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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Articles and Websites of Interest

Issue 2010-1

Accident Sketch

www.accidentsketch.com

Accident Sketch is a great free tool for lawyers and other legal professionals. The site allows you to create a professional-looking depiction of an accident site by dragging and dropping icons onto a screen. Users are also able to add written descriptions of the accident and vehicles. It has some good customization, and allows you to save or print a PDF copy of your results. Possibly the only drawback to the site is that it has a slightly European flavor—the demo video is in German, and some of the icons (such as street signs) are not American. But on the whole it is very intuitive to use and you can easily utilize it without instructions.

Supreme Court Database

www.supremecourtdatabase.org

This website, put together by Andrew D. Martin at Washington University in St. Louis and funded by a NSF grant, has over two hundred pieces of data about each Supreme Court case from 1953 to 2008 and bills itself as the “definitive source for researchers, students, journalists and citizens interested in the Supreme Court.” The site contains a streamlined database interface that allows the user to do analyses on cases using variables such as case components, case outcomes, justices, and vote types. The site also has downloadable formats if you want to do your own analysis with your own statistical package. The website will be updated on a regular basis and Martin hopes to be coding cases from 1792 to 1952 over the next four years.

“Stealth Life Sentence”

Mike McMillen, *Voice for the Defense*, v. 38, no. 8 (2009), p. 20-23.

Mike McMillen describes Chapter 841 of the Health & Safety Code as the “‘stealth’ life sentence.” The statute

is entitled “Civil Commitment of Sexually Violent Predators” and was created to impose involuntary civil commitment. It is intended to target a “small but extremely dangerous group of sexually violent predators” where existing involuntary civil commitment provisions were inadequate to address the risk that these predators pose. However, McMillen reports on the dangers of the statute. It has an extremely broad scope, does not require the Respondent to be competent to stand trial, and commits a person indefinitely — subject to a review every two years. Although the terms can be modified by the Court at any time, McMillen says that “As a practical matter, once a person is committed, he will remain committed for life. There is no effective avenue for appeal, nor is there any viable procedure for a committed person to file a petition for release from civil commitment, with CSOT [Council on Sex Offender Treatment] approval. Since 1999, CSOT has not granted permission for a Respondent to seek release.” McMillen advises that “a working knowledge of the statute could enable counsel to give a client valuable prospective advice or offer trial strategies that may help someone avoid the severe consequences of civil commitment.”

“The Psychology of Women’s Influence on Juries”

Lisa Blue & Robert B. Hirschhorn, *The Advocate*, v. 49 (Winter 2009), p.47-49

This article reports on the hows and whys of decision-making by women jurors and their impact on other jurors. Blue and Hirschhorn report that women are likely to be more judgmental of all female witnesses, parties and lawyers. They are also very sensitive to male attorneys’ treatment of women in the courtroom and are highly influenced by female witnesses and other female jurors. The authors also report that when more women serve on a jury, the method of deliberation will change—women react more emotionally to evidence but tend to spend more time reviewing the evidence than men do.

Copies of these articles may be obtained in the Law Library or from the Law Librarian via email:

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Hours of Operation:

Monday—Friday
8:00 am—5:00 pm



Library Closings:

The Collin County Courthouse (and the Law Library) will be closed on the following upcoming holidays:

April 2 for Good Friday.
May 31 for Memorial Day.

A full listing of county holidays can be found on the county website at:

<http://www.co.collin.tx.us/holidays.jsp>

Law Library Welcomes New Assistant

Ellen Heavner has joined the Collin County Law Library as the new Assistant Law Librarian. Ellen holds a Master's degree in Linguistics from Cornell as well as a Master's degree in Library Science from University of North Texas. She has a diverse background and has worked in various corporate libraries in the DFW area, including Verizon, the Federal Reserve Bank, and F1 Services. Ellen is looking forward to helping patrons find legal resources. Stop by and say hello!

New Computer Workstation Policy

As part of a new policy, we are collecting information about users of the attorney workstations.

When you sit down to use a computer, you need to

sign in with your last name, indicate whether you are an attorney, and provide the date and in and out times.

We will be using this in-

formation to guide us in future computer acquisitions.

Thank you for your cooperation!

New on the Shelves

Bankruptcy Code, Rules & Official Forms, 2009.

Black's Law Dictionary, 9th Edition, 2009

Federal Sentencing Guidelines Manual, 2009.

Federal Sentencing Law and Practice, 2009.

Handbook of Texas Lawyer and Judicial Ethics: Attor-

ney Tort Standards; Attorney Ethic Standards, 2009.

Handbook of Texas Lawyer and Judicial Ethics: Judicial Ethics Standards, Recusal and Disqualification of Judges, 2009.

O'Connor's Federal Rules: Civil Trials, 2010.

O'Connor's Texas Causes of Action, 2010.

O'Connor's Texas Rules: Civil Trials, 2010.

Texas Consumer Law Handbook, 2009.

Texas Search and Seizure, 2010.

Texas Worker's Compensation Manual, 2009.

All print materials are available for attorney checkout.