



Law Library Lights

Streamlining the Library Training Process

Gary Cleland

Research and Reference Specialist, WilmerHale
gary.cleland@wilmerhale.com

Law firm libraries balance the need to provide urgent reference and research support to their attorneys and staff with the obligation to offer specialized training on an ever increasing and changing array of legal research databases. Fixed library budgets create pressure to look for challenging solutions to remain competitive. At WilmerHale's Library & Research Services, we have used cost- and time-effective methods to balance the effort we spend on research projects with training sessions that build on our patrons' knowledge and skills. While we do not have unlimited time to devote to planning and perfecting a training program, we are doing more with limited means by expanding the scope and complexity of our library's training offerings.

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We first created a core training committee in November 2013 to set long-term goals and objectives, incorporate feedback to continuously improve our processes, and develop a mechanism to produce a body of work that would be refined for future training programs. In December 2013, our committee began an ambitious plan that would build on the services our training librarians were already providing, such as new attorney orientations, staff on-boarding sessions, and summer associate programs. We created a 10-course training program focusing on essential beginner-to-intermediate legal research skills: introductions to the next generation databases WestlawNext and Lexis Advance, beginning company research, docket searching, and open web search skills, to name a few.

The committee launched the development phase of the project in mid-December 2013 so that we could begin offering courses during the first quarter of 2014. Each committee member and training librarian designed one or more 30-minute course to cover the essentials of their topic, drafted

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these courses as PowerPoint presentations or Word outlines, then presented their sessions to our training librarians who served as the initial live audience. Based on feedback from training librarians, the committee members adjusted the training material as needed. The training librarians suggested that time be allowed for questions and discussion, that equipment and resources be checked for good working order, that presenters should know who to call when something goes wrong, and that reservations for web conferencing meetings be arranged and confirmed well in advance. These early presentations also provided the opportunity for librarians to develop their public speaking skills.

Based on our initial observations, we have developed a protocol for training librarians that includes a set of housekeeping items: requesting that participants place their phone on mute to reduce feedback and distracting noises during desktop webinars, sharing an agenda, handouts, or deliverables prior to the beginning of the session, and making sure each course allows for comments and questions while covering the essential content within the allotted time. We have stored the presentations into one shared WorkSite folder so that each training librarian can teach any of the courses due to unforeseen scheduling conflicts or the customary last minute research project.

In designing the courses, our committee made sure to create content for the entire range of law firm patrons, including associates, legal assistants, paralegals, partners, and secretaries. We then created standardized course descriptions with



In designing the courses, our committee made sure to create content for the entire range of law firm patrons, including associates, legal assistants, paralegals, partners, and secretaries. We then created standardized course descriptions with associated learning outcomes.

associated learning outcomes. Simmons College's Instruction Librarian Boot Camp, which I attended in November 2012, reinforced my own personal experience that learning outcomes are essential to devising active, flexible training programs for learner-centered instructors. While we did not incorporate a formal survey mechanism, we did discuss how to informally solicit feedback from participants to help refine and improve the content we present.

The final step in our process was to schedule each course in our firm's learning management system (LMS) training calendar with fields for title, description, contact information, and web conference meeting details. An advantage of utilizing an LMS is that our courses are now available as firm-wide webinars. Thus far, these 10 courses have been offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the first quarter of 2014.

The primary challenge we have faced is the need to better market the courses to appropriate patron groups to improve awareness and attendance.

Another prominent difficulty common to the law firm library community is catering to patrons like attorneys who travel frequently and have limited time to incorporate learning sessions that compete with their client billable hours and continuing education time. Our next step while assessing this program is to develop an additional, limited set of courses. These will add to and expand on the current offering by providing more complexity to the database research skills we have addressed so far. We can then use this programming as the summer associates arrive at our law firm near the end of the second quarter.

Although our overall approach may not be unique, the training process at WilmerHale's Library & Research Services has been successfully simplified and standardized to adapt to the demands and budgetary pressures of the current

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law firm library model. We have greatly benefited from incorporating appropriate library science training concepts into our training program and from customizing our content in an LMS. We believe our program will allow us to remain innovative and versatile as we continue to do more with less. ■



From the Editor

This Spring, Try Something New

Ann Baum

Librarian, abaum826@gmail.com



Spring has sprung. Maybe not as much as we would have hoped (at this writing, it's still a bit grey and dreary outside), but at least we can put away our hats and mittens and watch the start to a new baseball season. The cherry blossoms are in flower and longer days are just around the corner.

