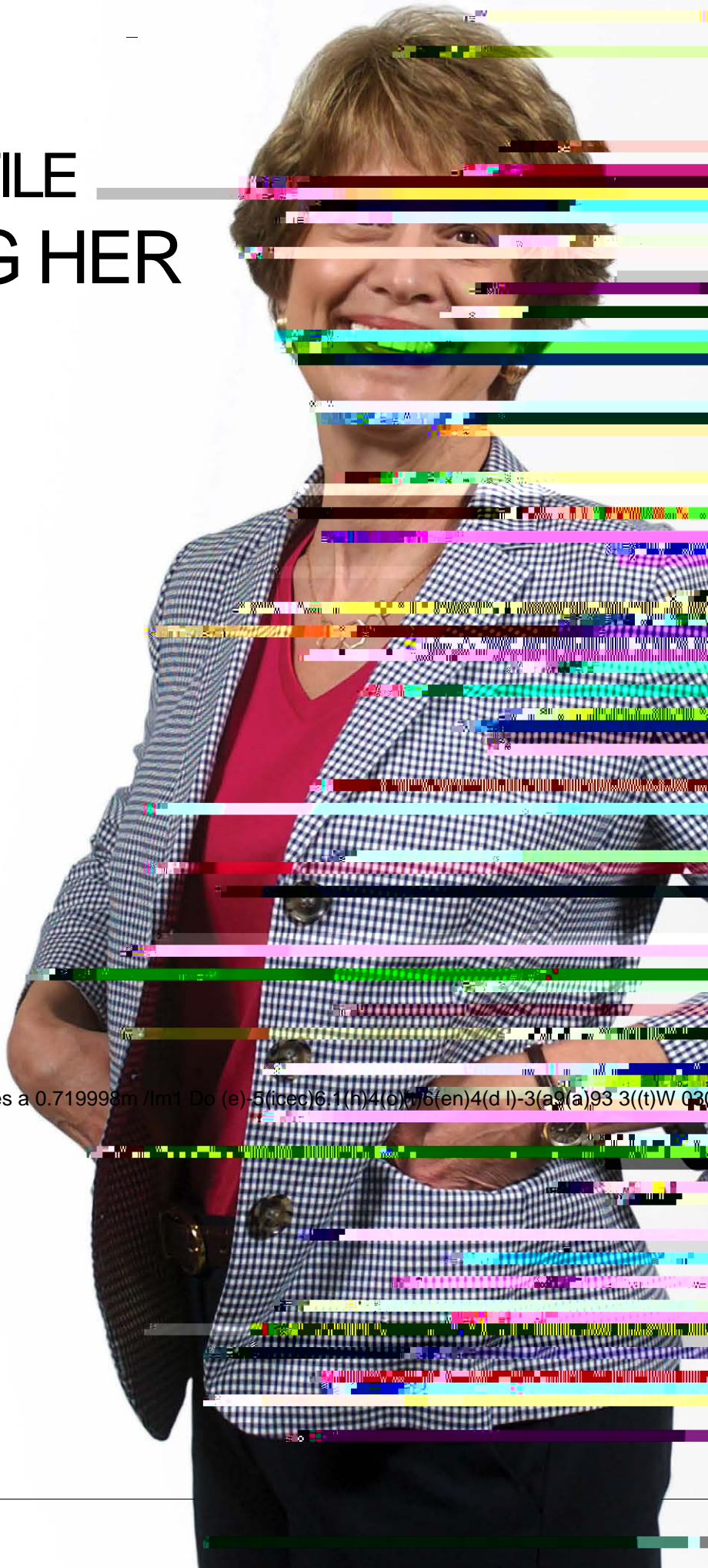


# LEADER PROFILE FOLLOWING HER

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Like many of her colleagues at AALL, Gail Warren's career path to becoming a law librarian was not direct. "My goal early on was to attend law school and



becoming an attorney as a way to correct that law librarian when the current librarian retired. scenario for lots of mothers and their children.” They hired me with the condition that I get a

Warren attended law school at the University of Richmond in Virginia. While in school, she realized two very piv(eir c)6.17lin3 pivOd emO University was willing to expedite my application, so I began my first class in August of 1982. I became the state law librarian on September 1 of that year,” said Warren.

Warren also served as adjunct librarian at the University of Richmond Law School Library. “It was around the time that lawyering skills programs became popular and the library didn’t have enough professional library staff to teach their sections of students, so I taught at the law school as part of that program for a number of years,” notes Warren.

In addition to her role as a government law librarian, Warren has served in several positions at AALL, including a three-year term as Executive Board Treasurer. She has also served on several committees, including the Review Special Committee, Leadership Development Committee, Executive Committee, Education Program Review Special Committee, Member Recognition Special Committee, Annual Meeting Program Committee, and the Council of Special Interest Section Chairs, to name just a few. She is also a member of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries and the Virginia Association of Law Libraries.

