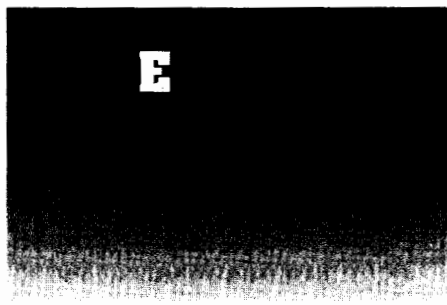


LIBRARY HIGHLIGHTS

Electronic Law Library

In a recent study, compiled at the urging of the chair of our law school's building committee, we discovered that if we got rid of every print volume that is on WESTLAW or LEXIS, the law library's collection would be 13 percent or 44,420 volumes smaller. If one print copy of all these "duplicated" legal materials would stay in the library's collection, our law library would get rid of 25,403 print volumes or 7 percent of the collection.



It is important to look closely at the assumptions we make if we decide that print materials can be discarded because they are duplicated online. First assumption: everything in the print volumes is completely duplicated online. Not so. Tables of contents, statutory and case indexes, descriptive word indexes, law review mastheads, and prefatory material are often not included in the online databases. Italics are omitted from online versions of texts. Graphics from texts such as the *Federal Register* and *Code of Federal Regulations* are not included in the databases.

Second assumption: full-text access is just as convenient and easy as using the print. Many experienced legal researchers would disagree, especially when using hierarchically organized research tools like codes.

Third assumption: electronic access is equivalent to the print volume in terms of readability, economy, and portability. Again, many users of legal materials will argue that it is easier to read a book and that the print is more economical if many need access to the same case or article or series.

Fourth and fifth assumptions: everyone with an interest in legal research knows how to use the online systems and has access to them. Of course, neither of these assumptions is really safe. Every law school library serves the rest of the university community and many serve the public. And our LEXIS and WESTLAW educational contracts prohibit access to all except our own law students, faculty, and staff.

Sixth, seventh, and eighth assumptions: LEXIS, WESTLAW, or equivalent systems will still be in business in the future, will continue to include the titles we have discarded, and will be provided at a cost we can afford.

It makes sense to rely on WESTLAW and LEXIS-NEXIS for resources that academic law libraries would not otherwise have in their collections—for example, the vast array of non legal periodicals included in NEXIS. It also makes sense to reduce the duplication of materials in print collections in reliance on online "back-ups." And it may even make sense to find ways to convert some legal research tools, primarily case verification systems such as *Shepard's Citations*, to electronic-only access since the print tools can never be as current or as convenient to use.

But, realistically, I know of no law library that would get rid of every print copy of the primary

state and federal statutes, cases, and administrative rules and decisions that are available online. As my friend and colleague, George Grossman, said, "If legal information were available only in electronic form, someone would invent the book."

We cannot and should not give up the print unless we are convinced that we are not sacrificing access, functionality, or economy. We have a responsibility to uphold the rule of law in our society. We must evaluate and analyze our collections carefully and not be taken in by the technology hype. □

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1999 Annual Meeting— London 2000

The ABA Annual Meeting will be in July this year due to the London 2000 program. The Section will host its regular Section activities, such as honoring the Robert J. Kutak Award recipient, in New York as part of the regular ABA Annual Meeting. In addition, Dean David Link is coordinating the Section's Presidential Showcase program for the London 2000 meeting on creating a new way of providing legal education. The Section's London activities will include a joint program with the law faculties of London University looking at legal education in the new millennium, a dinner at Middle Temple and a visit to Cambridge to meet with the Cambridge law faculty.