When someone comes into a library with a legal question, most librarians get a little uncomfortable. The usual response is to refer the patron to a library that specializes in law, such as the University of Washington's Marian Gould Gallagher Law Library or the King County Law Library.

The University of Washington's Law Library Program prepares students to work for public and academic libraries such as the ones mentioned above, and for libraries in law firms. According to Professor Penny Hazelton, the Director of the Law Library Program, the program at the UW is unique in the number of specialized law library classes it offers. "There are no other law librarianship programs at any other library or information school that have as many specialized courses in law librarianship as we do at the UW," she says. "Most other law librarianship programs include 1 or 2 courses only. We require 6 special courses."

Another factor that distinguishes the Law Library program here at the UW is its longevity. The program has been around since 1940, when it was founded by Law Librarian and Professor of Law Arthur Beardsley. As of August 2000, there have been 185 graduates of the program, 65 of whom have been or are academic, firm, court and county law library directors.

The Law Library's history and reputation make it easier for students to find employment after graduation. "No other program can boast such longevity. For that reason, our graduates are easily placed in jobs throughout the country and the world," says Hazelton. "The whole Gallagher Law Library staff mentor and work with the students all year and since many of the staff are known through their professional development activities, we are in a great position to help the students find rewarding careers in law librarianship."

Unlike most other law library programs across the United States, the UW's program requires its students to hold the Juris Doctor Degree or JD. This gives its students an advantage in the profession since many academic law library positions require or prefer a law degree (the majority of law librarians do not have a JD).

This fact should not deter MLIS students who are interested in working in law libraries. MLIS students do not have to hold a JD or even be accepted into the Law Library program to take law library courses. According to the Frequently Asked Questions page on the Law MLIS Program website, the Legal Research I and Legal Research II classes usually have many regular MLIS school students in them. "I would love to see more non-lawyer students taking the classes and starting their careers in

Interested in honing your legal research skills but never got around to taking the legal research classes offered through the Law Library Program?

The Law Librarians of Puget Sound (LLOPS) is offering a one-day workshop on May 12 providing a crash course in legal education for librarians with and without a law degree. The workshop, entitled What's Law Got To Do With It? A Day of Legal Education for Librarians, is only $30 for students and includes breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack.
law libraries," says Hazelton. "There are many opportunities - only about 40% of all law librarians have both law and library degrees. So there are lots of jobs out there - the technical services area seems to be especially needy in law libraries."

The regular MLIS program and the Law MLIS program differ from one another in a few key areas. Instead of requiring 63 credits over 2 – 3 years, the Law Library program requires 45 credits and is designed to be completed in four quarters. Law Library students are required to enroll in 7 core classes instead of the 9 core classes that MLIS students take (Law Library students are exempted from LIS 570 Research Methods and LIS 580 Management of Information Organizations). In addition to core classes, however, Law Library students are also required to take five specialized law librarianship classes and to complete a directed fieldwork in a law library.

The high number of required classes means that most law library students are taking 3 – 4 courses at a time for a total of 10 – 13 credits per quarter. It is a heavy course load, leaving no time for elective classes or to get involved with extracurricular activities (such as student groups in the iSchool). Off the record, some students have expressed a desire to have the freedom to take electives and to become involved with the iSchool community. Because of the rigorous schedule, however, Law Library students are able to earn their MLIS degree and certificate in Law Librarianship in only one year—a program advantage that most students believe far outweighs any disadvantages.

When asked what she enjoyed most about being the Director of the Law Library Program, Hazelton replied "I love working with the new students every year... I derive great satisfaction from knowing that they are happy in their chosen career path and that they are contributing to this profession through access to justice for everyone."