

## Southeast Librarians Attend Workshop on Resources for Law Librarians

by Iris Jones, Southeast Kansas Library System Consultant

“How do I file for a divorce?” “They gave me a ticket because my dog was running loose. Can they do that?” “They said at the courthouse that I could get the forms I need at the library. Do you have this legal form?” How do you help patrons with legal questions like these?

Andrew Evans, JD, MLS, Head of Reference and Government Documents Librarian at the Washburn University School of Law Library in Topeka, gave Southeast Kansas System librarians practical advice for these questions and more when he gave his workshop on LAW RESOURCES FOR LIBRARIANS in Fredonia on March 6, 2008. Besides recommending books that should be in most libraries and a series of books that help lay people understand the law, he gave a handout that listed pages of websites where staff at small libraries can go for information not available in their buildings.



Every library should have a current copy of its state statutes or laws, and its own city and county ordinances. The Kansas Statutes Annotated is available from the Kansas Secretary of State's office for a fee. There is a free version online at <http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-statutes/index.do>.

The website is a good resource to use if you know the citation for a law, but not as easy to search as the paper version. If you cannot afford the paper version, you can ask your State Senator or Representative for one. Kansas legislators are allowed two copies a year to give to their constituents. You might be able to be one of the two! You can get city ordinances from the City Hall. Most cities will post a copy for free in the library so their citizens have access to it when City Hall is not open. Not all counties have ordinances.

One other “must have” book is *Legal Research: How to Find and Understand the Law* from Nolo Press. This guide will help both the librarian and the patron working with law questions determine a search strategy and understand what is found. Nolo Press ([www.nolo.com](http://www.nolo.com)) is a very reliable source for law information for lay people. For do-it-yourself divorce books, books on pet laws, small claims court, landlord-tenant rights, starting your own business, books of standard legal forms, or other legal topics, the books are written by lawyers and revised regularly. Librarians should remember – laws change regularly. If you have books that are more than three or four years old, they may be too old. Law books should be replaced regularly.

Several websites were discussed at the workshop. The entire handout is posted on Iris' Idea Blog at <http://irisideafile.blogspot.com>. This is a resource you will want to print and keep at the reference desk. One website to bookmark in your browser is the Washburn Law Library's webpage at

<http://www.washlaw.edu>. It is regularly updated by the librarians and staff at the Law Library and gives one-stop shopping to law related websites, so every time you visit, there could be something new.