

2012

Books on My Desk

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Recommended Citation

Mary Whisner, *Books on My Desk*, 104 LAW LIBR. J. 597 (2012), <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/librarians-articles/42>

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Practicing Reference . . .

Books on My Desk*

Mary Whisner**

Are there still books that reference librarians need to keep on their desks? Ms. Whisner considers this topic as well as discussing her gradual shift from using reference books in print to using their electronic counterparts.

¶1 A while back I wrote a column highlighting three of my favorite reference books.¹ I thought of doing a reprise here, discussing a few other favorite books. I'll do that, but the passage of time—even less than ten years—demands that I also address format. Do I still want to talk about favorite *books*? Does anyone still care about them?

¶2 For now, yes. We still have physical books in our reference office, and we often pull them off the shelf to use them with our patrons. And I still have printed reference books in my own office (and home) and often use them. But we are in a period of transition: some online resources do the job better than books. And, even if we prefer a printed book, some resources are no longer available in print. It's not just online versus print—e-books and mobile apps lie somewhere between. Like a book, an e-book or mobile app is typically used by one person at a time, but like an online source, it usually allows for keyword searching and other features not available in print. E-books and mobile apps share disadvantages with online sources, too: unlike books, they are often dependent on licenses and continued support from a vendor. A book on the shelf is vulnerable to fire and theft, but you own it, and a remote corporation can't cut off your access.

* © Mary Whisner, 2012. Thanks to my friend Nancy Unger for reviewing a draft.

** Reference Librarian, Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library, University of Washington School of Law, Seattle, Washington.

1. Mary Whisner, *These Are a Few of My Favorite Books*, 95 LAW LIBR. J. 129, 2003 LAW LIBR. J. 7. One of the books I highlighted was the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, which was then in its 121st edition. *Id.* at 130, ¶ 5. The U.S. Census Bureau terminated “the collection of data for the Statistical Compendia program effective October 1, 2011,” as the result of a budget review. *What Is the Statistical Abstract?*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012). ProQuest, a private publisher, will begin compiling and publishing the data. Press Release, ProQuest, ProQuest Picks Up Where the Census Bureau Left Off: *The Statistical Abstract of the United States Will Be Back This Year* (Mar. 22, 2012), <http://www.proquest.com/en-US/aboutus/pressroom/12/20120322.shtml>. The price will increase more than fourfold, from \$44 to \$179. *Update on the Statistical Abstract and a New Threat to Government Data*, WATER LIBRARIAN'S BLOG (May 22, 2012), <http://waterlibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/05/22/update-on-the-statistical-abstract-and-a-new-threat-to-government-data/>.

My Conversion to E-Books

¶3 I have been experiencing the shift in formats in my personal life as well as my professional life. When I was younger, I used to read a lot of books. Then all sorts of technological developments hit society. The Internet, Gopher, FTP, e-mail, e-commerce, Google. And you know what? I still read a lot of books in hard copy. I got a laptop. I kept reading printed books.

¶4 In 2009, I bought an Amazon Kindle. In 2011, I won an iPad in a drawing at the AALL meeting.² These devices have changed my physical experience of reading, but I still read a lot of books.

¶5 Reading e-books is often much more convenient than reading printed books. I used to carry a book with me to read at lunch or while waiting for an appointment. Now I carry my Kindle. Sometimes the size of a book determined where I would read it: *The Treasury of the Encyclopædia Britannica*,³ for instance, was too big to carry to lunch, so I only read it at home. But even very long books can be carried in the Kindle quite comfortably, so now my lunchtime reading is not restricted by volume size. When I traveled, I often carried several books, making packing tricky—I had to choose books I would want to read but that weren't too heavy or bulky. If I was close to finishing a book when I left on the trip, I'd generally leave it at home to finish on my return—why carry a whole book when I'd only want to read the last bit of it on the trip? The Kindle has lightened my load considerably. It is wonderful to have a selection of books with me—whether I am traveling or at home.

