

LEADER PROFILE

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

The field of law librarianship continues to evolve, and Saskia Mehlhorn believes librarians should be leading the charge. As machine learning and artificial intelligence become more commonplace and librarians' roles began to shift, it will be more important than ever to stay ahead of the technological curve.

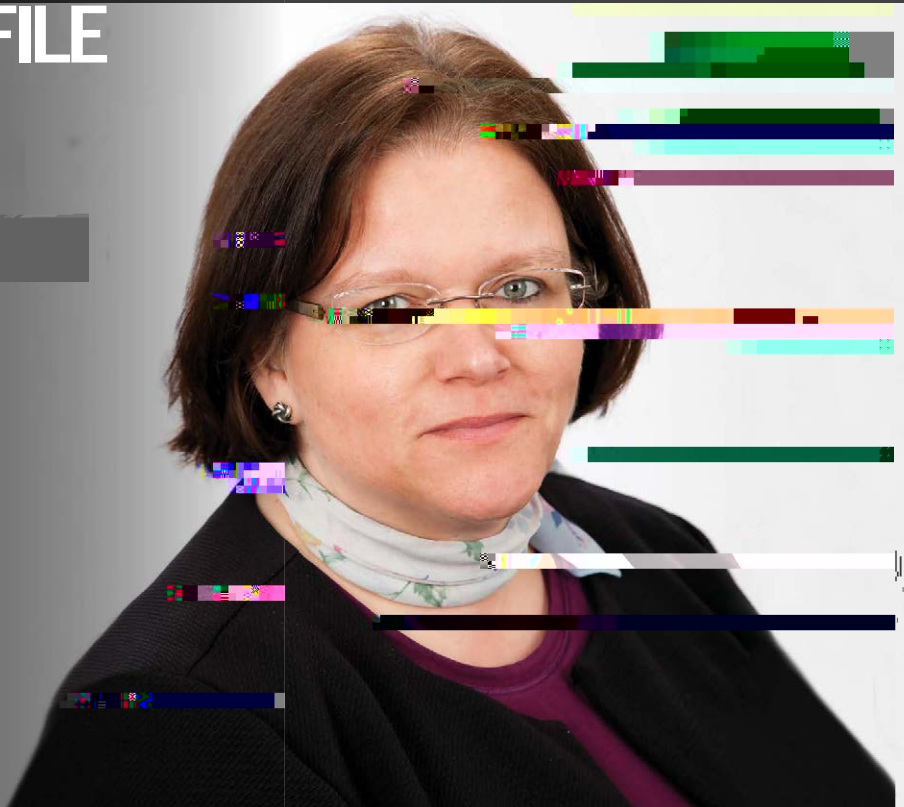
Born and raised in Germany, Saskia Mehlhorn grew up with a passion for law. After earning her law degree in 1993 from the University of Hamburg, Germany, she began her work as a lawyer at a law firm in Hannover, Germany, in 1995, before coming to the United States with her family in 1997. "We came to the U.S. for two years before moving to Norway for another two years, and then finally moved back to the States in 2001," said Mehlhorn. Once she was sure her family wouldn't be moving again anytime soon, she began thinking about her next career move. Deciding against a career as a lawyer, but still wanting to satisfy her passion for the law,

Mehlhorn opted to attend the University of Houston Law Center's LLM program. "I very much enjoyed practicing law when I was in Germany, but it was different in the U.S., and so I chose a different path," she explains.

While pursuing her LLM, an acquaintance who owned a legal service in Houston asked if she had ever considered law librarianship, as she had a client that was in need of a temporary law librarian. "I had no idea what a law librarian's job duties were—in Germany their responsibilities are different—but I thought it was really interesting," she said. "You get to do a lot of things that I enjoy, such as legal research. You can try out new tools

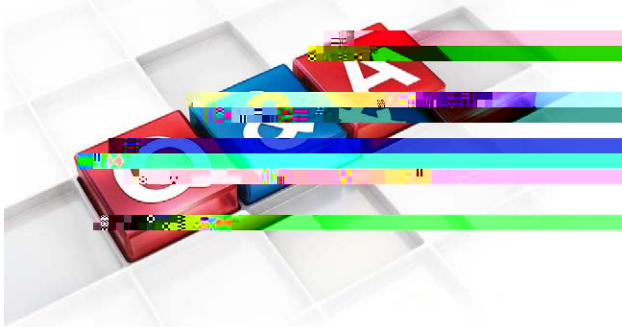
and different databases, and you're not charged for using them." After meeting with human resources at the law firm, she began working with their domestic team the next day. Mehlhorn stayed with the firm for about a year, working part-time while she completed her LLM.

"I did everything from loose-leaf filing to translating contracts from German into English, which I can do very well because of my legal background, and I assisted with administrative tasks," she recalls. "Even now, I find those experiences to be very useful, especially the loose-leaf filing, because I got to know a lot about the different treatises that are on the market."





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and typically contain great programs. I enjoy getting together with my peers to exchange ideas and opinions on what others are trying at their own institutions.

Any law firm

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Any law firm, whether it is a solo practitioner or a 4,000-lawyer global firm, has within its systems a tremendous amount of collective knowledge. So instead of asking why it's important, we should ask, "Why not make use of that knowledge?"

A comprehensive system is a key to the holy grail. All knowledge that has been accumulated is readily available for retrieval and allows law firms to work efficiently and consistently at a high level for their clients.

Knowledge management

Knowledge management hasn't really changed all that much. When we think of knowledge, it's really to communicate past experiences—we transcribe them, preserve them, and then make them available. That is how we still handle it today. In the past, it was often times all about the books. Someone would go to a book shelf, grab a book, get the knowledge out of the book, and move on. Now we aren't constrained to use only the printed format, because everything is also available online, which makes it easier to retrieve the knowledge. As we move forward, we won't be solely relying on the ability to retrieve knowledge and make results come back faster. In the future, we will be able to use systems that combine knowledge that is available in any given repository with ideas, thoughts, and concepts, whether they are articles or seminars, so you are better able to find a solution to whatever problems arise.

2018 AALL Annual Meeting

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I'm most excited about the use of chatbots

I'm most excited about the use of chatbots when it comes to carrying out tasks that are critical but also very time-consuming. In my department, we are currently working on a chatbot that could replace the reference interview. The reference interview is something that is necessary—often times because people don't

How do you

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I receive several technology emails. I usually focus on research institutions, whether it's Fraunhofer Applied Sciences Institution or business schools. Often times, especially when it comes to technology, there might be articles that include insights and trends outside the legal realm, but those can nevertheless be applied to aspects within the legal field.

I also enjoy attending webinars, especially on new technologies, because I find it very helpful to see how something works and not just read about it in theory. I especially find vendor-run webinars to be helpful since you can actually see the database tables they have created or a new system in action.

I don't attend every annual meeting out there, but I have been to the last couple of AALL Annual Meetings; I find one or two larger meetings a year is more than enough. I like to attend webinars such as ILTA (International Legal Technology Association), AALL, and the Private Law Librarians and Information Professionals Special Interest Section. These webinars are straightforward, not too expensive, or often free. I also attend local Houston Area Law Librarians meetings because they are usually only a few hours long

