

# **“Creating, Disseminating, Using, and Preserving Legal Information in Challenging Times”**

**Sponsored by the American Association of Law Libraries  
The Lodge at Oak Brook, February 27 to March 1, 2011**

## **Vendors’ Responses to Questions for Discussion, Arranged by Topic**

### **Introduction**

The Planning Committee decided that one of the best ways to generate a discussion for the Colloquium was to ask vendors themselves what questions and comments they might have for librarians regarding the current climate and practices of the library community. In November 2010, the Planning Committee Chair asked the representatives of the vendors participating in the colloquium to respond to the following open-ended question:

- 1. If you had an opportunity to ask librarians 5 questions about library and information trends, what would they be? (Day 1, Presentation 4)**
- 2. What 5 things would you like to tell librarians about your company and the legal information industry? (Day 1, Presentation 1)**

The scheduled presentations on Day 1 of the Colloquium will provide an opportunity for vendor representatives to give their own individual reflections and summaries of responses to these questions. During Presentation 1, vendor speakers will address the second question above. Then, in Presentation 4, they will highlight their highest priority topics or responses generated by the first question above.

The vendors’ written responses to the first question are set forth below in order to provide additional context and easy reference for discussion at the Colloquium. *(It should be noted that written responses for the second question have not been included, given the uniqueness of each vendor’s products, services and goals.)* The responses have been edited and condensed to spur conversation during the dialogue sessions. The initial unedited responses (without attribution) are available upon request.

Importantly, the responses are grouped around the general themes that emerged during this process. Included for each theme is a brief note that describes why the theme is important to the vendor community.

- 1. If you had an opportunity to ask librarians 5 questions about library and information trends, what would they be?**

#### **1.1. Librarians’ Strategic Planning: Institutional Sustainability and Growth**

*Rationale: Vendors rely on libraries as a market for their products and value libraries for the roles they serve in the community. For these reasons, vendors have a continuing interest in the sustainability of libraries.*

1.1.1. Society's institutions are experiencing rapid and dramatic change these days, due in part to circumstances affecting them from outside, which the institutions cannot control. What are the five most significant *external* challenges that librarians are facing today? Are they the same or different for law firm, law school and court libraries? How will these challenges evolve within 5 years? 10 years?

## **1.2. Librarians' Strategic Planning: Responding to the Needs of Parent Organizations**

*Rationale: Because of their stake in libraries' success, vendors are interested in how libraries are serving the needs of their parent institutions. Additionally, in order to better plan for new products and market opportunities, vendors wish to know how they might work directly with other departments within parent institutions, while at the same time recognizing the professional roles played by librarians.*

1.2.1. Large organizations must remain nimble in responding to new societal and technological needs. Additionally, organizations all have different expectations for their libraries. What are the five most significant *internal* challenges that librarians are facing today in meeting the expectations of their parent organizations? Are they the same or different for law firm, law school and government libraries? How will these challenges evolve within 5 years? 10 years?

1.2.2. In addition to traditional research products, many legal vendors have increased the breadth of their offerings to include litigation support software, data hosting, electronic discovery support, customer relationship management tools, client development tools, etc. For the traditional research products, the librarian is frequently the main contact for the vendor within the parent organization. However, in many organizations, especially law firms, the librarian is not responsible for working with other departments of the organization where such products may prove useful. How can librarians and vendors successfully navigate this terrain in order to ensure that appropriate members of the parent organization are aware of the breadth of vendors' offerings?

1.2.3. Vendors often rely on librarians to communicate information about vendors' products to the management of the parent organization. Because of the importance of the role that librarians play in this scenario, vendors wish to know more about the typical librarian-management communication profile. What are librarians' current practices for ensuring that appropriate members of the organization are aware of the vendors' product offerings and how they are deployed at the organization?

1.2.4. A recent development appearing at one large, international law firm was the outsourcing of that firm's research to a third party, presumably as a cost-saving measure, which downsized the firm's staff of professional support lawyers. How would librarians anticipate responding to such a situation if it occurred within their organization?

- 1.2.5. Purchasing and contract negotiations have grown in complexity at many organizations. Many libraries, for example, work within the framework of their parent organizations' finance, accounting and procurement departments. This development impacts the ways in which both librarians and vendors relate to each other and to personnel in these fiscal departments. How does the vendor-library relationship change when another department becomes involved in contracting or purchasing issues?
- 1.2.6. Online information is abundant in every organization these days, thanks to the Internet. Yet, in most cases, libraries have remained a vibrant and vital part of the parent organization. How have libraries managed to achieve this success, even with the widespread availability of free information in all corners of the parent organization?

### **1.3. Librarians' Strategic Planning: Developing Professional Roles**

*Rationale: In order to enhance their ongoing working relationships with law librarians, vendors are interested in how librarianship is changing to keep up with social and technological progress.*

- 1.3.1. Some law firm librarians are taking on new roles outside of traditional library management, for example, conflicts, records management, knowledge management, due diligence, recruiting, etc. What is the status of this role expansion today, and what do you see for the future? Is role expansion taking place for law librarians in law school and court settings, and if so, what new roles are being added there?
- 1.3.2. Law firms have begun to view information as a resource that should be managed across all departments in the entire organization. Nevertheless, there are challenges to managing content and access in a global practice, while simultaneously integrating internal and external information into work flow processes. How are librarians' responding to this development? With a greater emphasis on information security of all types, what role are librarians beginning to play in the fields of information security and risk management? Are librarians in law schools and courts seeing their roles developing in similar ways?
- 1.3.3. There is a continuing demand for client development, competitive intelligence and current awareness in law firms, especially in these lean economic times. How are law firm librarians' job duties changing to meet these needs? Are librarians in other types of organizations seeing their roles change in similar ways?
- 1.3.4. As librarians are fostering these new roles, the changing landscape demands daily collaboration with marketing and technology departments, as well as management executives. What are librarians' current practices for maintaining and enhancing such relationships?

