

Longitudinal Analysis of Mobility within the American Legal Academy—1922 to 1989: Visualizations, Network Dynamics, Trends, and Emergent Hierarchies

By Peter A. Hook

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The Association of American Law Schools (AALS) was founded in 1900 (AALS, 2008) and is the main learned society for law school professors in the United States. Since 1922, the AALS has produced an annual directory of its members that contains biographical information about law professors and librarians at each member school (AALS, 1923). Each directory contains a list of faculty members by school for that particular year. Student workers have hand keyed the content of these lists, from 1922 to 1989, into a relational database. The sixty-seven years of data has resulted in a dataset of over 37,000 unique names working at 206 different institutions.

The dataset allows for detailed, comprehensive studies of the migration trends of law school faculty members over time. The net inflow and outflow of each school, when conceptualized as a network, suggests a hierarchy of the prestige of each institution that predates the availability of the US News & World Reports ranking data ("Brains for the Bar," 1987; Gest, 1990; Henderson & Morriss, 2006). The operable assumption is that, in the aggregate, tenured faculty members move to more prestigious law schools. Thus, cluster analysis of the mobility between schools makes it possible to categorize the different tiers of schools, both nationally and regionally. Additionally, the data allows answers to such questions as which schools feed other schools in terms of faculty mobility, which cities or regions feed other cities or regions, and how these patterns have changed over time.

Further metrics and observations culled from the data include longitudinal growth studies—number of faculty members, per institution, per year. Growth spikes at the national, regional, and even city level may be identified and explained. Additional work will analyze law faculty members by gender and the rise of women in the legal academy.

References:

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