¶6 Before, I often had several books in my queue, as evidenced by precarious piles of books near my bed and other books scattered around the house. Now there are a lot fewer books in stacks and cluttering up counters and tables. And it's easier to be reading two or more at once. I still read each one straight through, from title page to final page, but I jump between books as my mood dictates.⁴

¶7 While the Kindle lightened my load, the iPad broadened my selection: I use it to read books and articles in PDF,⁵ as well as blogs, Twitter feeds, and web sites. Once I checked out a book from the university library that required downloading software; I read that on my iPad.⁶ Recently, I used the two devices together, reading text on the Kindle and looking at maps and illustrations on the iPad.⁷

2. I complied with the ethics rules for state employees accepting door prizes, which meant paying my own registration for the conference and taking a vacation day to attend. See FAQ, WASH. STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD, <http://www.ethics.wa.gov/RESOURCES/FAQ.htm> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012) ("Assuming that the door prize was offered to all attendees, then if your attendance at the conference was paid by your agency, the prize belongs to the agency. If you paid your own way to the conference, then you may keep the prize."). So the iPad wasn't truly free, but I was very glad to get it nonetheless. BNA's gift got me started with a device I enjoy and find very useful, both professionally and personally.

3. THE TREASURY OF THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA (Clifton Fadiman ed., 1992).

4. See JASPER FFORDE, THE EYRE AFFAIR (2002) for a whimsical take on jumping into and out of books.

5. It's possible to read PDFs on a Kindle, but the display is better on an iPad.

6. The book was ALLAN C. HUTCHINSON, IS EATING PEOPLE WRONG? GREAT LEGAL CASES AND HOW THEY SHAPED THE WORLD (2011). Published by Cambridge University Press, this used Bluefire Reader (<http://www.bluefirereader.com>).

7. The books were DAVID MCCULLOUGH, THE GREATER JOURNEY: AMERICANS IN PARIS (2011) (color photos of art) and WILLIAM R. TROTTER, A FROZEN HELL: THE RUSSO-FINISH WINTER WAR OF 1939–1940 (1991) (military maps).

¶8 Fundamentally, reading e-books is reading books. Either way, I am reading a sustained work by an author (whether fiction or nonfiction), arranged in a specific order, that makes an argument or presents a narrative. The Kindle's search tool allows me to vary from my linear front-to-back path, but for most books, the variation isn't much greater than the flipping I used to do in printed books: back to previously read passages, ahead to the photographic insert or the index.⁸ Even without the stack of books on my headboard or the poundage in my carry-on bag, I am still a reader of books.

“Reading” Reference Books

¶9 Few of the books I read on my Kindle are reference books.⁹ Reference books are not typically meant to be read straight through. You use the table of contents, the index, and perhaps tabs in the margin to get to the piece of information you need, grab it, and move on. Of course, finding, grabbing, and moving on are the strengths of many electronic tools. If you want to pluck a sentence out of a case or find a particular clause in a lengthy statute, searching is the way to go. And a well-structured database can increase the efficiency and power of searching. So it is little surprise that we all use many reference tools online. Want to figure out who played Erin Brockovich's boss? Use the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), either through a browser or as an app. Want to find out how far it is from Boston to Portland, Maine? Use Google Maps (again, via either browser or app). What's the capital of Estonia? What did the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo do? What are the milestones in Britney Spears's career and personal life? Wikipedia, Wikipedia, Wikipedia.

Favorite Reference Books

¶10 If electronic sources are so handy, why do we still have shelves of books in our reference office? Why are there often books open on my desk? When I began thinking about this column, I thought I'd highlight several books that I frequently use in print: *The Bluebook*, dictionaries, the *AALL Directory & Handbook*, and so on. That would help me explore the reasons I use them: efficiency, convenience, authority, habit. In the course of working on the column, though, I tried electronic versions of my favorite reference books, and I found that I liked them.

