

# The law school library: It's more than just books

**Academic librarians review Web sites, advise students and meet with vendors—all in one week.**

BY PENNY A. HAZELTON  
SPECIAL TO THE NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL

*A law school librarian's diary of a "typical" week on the job.*

### Day 1: On the road

I am in Napa, Calif., for the meeting of the editorial board of *Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing*. Besides brainstorming about articles that will be of use to those who teach legal research and writing, we discuss access to the articles on the publisher's Web page.

I learned that this journal is in the queue to be loaded full text on a major legal database. Even with electronic access, we think there is a need for a print compilation of the best articles to be at teachers' fingertips, especially given the high turnover in teachers of legal research and writing.

On the flight home, I am thinking about the legal research class I will teach to five of my new law library staff. A mix of librarians and support staff will take the class. What do they need to know and understand about the legal system and the law to do their jobs better? They work in circulation, cataloging, interlibrary loan and serials—completely different jobs.

I have decided that whatever I have to cover must be done in no more than six class periods. I need to prepare some library exercises and some in-class activities so this doesn't become just another lecture class. I will do sessions on the legal system and sources of law, a class on the judicial system, and classes on citation form and abbreviations, court reports, statutes and secondary materials.

### Day 2: Home at last

Out of the office for two days and I am inundated with e-mail messages. I spend the morning trying to respond to the ones

Salary raises for July 1 are due in a week. The Legislature appropriated only 4% for merit distribution. Given widely varying state policies over the years, salaries that tend to be far below those of our peers in other academic law libraries and the high cost of living in Seattle, pressure to compete with entry-level salaries has created serious compression in the middle range and some inequities at the top end. I continue to worry about this. Students who graduate with their Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree are in high demand. A 4% pool is simply not enough money to right these wrongs, even if some got no increase at all. The lure of interesting work, as well as the salary and benefits in the high-tech industry, will continue to make it hard for libraries to compete for the best graduates.

I have an appointment with one of the new law librarianship students, who will start the program in the University of Washington School of Library and Information Science in the fall. He is a law student and is trying to plan his course of study for the coming year. It was easier to advise students coming into the program when all students took exactly the same courses. But with a completely new MLIS course of study this fall, planning a student's curriculum ahead of time is important.


**Anyone who graduates with a Masters of Library and Information Science degree is in high demand.**

The student wants to know why he has to take two more legal research classes, which are required by the course of study for the law librarianship program. After all, he had a first-year legal research and writing class and clerked for a law firm. I explain that, as a librarian, he will be doing research and teaching research to law students and lawyers. He needs to know more

than his future students, and he needs to be extremely familiar with all print and electronic legal research tools.

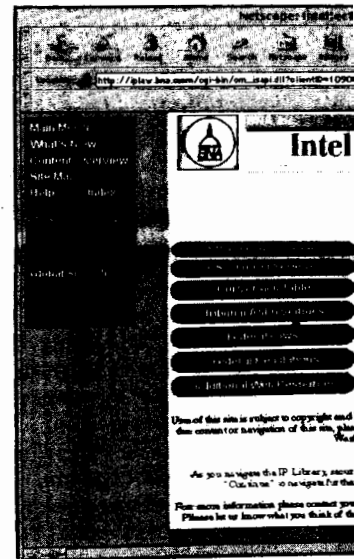
The market for law librarians continues to be strong. Both of the law librarianship students this year were hired by April, even though they won't graduate until late August. In the 15 years I have been at the University of Washington, this is a first.

### Day 3: Meeting the vendors



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### Day 2: Home at last

Out of the office for two days and I am inundated with e-mail messages. I spend the morning trying to respond to the ones I can quickly answer. This often seems to mean that I don't necessarily prioritize work by its importance, but rather by the speed with which I can deal with it. Questions that require reference to other material or time to really think about a response rarely get answered quickly.

Communication and efficiency have improved greatly because of e-mail, but I wonder whether, in our zeal to do more, we overwhelm others with things that they don't really need to know. Easy access to e-mail for many people has made me more accessible, but I have to remember to integrate my paper, phone, in-person and virtual workload.

*Ms. Hazelton is the director of the Gallagher Law Library at the University of Washington School of Law in Seattle. She has been a librarian since getting her J.D. and Masters in Law Librarianship in 1976. She can be reached at pennyh@u.washington.edu.*

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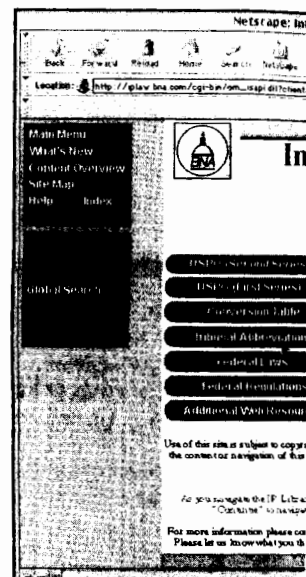
### Day 3: Meeting the vendors

Today, Nancy—one of my reference librarians—and I meet with our new Lexis/Nexis representative. Nancy and I want to be sure they understand that we are an educational institution with an educational mission. We know the vendors give law schools a deeply discounted rate in order to sell their products to the next generation of law students, but we ask the vendors' reps to leave salesmanship at the door and concentrate on training for educational purposes.

