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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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The Legislative Branch of State Government People, Process, and Politics (2006, 1-85109-761-9, $95) is one of a three-volume series of handbooks from ABC-CLIO entitled About State Governments. Authored by Thomas H. Little and David B Ogle, this book offers the reader a thorough grounding in the role and function of state legislatures. Divided into six sections it begins by discusses the fundamentals of state legislatures, how they have developed, what they do, and the nature of their influence. The second section deals with the actual powers legislatures possess and how they make laws. The next three sections discuss structure and process, including leadership and hierarchy; elections, the people who serve and the nature of their work; and the political environment in which state legislatures function including their role with the federal system of government. The sixth and last section is perhaps the most useful from a reference standpoint in that it discusses the legislatures and general assemblies of each of the 50 states. Each individual entry describes the structure and membership, process, leadership, election processes and key political factors unique to that state. It also gives the number of representatives and senators, as well as the phone number and Website address of the legislative body. The book ends with a helpful glossary, an annotated bibliography and a general index.

The Legislative Branch of State Government People, Process, and Politics provides a good deal of useful background information that students and other interested readers will appreciate. It is easy to use and full of facts and explanations. Taken with its companion volumes it offers a uniquely comprehensive look at the lesser studied part of our federal system. Where budgets permit, high school, public and undergraduate libraries, should consider purchasing the whole series.


Reviewed by Terry Conroy, J.D., M.L.I.S. (University of South Carolina, Coleman Karesh Library) <conroy@law.sc.edu>
Acquisitions and Collection Development Made Easy with Matthews Medical Books

by Mary Copley, MLS (VP Customer & Library Services) <maryc@mattmccoy.com>

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colleges in the U.S. and the degree to which they consider race in their admissions processes, along with minority enrollment data for each institution. Finally, in chapter four, Beckman describes the issues involved with “percentage plans” adopted by states such as California, Texas, and Florida that have banned affirmative action in higher education admissions in favor of guaranteeing graduates who place above a certain percentage in their graduating class admission to their state-supported colleges.

In chapters five through nine, Beckman offers advice to students and parents on utilizing affirmative action programs to maximize their potential for admission to the colleges of their choice. Beckman provides fifteen tips for better maneuvering through the affirmative action admissions process in chapter five and a six-step process for writing the convincing student essay in chapter six. Emphasizing the importance of student essays as a means for colleges to consider diversifying factors under its affirmative action plans, he includes examples of successful ones utilizing varying approaches.

In chapter seven, Beckman discusses the option of applying to HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and their attempts to achieve diversity in their student bodies. In chapter eight, he addresses the state of minority scholarships and financial aid programs since the Gratz and Grutter decisions, including as Appendix B, the U.S. Department of Education Guidelines on their permissibility. He describes affirmative action programs created to assist veterans and members of the U.S. Armed Forces in chapter nine and recommends additional resources for learning more about the admissions process and particular colleges and universities in Appendix C.

Beckman concludes by predicting the future of affirmative action in the U.S. (post Gratz and Grutter) to entail another landmark affirmative action decision by nine different members of the Supreme Court, in a country whose minority population will also be very different.


Reviewed by David Lehmann, J.D., M.I.L.S. (University of South Carolina, Coleman Karesh Law Library) <lehmann@law.sc.edu>

Genealogy is not an area one traditionally associates with copyright issues. I mean, your family history is yours and your family’s, right? Wrong! In the new technological age, copyright and contract legal issues have insinuated their way into all facets of life. This fact of life is made clear in Carmack’s Guide to Copyright and Contracts: A Primer for Genealogists, Writers and Researchers. Sharon DeBartolo Carmack discusses the impact of copyright and contract law on writers and researchers (generally) and genealogist authors (specifically).

This book explains how copyright law has now become a part of the fabric of our everyday lives. Carmack has done an excellent job of interpreting copyright law with its intricacies and vagaries and then describing the process in simple terms. She enumerates the common problem areas of copyright law and then intricately weaves these legal explanations into the study of genealogy. Additionally, Carmack covers a variety of contract legal issues that authors seeking publication of their work will be confronted in seeking their goal. These legal concepts are deftly applied to genealogist authors. The explanations are concise and accurate and are explained in terms that non-lawyers will easily understand. Moreover, examples are given to illustrate her points. The book is remarkably easy reading and even entertaining, given the two areas of law that she is tackling.

The book is divided contextually into two areas, as the title announces: copyright and contracts. The book is stylistically divided into nine chapters: four chapters on copyright and five chapters on contracts. These chapters cover the main points of the selected topic. The author has added a distinctive feature to all of her chapters. After her discussion of the law, she has added a closing subsection entitled “Applying continued on page 78

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It to Genealogy.” This section has a series of pertinent questions about the chapter and applying the legal issues to genealogy fact-based situations. This section is an effective method of communicating the information to the reader in an every day occurrence, matter-of-fact manner.

The author’s choices of topics for her chapters are strategically effective. In the copyright area, she starts with the basics. She then adds to this foundation with her chapters on points of interest to her target audience. Chapter two advances the basic copyright information with coverage of public domain, fair use, one of the bugaboos of copyright law, and seeking permission for copyrighted materials or materials where the copyright is unknown. Chapter three covers one of the most abused areas of copyright law in the Internet age: photographs, illustrations, maps, and images. These issues are of concern to everyone. The concepts are clear and the examples are part of one’s everyday life problems. She gives Websites for “stock” images and photos. Chapter four completes the copyright portion of the book with the problems of “works for hire.”

