



Town-gown Collaborations for Enhancing Student Research Skills

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The Problem: Graduates' Skills Gap



- Increasingly identified by governments, employers and professional associations
- Includes experiential and “soft skills”
- Missing skills are generally those mastered through application

■ Undergraduate Graduates

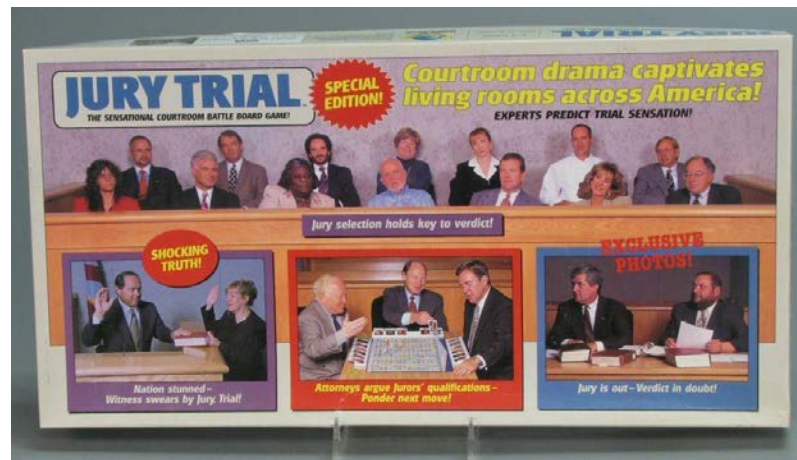
- Skills vary between studies but include:
 - Ability to locate, organize & evaluate information
 - Undertake effective analysis
 - Solve complex problems

■ Law School Graduates

- Knowledge of legal system
- Identify & analyze legal issues
- Critically evaluate information
- Construct effective research plan
- Select & use secondary sources
- Locate primary sources of law
- Using citators
- Historical statutory research
- Cost-effective legal research

- 1992 – *Report of the Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession (McCrate Report)*; American Bar Association
- 2007 – *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession*; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- 2009 – *Boulder Statement on Legal Research Education*
- 2009 – *Final Report on the Canadian Common Law Degree*; Federation of Law Societies of Canada
- 2013 – *Principles and Standards for Legal Research Competency*; American Association of Law Libraries
- 2015 – ABA Standard 302 Learning Outcomes

- Context-based or experiential education
 - Including simulation and “lawyering” courses
- Apprenticeship and internships
- Degree and course competencies



- Lack of prestige for experiential courses
 - Graded on pass/fail basis
 - Instructors have less “status”
- Design and delivery of practice-based courses are labour intensive
- Effective instruction requires a close connection to a current client-centred legal practice



- Employers want “practice-ready” hires as time is money
- Not every employer provides a training program
- Variation in content of the training program





CLOSE THE GAP

- “Research in the Real World” – a legal research workshop for summer students
- Cover:
 - The types of assignment they may receive
 - Practice-focused resources
 - Tips for using known resources in practice
- Need to collaborate with firm librarians and lawyers for “real world” authenticity

The Faculty of Law has a strong connection with the legal community, which has enabled us to enrich our teaching program through the participation of practicing professionals as sessional instructors, and has provided students with opportunities for workplace experience in clinical courses.

<http://law.ucalgary.ca/about>

- Comprised of courthouse, governmental and law firm librarians
- Is there actually a need?
- If yes, what should be included?



- Goal: mix of law librarians and lawyers
- Approached: The Calgary Law Library Group and the Research Lawyers subsection of the Canadian Bar Association (South Alberta)
- Ultimately 9 lawyers and 9 librarians presented at inaugural workshop
 - Librarians were from academic, courthouse and law firm settings



- Is oversight of the experts warranted or even necessary?



- Subject and research expertise does not necessarily correlate to instructional expertise

“Biglaw” (multi-national, national, large regional firms)

30-33%

Governmental departments

27-38%

Small and medium firms

24-33%

Corporations

< 1%

Why Does this Collaboration Work?

- Mutual respect

- Dedicated and reliable participants



- Melding of expertise and skills
- Employer support



- **Cons:**

- **Time investment**
- **Negative feedback**

- **Pros:**

- **Employers appreciative**
- **Students appreciative**
- **Happy UCalgary Administrators**
- **Branding opportunity**