It used to be that only law firms had trouble getting new associates to turn up for training—new associates felt that they were really good at Westlaw and Lexis/Nexis and did not need further supervised time. Most law firm librarians I speak with would dispute this claim. But now we are facing this same problem in law schools, with students who consider themselves to be computer- and Internet-literate.

[SEE 'LIBRARIAN' PAGE C5]

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# Librarians evaluate both print and elec

['LIBRARIAN' FROM PAGE C3]

Students are more and more computer-literate by the time they come to law school. Many are semi-Internet-literate—how hard can Westlaw and Lexis be, anyway?

I get a call from my reference department. They are trying to find a copy of the first question posed by a petitioner in a 1970s *in forma pauperis* petition to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court granted certiorari for the second question only. The reference team here looked at a variety of print and electronic sources for this information, but we concluded that the only place left to look would be the original petition filed with the court—a reminder that not everything is yet in electronic form.

### Day 4: Whether to subscribe

I meet regularly with the five librarians who make decisions about what print and electronic tools to add to the library's collection. A reference librarian and a librarian from technical services also join this biweekly meeting. We only discuss the hard questions. Most of the questions we discuss involve some electronic format.

Today, we discuss the new Web site that contains the reference books *Legal Looseleaves in Print* and *Legal Newsletters in Print*. Apparently, basic searches are free on the Web, but some types of information are not. The books in print see heavy use, so questions arise: Do we need to subscribe to the Web site? Can we cancel the print copy if we subscribe to the Web site? Does the electronic version have some functionality that the print does not have? And vice versa? Will the Web site archive older information?

If we subscribe to the Web site, how do we let our users know we have it? Do we catalog it separately or just put the uniform resource locator (the Web address) in the record for the print copy? We are reluctant to cancel the print version in favor of a Web site with which we have no experience.

This type of question always brings us to a major dilemma. Inflation in the cost of law library materials has been more than 12% for many years. Increases to most academic law library budgets fall far short of this inflationary rate. So where does the money come from to pay for something in both print and electronic form? The answer is, there is no extra money, so academic law libraries tend to be pretty conservative in their conversion of print resources to electronic ones.

In recent years, most academic law libraries have reviewed duplicate sub-

*Decennial Digest* because it is on Westlaw, even though our public patrons cannot access Westlaw under our academic contract?

One service we have been able to subscribe to is the Westlaw KeyCite product. For a low monthly fee, we are able to provide a free, state-of-the-art citation service for our public patrons.

### Day 5: Decisions, decisions

Our continuing legal education department can no longer provide us with copies of all their materials for free. We need three copies—one for our collection, one to be microfilmed for archival purposes and one for the State Law Library in exchange for work they do in our coop-

erative project to microfilm the briefs of the Washington Supreme Court and the Washington Court of Appeals. Can we afford three copies, especially as they are used most heavily by our outside patrons? No easy answers here.

Production of our weekly *Current Index to Legal Periodicals*, which we sell to other law libraries, is becoming more time-consuming because so many more academic legal periodicals are being published. At this time, we do not index any of the electronic-only academic journals. Will we have to add more staff, thereby driving prices up?

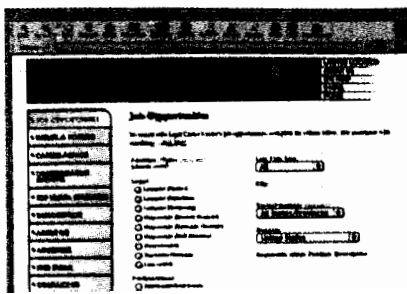
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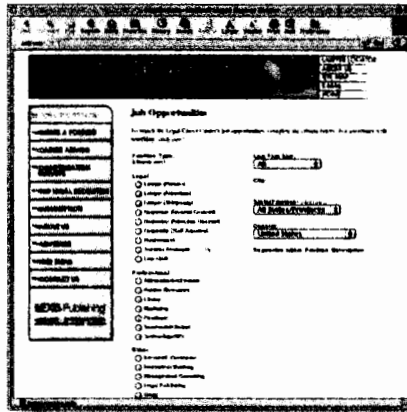
In recent years, most academic law libraries have reviewed duplicate subscriptions and have canceled those that cannot be justified based on use and shelf space. Updating treatises and *Shepard's Citators* in print has also been subject to the ax. Academic libraries have no clients to bill and increasingly must cope with buildings that are too small and/or have little or no technology infrastructure.

The pressure to contain the growth of the print collection is strong. Yet law school libraries have many constituencies. Although members of the law school community are the first priority, our law library is used by more than 125 outside patrons a day. An undergraduate, a member of the graduate faculty, a lawyer or judge, a firm messenger or law librarian, a person working pro se—all need access to legal information.

Public patrons use the Internet terminals, but these patrons cannot use Westlaw or any other fee-based electronic database that we subscribe to under an educational rate. Do we cancel the West

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# 7 evaluate both print and electronic info

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I finish up my sections of the report for the seven-year sabbatical American Bar Association site evaluation visit to

the University of Iowa Law School. My factual report on information resources and facilities will be added to the reports of the other team members and eventually submitted to the Accreditation Committee of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar.

I like to participate in these visits, but I always forget how much time it takes after a four-day visit to write up the report.

The faculty library has been closed to be remodeled as office space. What shall we do with the physical books and subscriptions? Shall we keep these print copies, cancel the subscriptions or what? Like Scarlett O'Hara, I will think about that tomorrow. NLJ

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