

## SRLN Brief: Law Library Ethics



The following are resources on law library ethics:

- [American Association of Law Libraries \(AALL\) Ethical Principles](#) & [AALL UPL Toolkit](#)

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Ethical Principles make a statement about law librarians' duty to avoid giving legal advice, referred to as the unauthorized practice of law. Although the rules defining the unauthorized practice of law are different in every state, and what constitutes legal advice may not always be clear, there are some general principles that can guide librarians' interactions with members of the public. Many states have guides for librarians. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) also provides a toolkit on the unauthorized practice of law.

- [Report: Law Libraries and Access to Justice \(American Association of Law Libraries 2014\)](#)

This white paper gives examples of collaboration among all three types of law libraries (private law firms; state, county and court and academic) and discusses the benefits of collaboration. It also makes recommendations for partnering with public libraries, including ongoing training regarding the unauthorized practice of law. The article notes that training for public librarians regarding the unauthorized practice of law should address more than just the distinction between legal information and legal advice. The article recommends that librarians should also focus on encouraging confidence and permissiveness rather than fear and restrictiveness when training public librarians.

- [Report: The Sustainable 21st Century Law Library and Access to Justice \(Zorza 2012\)](#)

This paper, by Richard Zorza, explores and clarifies the distinction between legal information and legal advice. Zorza suggests some responses or ways to address concerns about prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law. According to Zorza, the “best protection” for “anxiety” over violating rules prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law is “clear written guidelines and a robust and ongoing staff educational program for all staff, well integrated into operations and staff development.”

- [Presentation: Public Libraries and Access to Justice Conference PowerPoint 3 What Public Librarians Can Do: Ethical and Legal Issues \(Meadows 2010\)](#)

This presentation, presented by former Montana State Law Librarian Judy Meadows at the [2010 Public Libraries and Access to Justice Conference](#), explores and clarifies the rules governing what librarians can and cannot do when providing informational assistance.

See also:

- [Article Avoiding the Unauthorized Practice of Law \(Scardilli, 2014\)](#) (Available through EBESCOhost with library, school, university, or other institutional affiliation)

According to this article, “no librarian has ever been prosecuted for the unauthorized practice of law, but the concept still makes many librarians nervous.” The article reinforces the ongoing need for law librarians to train public librarians about the unauthorized practice of law, and provides examples of ongoing training for public librarians in New Hampshire, Oregon and South Carolina.

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- Self-Represented Litigation Network

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