#### **1.4. Librarians' Strategic Planning: Expectations of Technology Advancements**

*Rationale: Vendors rely on librarians' knowledge and professional assessment of online databases and other tools in order to bring high-quality digital products to market.*

- 1.4.1. Vendors continually strive to meet the needs of their customers. In today's publishing world, advances in technology affect the ways in which vendors will develop products for future use. Therefore, vendors are interested in how they can meet the technology needs of librarians and their customers. What do librarians see as the future of advanced media, such as e-books, iPads, tablets, smartphones and similar devices, in their institutions? What technologies do librarians anticipate adopting within 2 years? 5 years? 10 years?
- 1.4.2. Vendors are mindful that, while information content may be identical in a variety of formats and on a variety of devices, these devices themselves provide differing experiences for their users. How will new technologies change the way your patrons research and communicate?

#### **1.5. Librarian Practices: Customer Service**

*Rationale: Law librarians' chief obligation is service to their libraries' customers. A researcher's productive library visit, using vendors' products, is a successful outcome for libraries and vendors alike. In order to continue to improve these customer-focused transactions, vendors are interested in knowing more about how libraries are maintaining traditional services—and creating new ones—for their customers.*

- 1.5.1. Library patrons are visiting libraries with needs and expectations that likely are quite different today than they were 30 years ago. How is the work that librarians do every day changing as a result? What are successful librarians doing to add value to their institutions and to their patrons' research endeavors? Do the various types of law libraries adopt differing approaches?
- 1.5.2. One societal trend to which many people must adapt is the "shrinking" of the world as air travel and telecommunications bring people together. What is the impact of globalization on your collections and the information you must provide to your patrons? How does this trend vary by type of library?
- 1.5.3. Vendors understand that all of their customers must work within budgetary constraints. In order to provide the most cost-effective research tools, vendors wish to know more about libraries' selection processes. How do libraries choose new resources for their collections? How do libraries balance cost with information content and access that meets patrons' needs? In a hypothetical scenario, if libraries needed to choose between in-depth legal analysis and technology efficiencies such as improved search engines, which would they choose? Do these processes and preferences vary by library type?
- 1.5.4. Many online tools have the capability of providing usage statistics that librarians can use to evaluate the resource's cost effectiveness. Are usage

statistics, in fact, important and, if so, what type information would librarians like to receive? What criteria are they using to benchmark acceptable usage and value?

1.5.5. Vendors are sensitive to the needs of libraries and their patrons when it comes to format offerings. Print and digital media both have their advantages and disadvantages, but vendors hope to understand more thoroughly the implications of format selection for libraries and their patrons. When do librarians suggest online resources to their patrons, instead of print? How do librarians “bridge the digital divide” and instruct novice computer users in online research? When do librarians more often recommend using books? How will these trends change in 5 years? In 10 years?

1.5.6. Vendors know that librarians are always on the lookout for new resources that meet patrons’ ever-expanding research needs. What subject area(s) would librarians like to see added to vendors’ product ranges?

### **1.6. Librarian Practices: Partnering Opportunities between Vendors and Librarians**

*Rationale: As the roles of both librarians and vendors change in the coming years, new opportunities may arise. Vendors wish to know if law librarians can identify areas or projects in which they can work together more closely.*

1.6.1. Librarians’ successes are often vendors’ successes, as well. What can vendors do to help raise librarians’ visibility and respect from their institutions and patrons?

1.6.2. The vendor community acknowledges that librarians derive significant career growth and support from their professional associations, such as AALL. How can a vendor best work with AALL’s Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV) and the AALL Vendor Liaison to ensure that the vendor meet the needs of both AALL and the library community?

### **1.7. Librarian Practices: Expectations of Vendors**

*Rationale: Vendors wish to sell high-quality, useful information resources to the library market in a straightforward and efficient manner. Librarians, too, hope for positive interactions with their vendors. In order to improve their service to their library-based customers, vendors are critically interested in librarians’ expectations of their vendors.*

1.7.1. Vendors share with librarians a mutual wish for effective and positive interactions. If you as a librarian had one “pet peeve” when dealing with a vendor, what would that be? What one customer service “best practice” is the most important to you? Why?

1.7.2. Some vendors customarily have provided end-user training for their products, working in coordination with librarians to accomplish this. What do law school librarians expect in terms of the evolution of teaching research to law students, and what are their expectations of vendors in this process? In other library settings, how can vendors better assist librarians in training new associates or

clerks? What role is “e-learning” coming to play in research training by libraries?

- 1.7.3. Librarians and vendors alike offer educational opportunities for the purpose of improving the research skills of those in attendance. In order to enhance the effectiveness of such training programs, vendors are seeking a better understanding of librarians’ expectations of the research skills of new lawyers. What aspects of the research process do law students and novice lawyers tend to ignore or misunderstand? What suggestions do librarians, in all types of law libraries, have in mind to remedy this situation?
- 1.7.4. Vendors know that communication methods and styles are evolving rapidly and that their own customer service departments must respond accordingly. What are the best methods—specifically—that vendors can use to communicate information to librarians: letters or printed brochures; e-mail; blogs; wikis; Facebook; YouTube; Twitter; attendance at regional or national meetings; or some other means?
- 1.7.5. Today’s economic conditions have affected all of us. Libraries have flat or decreasing budgets, and vendors have increasing costs in providing quality resources and services. How best can a vendor meet the resource and service needs of a library, while recognizing that reasonable price increases are essential for the vendor’s continuing profitability and viability?