Warren’s extensive experience in an upper-level role enables her to help others grow and expand their knowledge and skills in court and government law, technology, and other general career management principles.

#### Describe a typical day?

A typical day includes performing routine administrative duties. Tasks like approving invoices and employee leave requests, as well as scheduling shifts at our reference desk. I also work two to three days a week at the reference desk. On the days I’m at the reference desk, I’m answering questions, usually via email (even law clerks who work in the building will send an email message as opposed to coming into the library). Some of the questions are super basic and can be answered in a matter of minutes, while others may take hours of research.

“Figure out what your strengths are, and let that guide the ways in which you advocate. I think you also need to be honest in your assessment of your value to your institution and your library’s value to your organization.”

Gail Warren

#### GAIL WARREN

- STATE LAW LIBRARIAN
- VIRGINIA STATE LAW LIBRARY
- RICHMOND, VA

government officials such as the governor and legislators, and so on. Generally speaking, we are not open to the public. Although the public does not visit the law library, they do call us and send us email questions. Everyone who contacts us, including inmates, receives a response. Our primary mission is to serve the legal community of the commonwealth of Virginia.

The bulk of the services we provide is for Virginia's two appellate courts, and to some extent, for lower court judges. We complete in-depth research for judicial staff; this is far more research than we would complete for an attorney or the public. We also offer orientation sessions for incoming judicial clerks, and I also present educational programs at judicial conferences. The library is located on the second floor of the court building, and, in addition to maintaining that collection, we are also responsible for maintaining chambers collections—collections for each of the appellate justices and judges in Virginia—a total of 28 satellite libraries. Our library houses the Supreme Court of Virginia Archive, so we are responsible for preserving items like photographs, administrative papers, and judges' papers. We also participate in the Legal Information Archive, a digital preservation program of the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA). The program is focused on long-term preservation and access to born-digital legal publications.

I spend the remainder of my time working on special projects that require a lot of writing. I am a member of the Virginia Access to Justice Commission and serve on two of its working committees. The Commission developed a website for self-represented litigants, and I serve as the site administrator. What I find myself doing most days is juggling tasks—from mundane administrative duties to the reference questions, and special projects I handle, my days are pretty busy.

[Do you work closely with the Supreme Court of Virginia?](#)

My boss is the chief justice, currently the honorable Donald W. Lemons. I meet with him routinely to discuss initiatives or ideas. He has challenged me and my staff in the past two years to do things we've never done before, such as installing exhibits on the first floor of the court building and conducting tours of the courtroom for school children and other groups. One of the co-chairs for the Access

[Who are your patrons at your institution, and what sorts of services do you provide?](#)

In Virginia, access to the library is governed by statute. The law library serves groups such as justices of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the judges of the staff of the Court of Appeals in Virginia, judges of all lower courts in Virginia, practicing attorneys in good standing,

### How has your past work experience benefited you in your current position?

Every position I've ever held, including summers in college when I worked at King's Dominion—an amusement park like Six Flags—has provided me with opportunities to learn about managing others. I started working at King's Dominion after my first year in college and continued working there through college and into my first year of law school. During my time with King's Dominion, I had opportunities both to supervise staff and to work with Wilson Learning, a management learning company, as they implemented an employee program. These early work experiences really inform how I work today and my management style. Each opportunity I've had built on the previous experience. Even as a student working in the law school library, where one started out by filing loose-leaf services, I eventually worked my way up to the circulation desk where I had regular interaction with staff and patrons. The greatest benefit of all past work experience was learning how to work with people. Learning how to motivate them, while respecting their boundaries, and realizing that not everyone is going to do a job the way I would do it. It's important to acknowledge and respect people's strengths and weaknesses.

I like to think that if you talked to the people I work with they would say I support them, kind of like how a coach would. Looking back, one of the most important "educational" opportunities I had was during the first year I worked at my institution, when I was the law library assistant. Although the librarian did not have any degrees, she did have the desire to do right by the library. But she was very insecure, and her management style reflected that and it was not an example anyone would want to emulate. It served as a lesson in how actions a manager might think are those of a powerful manager actually result in people doing the exact opposite of what you need them to do.

### What's the biggest challenge you face in your position?

Given that I've been in the same place for so long, my biggest challenge is not allowing myself or my staff to be complacent or too comfortable with the status quo. We can always continue to improve how we provide services

or how we share information. I think we need to be open to filling new roles, whether or not they are traditional library roles. These non-traditional roles open new doors for remaining relevant to the mission of our parent institutions.

### What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the profession?

Can I repeat myself? Allowing ourselves to be complacent about what we do or becoming too comfortable doing what we have always considered to be our role as librarians is a huge challenge. Not remaining relevant puts us in jeopardy. The problem isn't that we don't