Spring is also a time for new beginnings. Some times a new beginning can be the start of something we've never seen or done before. But other times, it is taking a fresh perspective on an old idea and giving it a new twist. In that spirit, our theme this quarter is "Doing More with Less: Making the Most of Your Library's Budget". We all can use some help now and again in changing our old ways, and adapting our libraries to new challenges is no different.

Our first article comes to us from Gary Cleland. He shares with us the ways that WilmerHale's library staff is working to reinvigorate the training process for members of the firm. With ever changing methods of retrieving data and conducting research, librarians and their patrons need to keep current on the latest technologies. Having a plan in place makes for cost effective responses to both current and future challenges.

Next, we have an overview of some free resources on the web from Morgan Stoddard. She discusses resources available for federal budget research, but remember that free resources go beyond just



Submission Information

If you would like to write for *Law Library Lights*, contact Ann Baum at abaum826@gmail.com. For information regarding submission deadlines and issue themes, visit the LLSDC website at www.llsdc.org.



From the Editor, Continued

a single topic area. Developing or maintaining a list of resources is just one more way to make your library a destination for researchers.

Dawn Bohls's book review this issue looks at economic changes that have occurred in law firms in recent years. New expectations from clients and from lawyers have redefined the roles that individuals play within the firm. On the job training and the nature of billable hours are not what they once were. The practice of law has changed, and libraries have to change with it.

And finally we have this issue's Tech Talk, in which Roger Skalbeck discusses the means of communication that can compete with email. He brings up alternatives like blogs and social media groups to better command the attention of your audience. Email alternatives can be more inclusive and allow for a more collaborative work environment, both in the library and out of it.

Hopefully we have helped you to think about ways to improve your library's cost effectiveness. These are just a few of the ways that your fellow librarians have made changes in their libraries. Also remember, it's never too early to begin thinking about articles you want to submit for our summer issue. It will be a year end wrap-up, so any topic you feel has not gotten sufficient coverage in recent issues would be welcome. Until then, happy reading. ■

Member Spotlight

LLSDC's seventy-fifth year is in full swing! Over 125 librarians came out for the celebration that got it all started. New members, past presidents, and AALL Executive Board members alike boogied down on the dance floor and got silly in the photo booth! The event would not have been possible without the support of our generous sponsors: Bloomberg BNA, Fastcase, Lexis, Thomson Reuters, Wolters Kluwer, Nosegay Florist Shop, Washington Express, Kastle Systems, and Priory Solutions.

We hope you'll continue to join us in celebrating throughout this exciting year of events! The Nationals baseball game outing is back this year as well as trivia and game nights! Look out for registration information in the next few months.



FOR 2014 ONLY!

In honor of LLSDC's milestone achievement, we want to encourage all DC law librarians to be a part of the society's history. LLSDC is offering a 10% discount to all new members* signing up this year. Please forward this amazing opportunity to your colleagues and peers who might be interested in joining! Contact [Alicia Pappas](#) for more details on how to receive this discount. (*must not have been an active LLSDC member for over one year.)

Do you have amazing event ideas? Ways to improve LLSDC? Or do you just want to be more involved and give back to your professional community? Email volunteer@llsdc.org and find out how you can help today!

Check the [LLSDC Calendar](#) for all upcoming events and be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for more photos and fun!

Alicia Pappas

LLSDC Arrangements Chair

Senior Associate of Library Services, KPMG LLP, apappas@kpmg.com



President's Column

A Night to Remember

Ed O'Rourke

*Manager of Library Services, Baker Botts LLP,
edward.orourke@bakerbotts.com*



For those of you who attended the LLSDC 75th Anniversary Reception it was truly a night to remember. A crowd of over 130 members, vendors, and guests were in attendance including several past presidents and the AALL President Steven Anderson. I met people whom I hadn't visited with in a long time and those who were from out of town, from such places as Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania, to name but a few. The photo booth was a popular place to be as was the main room where the reception was held.

Special thanks and a "shout-out" to our organizer Alicia Pappas for single handedly putting together this memorable event. The success of the evening was mainly due to Alicia's meticulous planning and fine attention to detail. I would also like to thank our sponsors as well for their generous support.

Spring is just around the corner and will be very busy for our society. We have the election for a number of board positions (to include the next Vice President/President Elect) in April. Thanks to our candidates for running on a very competitive slate. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. In addition to the election, we will have the Town Hall sometime in late April/early May and the closing reception in mid-May, plus AALL Lobby Day and the Joint Spring Workshop.