The Bluebook

¶11 *The Bluebook*¹⁰ is probably the book I turn to most frequently. Since 2008, it has been available online (www.legalbluebook.com) by subscription. I like the online version well enough. It's certainly nice to be able to search and to add one's

8. The Kindle's search feature is not as elaborate or flexible as the searching we're used to in commercial databases or Google, but it can be very convenient. Even as a teenager, I used to wish for a way to find quickly some character in a novel who was reintroduced to the story after I'd forgotten the early mentions—and now I can!

9. I do have some books on my Kindle that I use for reference: a Bible, a set of Shakespeare, and the built-in dictionary, which I'll discuss later (*infra* ¶18).

10. THE BLUEBOOK: A UNIFORM SYSTEM OF CITATION (19th ed. 2010). For more on this work, see Mary Whisner, *The Dreaded Bluebook*, 100 LAW LIBR. J. 393, 2008 LAW LIBR. J. 20.

own annotations. But when a student comes into the reference office with a citation question, I reach to the shelf behind me and pull out the object with the blue covers and the white spiral binding. It's faster than turning to the computer, opening the web site, and logging in. Since I know my way around the book, I seldom need the search features available online: I can just flip to the section I need. It's easier in print than online to skim several related rules and flip from a rule to a table and back (keeping a finger or bookmark between pages). I can point to the relevant page and hand the book to the student. And, when the rule isn't clear, it's easier to plopp the book on the desk so the student and I can look at it and frown over it together. When I'm writing, my *Bluebook* is more often on my desk than it is on its shelf.

¶12 After writing the preceding paragraph, I saw an exhibitor at the AALL meeting who has licensed the *Bluebook* and created an iPad app. Rulebook (<http://readyreferenceapps.com/rulebook.php>) already offers federal and state rules. The user downloads a free app and can then buy different sets of rules (e.g., Federal Rules of Civil Procedure or Federal Rules of Evidence for \$1.99 each, California Appellate Rules for \$2.99).¹¹

¶13 I downloaded the app shortly after the meeting, eager to try out the *Bluebook*. It turned out that it hadn't been released yet, but would be soon. I bought it the day it was available.¹² As an early adopter, I have found a couple of things to tweak (and I have written about them to the developer), but overall it's very handy. It's easy to navigate, with a table of contents on the left of the screen. The index has hyperlinks to the rules, and the whole thing is searchable.¹³ I have inserted some notes where my state's style rules vary from the *Bluebook*'s and I've created a couple of bookmarks. I think I will be happy using it. Unlike the online version, it doesn't require an Internet connection and logging in. And unlike the print version, it doesn't add weight to my bag when I take work to a coffee shop. To me, that convenience is worth the price.¹⁴ So it could be that a year from now I won't always have my *Bluebook* open on my desk. But I will probably still use it in the reference office, because I'd much rather let a student walk off with a library copy of the print *Bluebook* than with my iPad!¹⁵

11. I mentioned to the man at the booth that you can get the federal rules free from the Legal Information Institute (<http://www.law.cornell.edu>). He explained that the app enables annotation and highlighting, probably worth the modest price tag. Plus the app allows you to search across all content—another useful feature.

12. See Press Release, Ready Reference Apps, The Bluebook Is Now Available as a Mobile App (Aug. 13, 2012), http://readyreferenceapps.com/press_release.pdf.

13. Well, almost the whole thing. You can't search the examples, because they are formatted as tables, but the developer plans to tag those so that they can be searched too. E-mail from Greg Hoole, President, Ready Reference Apps, LLC, to author (Aug. 10, 2012) (on file with author).

14. The *Bluebook* is \$39.99 as an app. *Rulebook*, iTUNES, <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rulebook/id454619081?mt=8> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012). In paper it is \$34; online subscriptions are \$32 for one year, \$42 for two years, and \$50 for three. *Purchase Bluebook Products*, THE BLUEBOOK, <https://www.legalbluebook.com/Purchase/Products.aspx> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012).

15. For a little more detail about the three formats of the *Bluebook*, with screenshots from the two electronic versions, see Mary Whisner, *Bluebook Technologies*, GALLAGHER BLOGS (Aug. 27, 2012, 12:34 P.M.).

