 through August 1986

Responsibilities: Extensively researched civil and criminal legal issues. Drafted and edited both published and unpublished legal opinions for the approval of the Justices of the Court. Proofread and revised legal opinions prior to their publication in West's Southwestern Reporter.

Accomplishments: Acquired invaluable knowledge in the appellate practice area. Attained a high degree of professional satisfaction from working closely with jurists who possessed varied writing styles and judicial demeanors.

EDUCATION

Graduate: University of North Texas, School of Library and Information Sciences, Houston, Texas (Distance Program)

Enrolled: September 1993 to August 1997

Degree: MLS, December 1997 (summa cum laude)

Cumulative GPA: 4.0 on a 4.0 scale

Legal: University of Houston Law Center, Houston, Texas

Enrolled: September 1980 to May 1983

Degree: JD, May 1983

Licensing: Member of the State Bar of Texas, 1984 to present

Undergraduate: Ohio University, Athens, Ohio

Enrolled: September 1977 to March 1979

Degree: AB, March 1979 (summa cum laude)

Major: English
Cumulative GPA: 3.9 on a 4.0 scale
Class Rank: 43 of 2,205

University of Akron, Akron, Ohio
Enrolled: September 1975 to June 1977
Major: English
Minor: German
Cumulative GPA: 3.8 on a 4.0 scale

PUBLICATIONS

“Ask a Director: Paying for Professional Development,” in *AALL Spectrum*,
November/December 2018

“Promoting the Value of the Law Firm Library,” in *How to Manage a Law Firm Library*,
Aspatore Books, 2008

“Congratulations—You’ve Been Promoted! Now What?” in *Law Librarians in the New Millennium*, March/April 2005

“Post-Trial Preservation of Error in State Court,” Fourth Annual Conference On Techniques For Handling Civil Appeals In State And Federal Court (presented June 16 & 17, 1994) (co- author with Lori Meghan Gallagher)

MEMBERSHIPS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

American Association of Law Libraries, 1997 to present
Special Libraries Association, 2003 to present
Houston Area Law Librarians, 1996 to present
Houston Area Law Librarians Treasurer, 2007-2011
Lexis Library Advisory Board, 2009-2011
West Advisory Board, 2006-2008
Teaching Research in Private Law Libraries Council (LexisNexis), 2006
Texas Bar Foundation Fellow
Houston Bar Foundation Fellow
Texas Supreme Court Historical Society
Case Note and Comment Editor—*Houston Journal of International Law*, 1981-1983