

CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

Background

Continuing legal education is a major activity of every metropolitan and state bar association, as well as law schools and specialty bars. CLE developed as a way for lawyers returning from World War II to refresh and update themselves in the law.

In Missouri, the metro bars in St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield are all active in CLE, as are the law schools at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. All of these programs compete for the same customers.

Continuing legal education as an organized Missouri Bar activity dates to 1957 and as a bar department to about 1960. The Missouri Bar was an “early adopter” in the CLE world, participating in the Arden House Conference in 1958 that sketched the outline of present day CLE. After Arden House, The Missouri Bar created a Legal Education Committee, hired a director, and began producing CLE programs. In the fall of 1960, we presented “Probating Missouri Estates,” and MoBarCLE began what is now nearly 50 years of continuing legal education.

The CLE deskbooks began as course materials for the seminars. The early books were mini-treatises on Missouri law written by knowledgeable lawyers and judges. As time passed, the books evolved into stand-alone publications. The Legal Education Committee recognized that lawyers were using deskbooks as beginning research tools, not just adjuncts to CLE lectures. The bookshelf began major growth during the 1970s. Editing improved, and a MoBarCLE publication style developed.

Another major development occurred when CLE became a self-supporting program of The Missouri Bar. Revenues from program presentations and publications sales pay for the costs of production and the direct overhead costs associated with the CLE Department. This allows MoBarCLE to produce seminars and publications that, though important, are of interest to a limited segment of the bar.

As MoBarCLE began to operate like a business, the staff grew, program offerings increased, and the deskbooks were produced as research tools. The department developed a programs division and a publications division, each with its own internal budget and the direction to be self-supporting. The adoption of MCLE greatly increased the market for CLE programming.

As it has from the beginning, MoBarCLE relies almost entirely on volunteer lawyers, judges, and law professors to plan and produce seminars and publications.

Missouri Bar Activities

During 2004, more than 12,000 people attended MoBarCLE programs comprising 226 events, and a similar activity level continues into 2005. Programs are presented live in about 20 locations around the state and on video replay in several more. The mix of programs includes MoBarCLE

involvement in the Solo and Small Firm Conference and the production of the Family Law Conference and the Labor and Employment Law Symposium. Another conference-type program is Essentials of Missouri Practice, a two-day basics program that is very well received.

In addition to these more traditional programs, MoBarCLE offers a rich selection of programs through telephone seminars, live conference calls that offer the opportunity for callers to ask questions and receive answers. The telephone seminars have proved to be a very popular part of our program offerings, and they allow the quick production of a program that can be delivered statewide (or nationwide) on very short notice. Another part of our effort to serve all our members involves online CLE. We provide a considerable amount of audio and video content through LegalSpan.com, our present online outlet for our own programming, as well as some co-sponsored content.

During the past several years, MoBarCLE has encouraged members to volunteer to participate in CLE activities as speakers, moderators, authors, and reviewers. The campaign has been successful. Many MoBarCLE programs and publications have benefited from the good efforts of Missouri lawyers who have not previously been involved in working in CLE. The sign-up forms are available at all MoBarCLE programs.

MoBarCLE publications have continued to serve our members and to find a market. The increasing use of electronic publication in the dissemination of cases and statutes has apparently not diminished the desire of many lawyers to have books on their library shelves. Because all the production is done in-house, including printing, MoBarCLE is able to offer a very high quality Missouri-specific product at an affordable price. Forms disks (now on CD-ROM) add to the usefulness of the books. MoBarCLE is continually striving to give Missouri lawyers the resources they want and need in their practice.

Online ordering is an important part of our connection with our lawyer public, and more of our members each year take advantage of e-commerce to purchase our programs and publications. It is safe to predict that the use of the Internet for this purpose will continue to grow.



Registrants at MoBarCLE programs, such as this session focusing on effective use of PowerPoint presentations, find themselves enjoying cutting-edge programs at very reasonable prices.