BNA's Court Directory

¶14 *BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks*¹⁶ also offers speed and efficiency. It is so close to the reference desk that I can reach it and open it faster than I could type **central district california** in Google. The alphabetical arrangement makes navigation speedy. Like the *Bluebook*, it's easy to show to a patron. Unlike many court web sites, it lists the clerk's office and all the judges for each court together, often on one page. The diagrams of state court systems are also convenient visual aids to show patrons who wonder where a particular decision fits in the hierarchy. BNA (now Bloomberg BNA) has a court directory app for \$9.99, but it doesn't tempt me. Unlike the *Bluebook*, a court directory isn't something I need when I'm away from the reference office. If I were a litigator with a geographically broad practice, maybe it would be handy. (A litigator who only practices in one or two courts could have all the directory information needed in a short document.)

English Dictionaries

¶15 I like to have a dictionary or two in print. In my office and home I have personal copies of the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.¹⁷ I became a fan decades ago—I liked the usage notes and the pictures—and I've stayed with it. I pull it off the shelf fairly often. But print is not my only format for dictionaries. I love having electronic access to the OED Online through our university library. It not only includes the text of the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but it also has updates not available in print.

¶16 I also use free online dictionaries: Dictionary.com gained credibility with me when I learned that it included content from the *American Heritage Dictionary*.¹⁸ Recently, I found Vocabulary.com, which has clear definitions and lots of examples, without the ads and visual clutter of Dictionary.com.¹⁹ Oxford also offers free content, in Oxford Dictionaries Online (<http://oxforddictionaries.com>), which unfortunately has a lot of distracting ads.²⁰

16. *BNA'S DIRECTORY OF STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS, JUDGES, AND CLERKS* (Catherine A. Kitchell comp., 2012).

17. The first edition was published in 1969, when I was a teenager. Perhaps my loyalty is like other Baby Boomers' affection for bands that were popular in their youth. I still have the original paperback.

18. See *Content-Specific Notices*, DICTIONARY.COM, http://dictionary.reference.com/help/content_notices.html (last visited Aug. 20, 2012) (referring to content from the third edition of *American Heritage*, copyright 1996, 1992). That's not the only source: "[O]ur content is licensed from over 15 trusted and established sources including Random House and Harper Collins." *Our Products*, DICTIONARY.COM, <http://content.dictionary.com/about/products> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012).

19. It's much more than a dictionary: it offers vocabulary lists and exercises to help people learn. It's owned by Thinkmap, which offers the Visual Thesaurus and other products for sale, but makes Vocabulary.com available free. See Press Release, Thinkmap, Thinkmap Launches Vocabulary.com, Revolutionizing Vocabulary Instruction (Apr. 11, 2011), <http://www.thinkmap.com/pressrelease.jsp?id=1290>.

20. The site has "a comprehensive current English dictionary, grammar guidance, puzzles and games, and a language blog; as well as up-to-date bilingual dictionaries in French, German, Italian, and Spanish." *About*, OXFORD DICTIONARIES, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/about?region=us> (last visited Aug. 20, 2012).

¶17 Interestingly, some patrons still ask for a “regular” dictionary (as opposed to a law dictionary)—and they don’t ask: “Where can I find a credible dictionary online?” But maybe the ones who come to the reference office aren’t a representative sample. The users who prefer electronic dictionaries might not be asking about them.²¹

¶18 The dictionary that came with my Kindle has been a treat.²² Although I have always consulted dictionaries when I was writing or editing, for many years I seldom felt the need to go find a dictionary to look up words when I was reading casually. But the Kindle makes it so easy to look up words that I often do. If I’m even a little uncertain or curious, I move the cursor to the word and jump to the definition. Recently I read in a P.G. Wodehouse story: “Bradshaw . . . emitted hoarse chuckles like minute guns.”²³ I wondered: Which “minute” is it? The one that means “tiny” or the one that means “sixty seconds”? Is there some special gun that’s called a “minute gun”? Obviously, I could get the sense of the passage without knowing more, and if it had been a bother to look up, I would have shrugged and kept reading. But I was reading on my Kindle, so I clicked and was interested to learn that a minute gun is “a gun fired at intervals of a minute, esp. at a funeral.” So *that’s* how Bradshaw was laughing, eh? No wonder the narrator was annoyed. In addition to using this dictionary by linking from another book, I sometimes use it on its own. It’s convenient to have it with me when I don’t have other dictionaries at hand.

