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In Memory of Jo Ann Humphreys, Associate Director of the UMC School of Law Library

*Martha J. Dragich**

Jo Ann Humphreys, Associate Director of the Law Library, died of ovarian cancer on October 19, 1996. She struggled valiantly against this dreadful disease for many months, and endured difficult treatments with courage, nobility and grace that amazed us all.

It is not easy to sum up what Jo Ann meant to us in the Law School, because she meant so much. Jo Ann spent virtually her entire career in our Law Library. She joined the staff in 1978, less than a year after completing her Master's degree in Library Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Serving initially as Government Documents Librarian, Jo Ann eventually moved into the position of Computer Services Librarian and, later, Associate Director. In each position—indeed, every day—Jo Ann displayed not only the highest professional competence but also unsurpassed dedication to the Law Library and the School of Law. Law faculty, students, and staff depended on Jo Ann's skills, perseverance, and perfectionism in overseeing library operations, solving technological problems, and providing research assistance and instruction. And Jo Ann wanted to keep right on doing all those things. During her illness she often told me how she missed her Law School colleagues, missed her work, and missed the feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment she derived from it. The School of Law was a very important part of Jo Ann's life.

Jo Ann was a modest woman, not given to trumpeting her own achievements. But her influence extended around the world. Twice Jo Ann contributed her expertise as a librarian to institutions in developing foreign

* Associate Professor of Law and Director of the Law Library, University of Missouri-Columbia. J.D., M.A. (Library Science) 1983, University of Minnesota.

countries. In 1984 Jo Ann took a one year leave of absence from the Law Library. That year she spent in Costa Rica, organizing the library of a seminary. In the fall of 1994, Jo Ann spent several weeks in Ghana, acting, under the auspices of the United States Information Agency, as an advisor on legal information to the courts, law schools, and other legal institutions of Ghana. Jo Ann's report, recommending the establishment of a central law library in Accra, the capital city, was accepted and funded by the USIA. Just days after Jo Ann's death, I received a letter commenting on her service to the country of Ghana:

I had the privilege of working with Jo Ann in Ghana about two years ago, while I was Cultural Affairs Officer at the American Embassy there. Jo Ann did a superb job for us as an Academic Specialist, making valuable recommendations for the establishment of a Central Law Library and generously sharing her expertise with many people and institutions in Ghana. We could not have found a better professional for this challenging task. Moreover, I was pleased to consider Jo Ann my friend, and we remained in touch from time to time after her return to Missouri and my transfer to Guatemala. It is indeed sad to learn that such a fine person has been taken from us so prematurely.¹

Jo Ann's influence was no less profound closer to home. In addition to her contributions to the School of Law, Jo Ann was active in community and professional organizations. She gave tirelessly of her time and expertise to organizations that mattered to her. Jo Ann served at least one term as President of our local chapter of Habitat for Humanity and participated in numerous Habitat homebuilding projects as a family liaison and advocate. She also served as Faculty Advisor to the University of Missouri-Columbia's student chapter of Habitat. Even after she became ill, when the local chapter once again asked Jo Ann to sit on its Board of Directors, she agreed. Jo Ann was an equally generous participant in professional organizations relating to law librarianship. She served two terms as Secretary to the Mid-America Association of Law Libraries and coordinated a major technology grant from the Department of Education to the Mid-America Law Schools Library Consortium. Jo Ann made many presentations at regional and national conferences, always willing to share her expertise with others. She was an exemplary role model and mentor to new librarians.

What Jo Ann liked a lot more than serving as an association officer was working side-by-side with community neighbors or professional colleagues. Those who worked with Jo Ann quickly came to appreciate her friendship, warmth, caring, and humor, her sage advice, her honesty and integrity. Another letter attests to the personal qualities that made her so special:

1. Letter from Michael D. Orlansky to Martha J. Dragich, dated 10/29/96.

I cannot tell you how saddened I am at Jo Ann's death. We grew up together in the association,² meeting as University of Missouri Law Librarians. She was at the Columbia campus and I was at the Kansas City campus. We were soul mates . . . fast friends. We challenged each other about going to law school. She went first and opened the door for the University to offer tuition remission for law library staff attending law school. The University of Missouri-Kansas City gave me the same support based on the precedent Jo Ann had set on our sister campus the year before. Although she didn't finish law school—for all the right reasons—she was always proud that I continued for 4 years to complete my J.D.

I will always miss her. We had a 17 year friendship that was one of the greatest benefits of my membership in AALL and my six years with the University of Missouri School of Law. The world has lost one of its gentle, warm, and most generous citizens, and we have lost a dear friend.³

I knew Jo Ann for only three years. Jo Ann called me her “boss,” but I thought of her as my partner. She shared in every aspect of library administration, and every decision bears her imprint as much as my own. When I accepted my position as Director of the Law Library, I wondered whether a woman who had almost never worked anywhere else would resist this outsider's plans for change. I couldn't have been more wrong. From my first day, Jo Ann was supportive and cooperative in all I hoped to do. I should have known: it was her dedication to providing the very best service that mattered, not her own way of doing things. Jo Ann was my confidante, my sounding board; my half-baked ideas always benefitted from her review. I sorely miss her counsel. In work and in life (spheres Jo Ann thoroughly integrated), I deeply admired and respected Jo Ann's compassion and wisdom.

Ironically, the outpouring of support from law students, staff, and faculty during her illness helped Jo Ann begin to transcend her unassuming nature and understand her importance in our lives. Would that she could have learned this truth some easier, happier way! The *Law Review's* decision to dedicate this issue to Jo Ann is a fitting testament to her place in our hearts. I know she would be honored by it.

We all miss Jo Ann, each in our own way. We will not forget her.

2. The American Association of Law Libraries, and its Mid-America regional chapter.

3. Letter from Shelley L. Dowling, Librarian of the Supreme Court of the United States, to Martha J. Dragich, dated 10/22/96.

