

RALPH F. GAEBLER

Ralph Gaebler retired from the Jerome Hall Law Library on February 29, 2020. Ralph has had a long and storied career with the law library. From furnishing the law faculty with their first desktop computers in the 1980s to building the law library's foreign and international collections, Ralph will leave an indelible mark on the law school and law library, and will be dearly missed.

Ralph grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, and attended Brown University. Already showing an interest in libraries, Ralph served as the student member of the library committee during his time at Brown. He majored in German literature with a concentration in German medieval literature, graduating in 1981. He then briefly took a position at the Syracuse Public Library before deciding to go to law school the following year.

Ralph moved to Bloomington and entered the Indiana University School of Law, earning his J.D. in 1984 through the law school's accelerated program. While in law school, Ralph joined the JAG Corps through the United States Navy. He attended Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and served on active duty at the naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, for the summer of 1984. During this time, he served in the Navy prosecutor's office and worked on two criminal trials. By the end of that summer, Ralph realized that he was more interested in legal research than in the practice of law, and resigned his commission. He returned to IU, entered the School of Library and Information Science, and earned his Master of Library Science in 1985.

He was hired as the computer services librarian at the law library in 1986 and held this position until October, 1987. As the computer services librarian, he was responsible for setting up IBM 80-86 dual floppy disk desktop computers on every faculty desk. While some faculty were enthusiastic about this technology change, others were skeptical about whether computers would make much difference in their professional work; therefore, part of Ralph's job was to promote the notion that computers could be helpful. Since the only other unit on campus to have faculty



desktop computers at the time was the business school, this was a hard sell. In October 1987, Ralph took a new position at the University of Pennsylvania's Biddle Law Library. At Penn, he served as a public services librarian with special responsibility for computer services, tending the law school's local area network of Wang computers. In addition to his computer services responsibilities, Ralph served as a library liaison to several members of the Penn law school's faculty, including future senator Elizabeth Warren, for whom he provided frequent research assistance.

Ralph returned to the IU Bloomington law library in June 1990 as our international and foreign law librarian. For Ralph, this was an ideal job because he could harness his foreign language skills in conducting legal research for patrons. He received a West European Studies Summer Language Study Grant to attend a French immersion program sponsored by the University of Western Ontario at Trois-Pistoles, Quebec, during the summer of 1991. He was the first grantee West had sponsored to learn French anywhere other than in France.

As the international and foreign law librarian, Ralph managed and built the law library's collection of international and foreign legal materials and provided service in the use of those materials.

His arrival coincided with the law school's decision to build a graduate program for foreign law students, a program Ralph has worked closely with ever since, both in providing research instruction and by serving on the program's admissions committee. For students in the program completing dissertations, Ralph provided significant research assistance and came to know those students quite well. Some of the most rewarding relationships Ralph has had at the law school have been with our foreign graduate students.

In addition to his duties as the international and foreign law librarian, Ralph participated in other shared responsibilities, such as the creation of displays in the law library lobby. Most notably, in 2004 he worked on a display with Dick Vaughan organized around *Hess v. Indiana*, a first amendment case that originated in Bloomington and made its way to the Supreme Court of the United States, where two law school professors, Tom Schornhorst and Pat Baude, successfully argued the case in favor of Gregory Hess. As a result of the display, the law school held a symposium that featured many of the case participants and, in conjunction with the IU Bicentennial, a historical marker commemorating the case was placed in the law library just this year.

Ralph is also an accomplished scholar, having published three books and several articles related to foreign and international law. He took a sabbatical in academic year 2003-04 to earn his master's in philosophy from IU, and has published several articles in this area as well.

Retirement brings more time for rewarding volunteer opportunities. You might see Ralph the next time you're at Global Gifts, our local free trade store. He is also excited for new experiences, such as his recent pursuit of playing the mandolin, and he looks forward to more time to travel.

Ashley Ahlbrand