



TRUTH, JUSTICE AND INFORMATION FOR ALL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COLLIN COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

ISSUE 2012-04

WWW.COLLINCOUNTYTX.GOV

NOVEMBER 2012

Useful Internet Sites and Articles

Non-Lawyer Assistance in the Courtroom—the UK model

<http://accesstojustice.net/2011/12/02/non-lawyer-assistance-in-the-courtroom-the-uk-model/>

An interesting article from the “Access to Justice Blog” about one of the ways the UK handles pro se litigants. In the UK, the judicial system has established “McKenzie Friends” – non lawyers allowed to help pro se litigants in the courtroom, as well as a “lay representative,” a non lawyer allowed, in special circumstances to directly address the court on behalf of another person. According to the working group report, the “general view from judges and staff was that on balance it was better to have McKenzie Friends than not.” Richard Zorza, author of this blog, is of the opinion that this could be a possible model for pro se litigants in the US.

So long THOMAS, Hello Congress.gov

<http://ripslawlibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/10/02/so-long-thomas-hello-congress-gov/>

In September, the Library of Congress

announced the new website Congress.gov, which will eventually take over for the THOMAS.gov website. THOMAS.gov has been the online source for federal legislation information since 1995. Congress.gov boasts a cleaner look, with an updated google-like search box, permanent URLs, and improved searching on mobile devices. So far, reviews of the site have been mixed.

Word Counts are Coming to Texas

<http://www.scotxblog.com/practice-notes/word-counts-are-coming-to-texas/>

The Texas Supreme Court has issued a rule change that will change the page limit to a word count limit for most briefs. The new word count limit will be: 15,000 for an appellant’s or appellee’s brief, 7,500 for a reply brief, 4500 for petitions and 2,400 for petition-stage replies, 4,500 for motions for rehearing. The proposal also changes the minimum font size of the body text, from 13 to 14, and footnotes from 10 to 12. The rules will take effect on December 1, 2012.

**Contact
Information:**

Diane Roberts
Law Librarian
Email:
droberts@
co.collin.tx.us

Ellen Heavner
Assistant
Law Librarian
Email:
eheavner@
co.collin.tx.us

Hours of Operation:
Monday–Friday
8:00 am–5:00 pm

Useful articles continued

Texas Supreme Court Approves Pro Se Divorce Forms

http://texaslawyer.typepad.com/texas_lawyer_blog/2012/11/texas-supreme-court-approves-pro-se-divorce-forms.html

The Texas Supreme Court has approved a set of pro se divorce forms for indigent couples with no children or real property. There has been a great deal of controversy over these forms this year. However, the court concluded that the need for these forms is great. The order “notes that in fiscal year 2011 pro se litigants filed 58,000 family law cases, and even if all 4,400 members of the Bar’s Family Law Section took one pro bono case per year, tens of thousands of litigants would remain unserved each year.” The court will accept public comments about the forms through Feb. 1, 2013.

Free Law Books

We are in the process of weeding the library’s collection, and are getting rid of many outdated and superseded books. Periodically, we are leaving unwanted materials on the back table in the library. If you are looking to add books to your personal collection, check for the sign in the back that says “Free Outdated Legal Materials.”

CLE News

We have the new *Advanced Guardianship 2012* CLE available for check-out. This CLE covers: The Basics of Guardianship in a Nutshell, Ethical Situations, Texas Guardianship Cases August 2010 to February 2012, Welcome to the Party: Notice Requirements in Guardianship Proceedings, Mental Health Commitments in Statutory Probate Courts and County Courts at Law, Avoiding Litigation in Guardianships, Decision Making Standards for Guardians, Medicaid Issues in a Guardianship, Guardianship and Alternatives when Dealing with Scams and Exploitations. This course can be taken for self-study credits (2.0) ONLY. If you need certification credits, please contact the State Bar at 1-800-204-2222.

Social Media

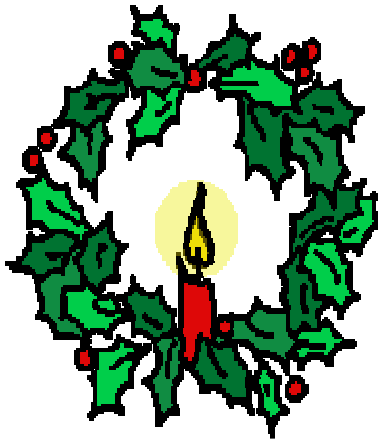
“Use of Social Media in Voir Dire”

Chip Babcock and Luke Gilman,
The Advocate, Vol. 60 Fall 2012, p.44-49.

This article is divided into three parts: using social media to help you weed out jurors, using social media to get to know your panel, and the pitfalls of using social media. Research indicates that jurors are generally more candid in online communications than in courtroom discussion—for example, people are more likely to reveal personal information in a text message than in an interview. Social media also tracks jurors’ attitudes over longer periods of time. This combination of factors “holds the potential to offer a more complete profile of a juror’s experiences and attitudes than they would likely share.” Understanding the backgrounds and experiences of jurors can help attorneys present the case and communicate effectively during the trial. Social media information can also potentially tell you about who will be a leader in the jury, and who may go along with popular opinion. However, there are risks involved with social media, notably: information gleaned from social media should be used for general questioning and strategizing, rather than revealing information. Attorneys need to be aware of the ethical restrictions on investigations of and communications with jurors.

The article concludes with some caveats to keep in mind when using social media. First, be aware of the ethical and legal restrictions on investigating and communicating with jurors (see Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct 3.06). Second, attorneys should use social media information to question and strategize, but not to reveal information about the juror in a public setting. Third, be aware that jurors may be investigating you through social media. Fourth, develop a checklist for researching with social media, and assign a regular schedule for monitoring sites.

Copies of this article are available in the library, or from the Law Librarian via email droberts@co.collin.tx.us



The Law Library

will be closed

For
Christmas Eve
and Christmas
on
December 24 & 25

And for New Year's
Day
on January 1, 2013

New on the Shelf:

- Advanced Elder Law Course, 2012.
- Federal Civil Judicial Procedure and Rules, 2012 revised edition.
- Federal Criminal Code and Rules, 2012.
- Ineffective Assistance of Council, 2012.
- Navigating the Federal Trial, 2012.
- O'Connor's Family Code Plus, 2012.
- O'Connor's Civil Practice and Remedies Code Plus, 2012.
- O'Connor's Family Code Plus, 2012.
- Texas Criminal Codes Plus, 2012.
- Texas forms manual: a Guide to Texas Probate, 2012.
- Texas Rules of Evidence, 2013 update.
- O'Connor's Probate Code Plus, 2012-2013.

A Little Legal Humor