In the contract area, Carmack attacks the publication problems that authors might encounter with chapters on collaborative agreement, journal/magazine contracts, and book contracts. These chapters give step-by-step guidelines for evaluating and negotiating contract issues that every author who tries to publish is required to wade through in the publication obstacles course.

She finishes her book with two chapters that fit together nicely. The first of these last chapters explores electronic contracts, an area where copyright and contracts interact on a new level. The final chapter in the book is on self-publication and the issues involved in this avenue of publication and flows smoothly from the previous chapter.

Carmack’s Guide to Copyright and Contracts is an excellent elementary textbook on the issues that confront authors and writers in their chosen field. It accomplishes its goal of educating writers and researchers in the problem areas of copyright and gives solid negotiating pointers for publishing contracts. The information is especially pertinent to its target audience, genealogists. It concisely covers everyday problems and is a great general information tool to alert authors to problem areas and give them general guidance on avoiding some of the pitfalls. This book covers in detail areas that frustrate and confuse every writer. It is a valuable contribution for the literate and should be read and reread. It should be kept in any author’s desk as a reminder that copyright is a pervasive issue in any writing or publication endeavor and its tenets must be understood and be continually monitored to avoid legal and financial catastrophes.


Reviewed by Stacy Etheredge, J.D., M.L.S. (Coleman Karesh Law Library, University of South Carolina School of Law) <etheredge@law.sc.edu>

Anyone interested in the legal history of the United States should be ecstatic to learn about the recent publication of Prestatehood Legal Materials: A Fifty-State Research Guide, Including New York City and the District of Columbia. The two volume set, beautifully rendered by Haworth Press, fills what had been a major gap in legal and historical bibliography. The goal of the book is to provide detailed information about the legal materials in use in every state before they became states, and in this regard it succeeds admirably.

The two-volume set is the end product of a unique project overseen by editors Michael Chiorazzi, Director of the Law Library and Professor of Law at the James E. Rogers College of Law at the University of Arizona, and Marguerite Most, Collection Development and Legal Information Librarian and Lecturer in Law at Boston College Law Library. Chiorazzi and Most recognized the fact that law librarians, by the very nature of their jobs, generally attain an admirable level of research expertise in the legal history of their home states. They asked law librarians across the country to participate in the development of a legal reference tool focused specifically on prestatehood history and as a result almost all of the individual state chapters are written by law librarians from those states (with an occasional archivist or legal historian thrown in).

Each state’s chapter encompasses not only the constitutional, executive, legislative, judicial, and secondary source materials one would expect to see but also can include references to more creative lines of inquiry, such as manuscript materials, local state museums, and legal histories. To test the book’s effectiveness I decided to first read the chapter from the state I now live in (South Carolina) as I have a fairly extensive knowledge of the legal history materials that should be covered. After that I read the chapter for a state for which I had a small amount of legal history knowledge (Washington) and then a state where I had no legal history knowledge whatsoever (Arizona). I was not disappointed by any of the chapters; the South Carolina chapter mentioned the materials I expected to be covered, the Washington chapter covered what little I knew and then lead me in new directions, and the Arizona chapter left me with the feeling that I now had an excellent background with which to begin my research.

Guidelines for writing the chapters were left to the devices of the different authors involved and thus there are basically 52 different styles and approaches. Although this method provides a distinctive freshness to the book as a whole it ironically also leads to its major weakness, as the inconsistency and unevenness among chapters can often times be distracting or even disconcerting. For example, chapters vary considerably in length and some are long narrative essays while others are basically straight bibliographies. The bibliographies themselves can fluctuate between being selective, exhaustive, annotated, and unannotated. Some chapters might list Websites, while others might not. However, this may very well be a moot point as the average researcher consulting the set will most likely be interested in one state only and will neither notice nor be bothered by any inconsistencies.

Prestatehood Legal Materials is a remarkable, one-of-a-kind book as there is currently no other compilation or reference work similar to it. It would be a valuable addition to all university and law school library collections as well as the personal bookshelf of anyone interested in the legal history of the United States.

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Dream up to ask him to do. Please thank them all when you see them!

And speaking of assistance, I can’t leave out Beth Bernhardt <bbernhardt@unm.edu> who has a brick in helping to put the Conference program together, contacting speakers, keeping track of the schedule, assigning rooms for the papers, etc., etc. Thanks to Beth for her perseverance and, most especially, her good humor!

It’s official: Serials Solutions has launched Vivisimo, its new results clustering feature. More than 30 libraries have implemented it already. Serials Solutions launched the new Results Clustering feature for its Central Search federated search service. Researchers can now quickly identify the resources relevant to their areas of interest. Serials Solutions’ Web-hosted model requires no local software loading, making implementation of Result Clustering effortless for the library. Results Clustering integrates the Vivisimo Clustering Engine with Serials Solutions Central Search. Serials Solutions is offering the feature free to all Central Search subscribers. No software or hardware installation is required. Clustering can be deployed by libraries with virtually no effort. As with all Central Search user interface features, results clustering is customizable. www.serialssolutions.com/websearch.aspx or request a free demonstration by vivisimo.com www.ilproquest.com.

And — Attention!!! — here are some job
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