EDITORIAL COMMENT _____

What Law Librarians in the United States Want to Know About the Operation and Future of Law Libraries.

THE PURPOSE and character of law libraries, as well as their economics and, in a broader sense, the acquisition and management of legal information and the changing techniques of legal research, have become the daily preoccupation of most law librarians. The search for answers is largely unsuccessful because the various issues have not yet been sufficiently generalized and our understanding of the available technology has not yet stabilized. Clearly, some in-depth research is necessary before meaningful conclusions about the future of law libraries can be reached.

As a first step towards the understanding of the new role for law libraries, Rita Millican, Associate Law Librarian at the Louisiana State University, and Danny P. Wallace, Associate Dean of the School of Library and Information Science at the same institution, decided to conduct a survey among law librarians in the United States about law library and legal information issues most urgently in need of research. Their findings, important to everyone interested in the management of legal research, are published under the title "Research Needs in Academic Law Libraries" in 84 *Law Library Journal* 421–438 (1992).

Millican and Wallace ask their respondents to state what issues are in need of immediate investigation and what are the most important issues to be researched thereafter. The principal responses form an interesting agenda of what concerns law librarians in the United States most.

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH IN THE NEXT YEAR

Items identified by at least twenty-five percent of the respondents as being in need of major research in the next year.

1. Determine how access to legal information or other relevant issues can be measured and substituted for volume count. Librarians recognize the need to move away from volume count as a quality measure for libraries. How can we get deans and accrediting agencies to recognize the validity of the new measures?

2. Determine whether law libraries are at the stage where paper copies of

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materials can be dropped in favor of CD-ROM, WESTLAW, LEXIS, and the various other new nonprint products. What is the impact on obligation to the public, *pro se* litigants, small firms with sparse financial resources, and other nonprimary clientele if materials are only in WESTLAW and LEXIS? Develop guidelines and collection development policies.

3. Determine how lawyers actually perform research. To provide meaningful library service and to instruct law students and attorneys in effective research techniques, law librarians need hard data on how attorneys actually do research—what materials do they use and how do they use them? When do they use them? Why?

4. Attempt to discover how legal research can be improved.

5. Develop guidelines with respect to the number of librarians need for a library with X volumes, Y faculty, and Z students. While the American Bar Association provides guidelines with respect to the number of faculty per full-time equivalent student, they do not address the same need in the library.

Research in the Next Five Years

The top six items identified by most law librarians as being in need of research in the next five years.

1. Determine whether law libraries are at the stage where paper copies of materials can be dropped in favor of CD-ROM, WESTLAW, LEXIS, and the various other new nonprint products.

2. Determine how to incorporate librarians' skill and knowledge into the research mission of the law school, i.e., advantages, disadvantages, etc., of the collaboration on research between librarians and faculty.

3. Study organizational structure of law libraries to determine appropriate structures at a time when information formats and functions of law libraries are changing and fully integrated systems are emerging.

4. Analyze the current patterns of budget allocations in various types of law libraries today. Specifically, what are the relative proportions for monographs and serials vs. new media research, for acquisitions vs. personnel, etc.

5. Determine how access to legal information or other relevant issues can be measured and substituted for volume count. Librarians recognize the need to move away from volume count as a quality measure for libraries. How can we get deans and accrediting agencies to recognize the validity of the new measures?

6. Discern how the quality of an academic law library can be assured.

The Top Six Targets for
Academic Law Library Research

Combining the categories of "Research Essential in the Next Five Years" and "Major Research Needed in Next Year" produces a consolidated list of six proposed projects listed by more than sixty-five percent of the respondents as requiring research in the relatively near future:

1. the impact on law libraries of electronic products (90.4%)
2. new measures of law library performance (82.3%)
3. assuring the quality of an academic law library (68%)
4. determining how lawyers actually conduct research (67.9%)
5. analysis of current budget allocation patterns (65.7%)
6. improvement of legal research instruction (65.7%)

For a detailed analysis of survey and its findings, see Millican, Rita, and Wallace, Danny, Research Needs in Academic Law Libraries 84 *Law Library Journal* 421–438 (1992).