

## TRIBUTE TO GAIL F. ZWIRNER

*Paul M. Birch \**

When Gail Zwirner joined the law library staff in 1998, many of us had already gotten to know her well during her decade across town as a librarian for Hunton & Williams and particularly through her active involvement in the Virginia Association of Law Libraries (“VALL”). This mutual familiarity probably eased her career transition from law firm to law school librarian. At any rate, in her seventeen years at the University of Richmond School of Law, Gail has demonstrated in every way how to excel in academic law librarianship: as an information provider, as a teacher, as an administrator, and as a colleague.

Among the half a dozen librarians who staff our reference desk, Gail has been almost certainly the best versed in Virginia law materials, and she has often been the source of gracious assistance to me in identifying obscure state agency or continuing legal education publications. To say even that Gail wrote the book on Virginia legal research would be no exaggeration: she is co-editor of *A Guide to Legal Research in Virginia* and contributed two chapters to this definitive manual. One of her most lasting services to all who work with Virginia law has been her involvement with VALL’s Ad Hoc Committee for the Creation of an Administrative Code (the “Code”) for Virginia, which spearheaded legislation authorizing the Code’s creation. Subsequently, this committee worked with the Code commission and publisher to bring out its first edition. Anybody who attempted to do administrative research in this commonwealth prior to the Code’s publication will attest to the enormity of this contribution.

Much of Gail’s work as Access Services Librarian has involved the borrowing and lending of library materials both within and

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outside the law school and the supervision of staff and students involved in this operation. One cannot say hers is a thankless job, for there can be no doubt Gail received many well-deserved thank-yous from grateful patrons. That said, it is a position noted for its share of unwilling interlibrary lenders along with demanding (and sometimes delinquent) borrowers. Add in the occasional absenteeism of student desk attendants that can erase a librarian's evening plans without notice. Gail consistently responded to the less pleasant aspects of her job with at least as much equanimity as could be hoped for and, most notably, her sense of humor intact.

In her participation in the various aspects of the library's shared governance, Gail has been a welcome voice of common sense and practicality. As can happen with even the best of committees, a group-think approach to a problem sometimes gives rise to an unworkable solution, nonetheless embraced by most. On such occasions, Gail has often been the one to bring the process back to reality by simply asking, "Are we really going to do *that*?"

Over the years, Gail's clarity, conscientiousness, and kindness have made fans of many students who took her first-year Legal Research course. She once shared with me a teacher evaluation in which the anonymous student, after a long paragraph of lavish praise closed with the pronouncement, "Zwirner rocks!" Truer words have seldom been written in a teacher evaluation. And, in wishing Gail all the best in her retirement endeavors (which will include a term as President of the Richmond Public Library Board of Directors), what more can I say but, "Rock on, Gail!"