Welcome back from the winter break. The year of 2009 ushers in many opportunities and promises. We look forward to serving you with a renewed energy and purpose.

Over the last few months, the library staff has worked hard to improve access to information resources for the law school community. We subscribed to several new databases, including the AudioCase Files, Journal Locator, and Subject Compilations of State Laws — you can talk to one of the librarians to find out more about these databases.

We also filled two librarian vacancies. Tim Wilson was hired as the Electronic Services Librarian last fall, whereas Katy Stein came on board as the new Faculty Services Librarian last month. With the two new librarians here, we hope to provide better support to students and the faculty, like providing extended reference hours and redesigning the library Web site.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions on how we can improve library services to assist you better. Stop by my office or drop me an email at rhu@stmarytx.edu.

Bob Hu, Director

SPOTLIGHT ON ABRAHAM LINCOLN, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

In recent years, Lincoln scholarship and publishing has focused, among other areas of interest, on President Lincoln’s 25 years of legal practice (1836-1861). Titles available on this topic in our library include:


- The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal Documents and Cases / Daniel W. Stowell, editor. (KF213 L53 S76 2007). Another major product of the Lincoln Legal Papers Project, this four-volume set includes extensively annotated documents for “more than fifty of Lincoln’s most interesting, important, or representative cases” as well as scholarly essays on Lincoln’s legal career, a biographical dictionary, a legal glossary, and an index to all four volumes.

- An Honest Calling: The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln / Mark Steiner. (E457.2 S8 2006). An overview of Lincoln’s legal practice by University of Houston legal historian, Mark Steiner. Based extensively on sources collected by the Lincoln Legal Papers Project.

- Lincoln The Lawyer / Brian Dirck. (E457.2 D575 2007). Another monograph benefiting from efforts of the Lincoln Legal Papers Project, Lincoln The Lawyer focuses on the law’s influence on Lincoln as a man and politician.

- Garry Stillman, Reference Services Librarian
In today’s column, I will highlight some legal encyclopedias — print and electronic — developed especially for the layperson.

The major title in this field is West's Encyclopedia of American Law, a thirteen-volume set published in 2004 and located in our reference collection at KF154 W47. This encyclopedia contains “nearly 5,000 entries devoted to terms, concepts, events, movements, cases, and persons significant to U.S. law.” Appendix volumes include articles on landmark cases, a collection of historical documents, and a cumulative index. Annual yearbooks update the set.

Another useful resource for the layperson is the two-volume Gale Encyclopedia of Everyday Law, located in our reference collection at KF387 G27 2006. This title provides “practical information on laws and issues affecting people’s everyday lives.” Each article includes a bibliography and webography of additional resources and a list of organizations and agencies with contact information.

A similar title, Nolo's Encyclopedia of Everyday Law, is available as a 2008 EBook from Netlibrary (for access, contact a reference librarian).

A free internet legal encyclopedia for the layperson, hosted and sponsored by Cornell University Law School’s Legal Information Institute, is the WEX (http://topics.law.cornell.edu/wex).

On a related note, please stop by and browse in our new “Self-Help” collection, conveniently located next to our reference collection. We have titles from Nolo Press and other publishers on Social Security, Medicare, tenant-landlord law, employment law, bankruptcy, and of interest as April 15th approaches, income tax.

-Garry Stillman, Reference Services Librarian