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Oklahoma City University School of Law

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In Appreciation of Judy Morgan

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IN APPRECIATION OF JUDY MORGAN

Lawrence K. Hellman*

More than thirty years ago, before Judy Morgan came on the scene at Oklahoma City University School of Law, I attended the annual meeting of the American Association of Law Librarians to interview candidates for the position of director of the law library at our school. I remember telling the candidates that I considered the law library to be the “heart of the law school.” Years later, when I became dean, Judy Morgan was in place as our library director. I soon discovered that the “heart of our school” was in very good condition. It was healthy and strong, pumping the sustaining lifeblood of the academic organism we call a law school to all of its moving parts. That this was so—and continues to be the case—is attributable to the remarkable leadership that Judy Morgan has provided for twenty-five years.

When Judy came to OCU in 1983, the law library was small and humble. The collection totaled only a little more than 100,000 volumes, and the physical space assigned to the law library was less than half of what it is now. The staff consisted of Judy, three professional librarians, and four support staff. As she departs in 2010, she leaves a collection of well over 330,000 volume equivalents and a departmental staff of thirteen, including six professional librarians. But these numbers do not come close to telling the story of the transformative contributions to our law library that Judy has made during her time as director. Indeed, getting from point A to point B has not been a straight line path. No one who knows the history of this law school over the past twenty-five years would say negotiating that path has been easy.

Judy had to work with lean budgets—which frequently were cut in the middle of the fiscal year. She had to cope with understaffing. Her advocacy on behalf of the library was always measured and restrained—but ultimately effective. Sometimes she had to wait patiently for the

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obvious needs to be fully appreciated. But she never overreached, thus earning respect from all of the deans under whom she served.

As the law school's fortunes improved, the resources available for the law library grew. But so did the needs and expectations of students, faculty, and public patrons. A true professional, Judy welcomed the opportunity to support the increasing scholarship of the faculty, the desires of new generations of students to have more spacious study environments and reliable access to electronic databases, and the law school's need to squeeze more faculty offices out of the finite space available in the Gold Star Building. She met these needs with grace and an innovative spirit.

As a manager of a large staff, Judy dealt with professional and nonprofessional staff with compassion, understanding, and encouragement. She succeeded in keeping the staff filled with dedicated and talented individuals, and she gave them the space to develop professionally. While some employee turnover inevitably occurred over the long span of her career as library director, it was not as high as it might have been had Judy not provided such a welcoming and affirming working environment. The talented individuals she identified, recruited, and retained were always characterized by a desire to serve, which resulted in consistently high marks from patrons of all types. This is all the more remarkable in light of the awkward facilities allocated to the law library in the Gold Star Building—which was not designed to function as a library.

But it did function—and well. So well in fact that when an ABA site inspection team in the late 1990s suggested the library facilities were having a material and adverse impact on our educational program, it was easy to rebut the suggestion by pointing to the high levels of satisfaction of a demanding faculty, student body, and legal community. Far before outcome measures began to be considered to be more appropriate than input measures for accreditation standards, Judy Morgan's organization and management of our library allowed us to show that our library was most definitely *enhancing* the educational experience of our students, the scholarship of our faculty, and the law school's service to the community. The site inspection team's concerns faded away, quietly.

One managerial characteristic of Judy's will remain legendary after she retires. That is her determination and ability to spend every penny in her budget before the end of each fiscal year. The expenditures were never rash nor imprudent, but her attention to the details of billing cycles

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and university mandates ensured that she got the most out of her budget for the best interest of, not the library, but the users of the library.

I'll close with a word about Judy Morgan's unblinking focus on the welfare of students. Though seldom seen in a classroom, Judy was always mindful of the students' needs and schedules, always advocating for more study rooms (the last time I checked, we had more than Harvard), always accommodating special requests on the part of moot court teams and law review students for extended access to the collection and storage facilities, and always trying to outsmart or outrun the changeable Oklahoma weather to keep the library open for the students.

Especially in this respect, Judy Morgan operated according to the unwritten creed of the OCU LAW faculty: We care about our students and their success; we take pride in our students and their success; we derive our professional satisfaction from helping our students to achieve their goals and aspirations. It is through their careers that we touch thousands and thousands of lives. Judy Morgan has done this, and done it well.