¶19 So I still have my dictionary in print, but I’m not sure I always will. Indeed, I’ve taken another step in my transition. As I was working on this column, I bought the *American Heritage Dictionary* as an iPad app, and I like it. The app is easy to navigate, with bars for initial letter and then initial and second character (OA, OB, OC, etc.). The definitions and usage notes are nicely laid out. And it still contains the pictures I enjoy.

¶20 On my iPad I now have the fifth edition (2011), which is more current than my print copies. As you’d expect, the newer editions pick up newer words or usages. For example, the fifth includes “app” (meaning computer application), the fourth has it but labels it informal, and the third doesn’t have it at all. Seeing it in the fifth makes me more confident using it here. And it’s not just vocabulary; dictionaries often include entries that provide basic information about famous people, countries, cities, and so on. Being new, the fifth has entries (with pictures) for Barack Obama and Michelle Obama that the earlier editions lack.

¶21 I was also curious about whether there were as many pictures in the app as in print. My first test was to look for a picture of a pointer (that’s the breed of dog that sprawls on our couch). The third and fourth editions have photos of pointers, but the fifth edition app does not. To make my test a little more systematic, I looked at the beginning of the O’s. In that small sample I found more photos in the app than in my latest print volume (table 1 shows my results). The illustrations look good, and if you tap one, you see it enlarged. Last year I gave away my old two-

21. It’s been a hard sell getting students at the tutoring center where I volunteer to try a print dictionary. One student insisted Dictionary.com was faster, even after I repeatedly beat him in races to look up the words in the list his teacher had assigned.

22. THE NEW OXFORD AMERICAN DICTIONARY (2d ed. 2005) (e-book copyright 2008).

23. P.G. WODEHOUSE, *A Shocking Affair*, in TALES OF ST. AUSTIN’S 44, 47 (2008).

volume microprint edition of the OED.²⁴ I might be on my way to parting with my print *American Heritage Dictionary*, too.

Table 1

Comparison of Illustrations in Versions of the *American Heritage Dictionary*

Illustration Only in 4th Ed. (Print)	Illustration in Both 4th Ed. (Print) and 5th Ed. (App)	Illustration Only in 5th Ed. (App)
oak apple	Edna O'Brien	oak
Joyce Carol Oates	Sandra Day O'Connor ^a	Georgia O'Keeffe
oboe	Annie Oakley ^b	Eugene O'Neill
observatory	obelisk	Barack Obama
	obi	Michelle Obama
	oblanceolate leaf	obento
	oblique angle	oblique triangle
	obovate leaf	obverse
	obtuse angle	
	ocarina	
	occlusion	
	ocean sunfish	

^aThe newer edition has a more recent photo.

^bThe newer edition has a different photo—not necessarily more recent, just different.

Black's Law Dictionary

¶22 We have print copies of *Black's Law Dictionary* on dictionary stands, and they are used. In fact, they're used so much that sometimes they are on tables or waiting to be reshelved, rather than on their stands. We also have a copy in the reference office, both for our own use and to show patrons. Again, it is convenient and fast to use this source in paper.

¶23 Even if the patron is a law student and therefore has access to Westlaw, I go for the book, rather than suggesting we go online to look up a term. Being used to print, where I find, say, "libel" by going to the Ls, I have often found Westlaw's version surprising: I type in "libel" and the entry for "libel" is the sixth document (after "criminal libel," "defamatory libel," and so on). I'm not saying it was wrong for Westlaw's programmers to set it up this way—it's useful to see all the terms that include the term you're looking up—it just startles me sometimes. One thing I do wish were different: Westlaw should make greater use of its linking capability. When the definition of "libel" has cross-references ("See DEFAMATION. Cf. SLANDER."), Westlaw should offer hypertext links.

¶24 There is a *Black's Law Dictionary* iPad app, but I hadn't tried it. I thought that \$54.99 was a little steep for an experiment, since I have the print volume already in the reference office and in my own office. But I made inquiries and was

24. THE COMPACT EDITION OF THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY: COMPLETE TEXT REPRODUCED MICROGRAPHICALLY (1971).

given trial access by Thomson Reuters, the publisher.²⁵ It's an attractive app and easy to navigate—not to mention easier to carry than the hardbound book. My copy of *Black's* always stays in the office, but I think I will like having the app. If I were a student, I'd much rather have an app that I could have with me than a huge book I'd only leave at home.

¶25 The app could be improved though. In contrast with the Westlaw version of *Black's*, which lacks hypertext links even when there are clear cross-references, the app has an excess of hypertext links. It appears that a program searched the text for any string of characters that was a defined term and created a link. The results can be odd or downright silly. For example, "Pac-Man defense" has a link to "man" ("1. An adult male. 2. Humankind."). The definition of "racial discrimination" ("Discrimination based on race.") has a link to "based on" ("Copyright. Derived from, and therefore similar to, an earlier work."). A comment under "robe" that U.S. judges generally wear black robes is linked to "wear" ("Hist. A dam made of stakes interlaced by twigs of willows that are placed across a river to more easily accommodate the netting of fish.—Also termed weir."). When a book is cited as a second edition ("2d ed.") there's a link to "E.D." ("eastern district"). And every time a definition uses "so," there's a link to "So. abbr. SOUTHERN REPORTER." Although odd, this excessive linking is not likely to mislead users. Anyone literate enough to be consulting a law dictionary isn't likely to need to look up the ordinary meaning of "wear" or "so." The lesson is just that hyperlinking cannot yet be entrusted to a program working without human oversight. I have only had this app a short time, but as with the *American Heritage* app, I find my allegiance to the physical book fading.

Garner's Modern American Usage

¶26 Another reference book I use regularly is *Garner's Modern American Usage*.²⁶ I use it for guidance on individual words (e.g., "discrete" versus "discreet")²⁷ and usage questions (e.g., phrasal adjectives,²⁸ possessives [especially joint possessives]²⁹). I use it for my own writing and for editing. And I occasionally refer patrons to it.

¶27 Here again, I am personally in a format transition. Before I bought a copy of the third edition for myself, I checked to see if it was available for Kindle. It wasn't. I waited a couple of weeks and checked again. It still wasn't. I was a little surprised, since other books published by Oxford University Press are available in Kindle editions. I went ahead and bought the print. I checked a couple more times and at some point I think I even posted a comment on Oxford's web site suggesting that a Kindle edition be produced. I didn't think about it again until I started this

25. I am grateful to Bryan Garner for arranging this.

26. BRYAN A. GARNER, *GARNER'S MODERN AMERICAN USAGE* (3d ed. 2009). As with the dictionary, I use more than one edition. I have a personal copy of the current (third) edition at home and the library has copies in the reference office and the reference area. I also have a personal copy of the second edition (2003) in my office.

27. *Id.* at 263.

28. *Id.* at 625.

29. *Id.* at 644.

column. I checked Amazon.com one more time and voilà! I bought the Kindle version and now have it on both my Kindle and my iPad (using the Kindle app). It is not optimized for the e-book format—the table of contents and the many cross-references do not have links—but I’m still glad to have it. For one thing, having it on my mobile devices has encouraged me to browse it, and browsing it is fun.³⁰ Browsing is helpful (whether or not you find it entertaining), because you come across usage issues that you didn’t even know were problematic. For instance, I might know that I need to check “discreet” or “Peggy and Cheryl’s project,” but until I read the entry on “fun,”³¹ I didn’t realize that using it as an adjective was a casualism. Not that I’m above using casualisms, even in *Law Library Journal*, but knowing this led me to write “browsing it is fun” rather than “it’s a fun book to browse.”

USCA Popular Name Table

¶28 Another print staple is the *USCA Popular Name Table*, in two paperbound volumes. For many years, our library has purchased an extra copy for the reference office. It is very convenient to be able to look up a statute’s citation without either walking to the stacks or going online.

¶29 This is a print product that is better now than it was several years ago. When I learned to use USCA (and USCS and USC), it was a two-step process to find where, say, section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act was codified: (1) look up Immigration and Nationality Act in the Popular Name Table; (2) look up the Public Law number in the Tables volume. Eventually, the editors of USCA decided to spare us the second step and inserted a codification table after each popular name. You can do this in Westlaw, too, as is shown in figure 1. It’s easy and clear on Westlaw, but we still often pull out the paper copy. First, many of our patrons do not have Westlaw access.³² Second, it’s usually faster to pull out the book. And I sometimes like to browse the book.

AALL Directory & Handbook

¶30 I like having a print copy of the *AALL Directory & Handbook*.³³ When I’m sitting in my office chatting with a law librarianship student about a job opening that was just posted, I’d rather use the book to see whom I know at that library. Why turn my back on the student to go to my computer and log in to AALLNET? On the other hand, when I was at the AALL meeting and had one of those conversations

30. It probably wouldn’t be fun for everyone, but I’m a bit of a nerd about these things. On several occasions, I have even read a few entries while at the off-leash park with my dog. Why not?

31. GARNER, *supra* note 26, at 379.

32. Free popular name tables include those from the Law Revision Counsel (<http://uscode.house.gov/popularnames/popularnames.htm>), the Legal Information Institute (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/topn/0>), and Findlaw (<http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/uscodes/popularnames/index.html>). None of these have the section-by-section detail that the USCA table does. LexisNexis Academic, which is available to anyone who comes to our library, doesn’t include the USCS Popular Name Table, advising: “Tip: To find Popular Names of Laws, search in Public Laws.” LexisNexis (Law School) isn’t available to our public patrons, but even if it were, its USCS Popular Name Table also lacks the section-by-section detail.

33. AM. ASS’N OF LAW LIBRARIES, *AALL 2011–2012 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY* (2011).

Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (McCarran Act) (McCarran-Walter Act)

June 27, 1952, ch. 477, 66 Stat. 163

Short title, see [8 USCA § 1101](#) note**Current USCA classifications:**

Section of ch. 477	USCA Classification
101.....	8 USCA § 1101
102.....	8 USCA § 1102
103.....	8 USCA § 1103
104.....	8 USCA § 1104
105.....	8 USCA § 1105
106.....	8 USCA § 1105a
201.....	8 USCA § 1151
202.....	8 USCA § 1152
203.....	8 USCA § 1153
204.....	8 USCA § 1154
205.....	8 USCA § 1155
206.....	8 USCA § 1156
207.....	8 USCA § 1157
208.....	8 USCA § 1158
209.....	8 USCA § 1159

Figure 1. Portion of USCA Popular Name Table on Westlaw

with a student, I was very happy to be able to pull up AALLNET on my iPad—my print directory was back in the office and AALLNET worked just fine.

¶31 What AALLNET can't do—at this point anyway—is provide snapshots of the past. Our library has past editions of the *Directory*, so that we can look up who was listed for a given library in 1990 or 1995, or the location in a given year of an individual who is no longer a member.

Conclusion

¶32 We need reference works. We still use many key works in paper, but that will probably change. In recent weeks, I have experimented with some of my favorite reference books in new formats, and I know that my own habits are changing. What began as reflections about books on my desk turned into experiments with books on my mobile devices.

¶33 But my personal choice to buy a dictionary or a *Bluebook* app does not answer many questions libraries face. How can we make these resources available to our patrons? Will we need to provide devices as well as content? Will there be ways to license content for users' individual devices? How will we maintain our collection as hardware and operating systems change? How can we preserve successive editions for future scholarship? I don't pretend to have answers for these questions, but I know that we need to think about them. In the meantime, I will continue to explore the day-to-day use of favorite reference books on my mobile devices.