The theme for this issue is *Doing More with Less: Making the Most of Your Library's Budget*. How do we provide value to our customer base in an era of tight budgets, smaller staffs, centralized staffing, and greater demand for online over print resources? In my own situation, I've downsized my physical collection by two-thirds in the past year while increasing use of electronic resources. I am also assisting my users with suggested apps for their iPads and iPhones. Staffing is minimal at my location whereas the majority of our staff are located in our main office and a couple other locations in the home state. Finding ways to serve our international offices efficiently while balancing time zone differences is yet another challenge. Marketing ourselves and our resources to a wider audience is also essential. I'm sure we all have our own experiences and best practices learned in what is a continually evolving process. ■



Federal Budget & Appropriations Research: Ten Valuable Free Online Resources

Morgan M. Stoddard

Research Services Librarian, Georgetown Law Library, mms237@law.georgetown.edu

For the last few years—and particularly the last few months—we have been experiencing what some may call a federal “budget-related crisis”¹ in the United States. Of course, here in

The process by which federal spending decisions are made is complex, and it is made more so by the fact that actual process deviates quite often from the procedures established by law.

Washington, D.C., where many librarians and their patrons are directly and significantly impacted by federal spending decisions, we’re all aware of this. Given the effects and considerable news coverage of the events of the last few years—including the “fiscal cliff,” sequestration, and the government shutdown²—some librarians may have experienced an increase in the number of questions from patrons regarding federal spending and the budget and appropriations process. Many librarians—particularly those employed in legislative and government libraries—have in-depth knowledge of the federal budget and appropriations process and information resources.

For the rest of us, assisting patrons with budget-related research can be a challenge. The process by which federal spending decisions are made is complex, and it is made more so by the fact that

actual process deviates quite often from the procedures established by law.³ Additional challenges are presented by unfamiliar terminology, financial and accounting principles and concepts, and complicated congressional rules and procedures.

Fortunately, there are many great resources on the federal budget and appropriations process that provide useful explanation and analysis as well as information on locating various key documents and figures. Here is a list, in no particular order, of ten valuable resources that are available free online.

1. Congressional Research Service Reports

Congressional Research Service (CRS)

Reports are one of the best resources for background information and explanation of the federal budget and appropriations process. CRS has written many reports that range from general overviews (e.g., *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*) to more in-depth explanations of particular aspects of the process (e.g., *Points of Order in the Congressional Budget Process*). Find CRS Reports in one of the several collections available free online, such as Open CRS, <https://opencrs.com/>, the Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/>, or the University of North Texas, <http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/CRSR/>.



2. National Priorities Project

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org>

This organization, recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, seeks to make the “complex federal budget transparent and accessible.” Its website provides an explanation of the process; in-depth analysis and charts; interactive data tools, such as “Your Tax Receipt” that allows user to see how their tax dollars are spent; a timeline for tracking budget and appropriations activity; and a blog and an e-mail list that provides updates on the federal budget. The National Priorities Project has also published a useful book, *Mattea Kramer et al., A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget (2012)*.

3. Congressional Budget Office

<http://www.cbo.gov>

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is a nonpartisan agency that produces “independent analyses of budgetary and economic issues to support the Congressional budget process.” The CBO’s website provides access to its many useful reports, including the *Budget and Economic Outlook* and the *Analysis of the President’s Budget*, as well as historical budget data providing information on revenues, outlays, deficits, and surpluses since 1974. The CBO also publishes a useful glossary of budget and economic terms, <http://www.cbo.gov/publication/42904>.

4. Congress.gov

<http://beta.congress.gov>

Following all the appropriations legislation and activity in Congress in a given year can be difficult. In addition to the budget resolution,⁴ there are all the regular appropriations bills under consideration by the various appropriations subcommittees⁵ as well as, most likely, continuing resolutions and possibly supplemental appropriations legislation.⁶ Congress.gov makes it easier to check the status of appropriations with its “Appropriations by Fiscal Year” table, <http://beta.congress.gov/legislation/appropriations/>. The table lists the bills, committee reports, and votes.

Currently, Congress.gov has a table for Fiscal Years 2011 to present. For previous years, use THOMAS, which has tables for Fiscal Years 1998 to present. Additionally, the U.S. Senate website has similar tables that include hearings, https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/b_three_sections_with_teasers/appropsbills.htm.

5. GovTrack.us

<https://www.govtrack.us>

Another way to monitor budget and appropriations activity in Congress is to use GovTrack to follow the Budget and Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate. With GovTrack, you can sign up to receive email alerts when action is taken on bills or meetings or hearings are held by going to GovTrack and clicking on Track > Start Tracking > Committees.

6. Office of Management and Budget

<http://www.omb.gov>

The Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) mission “is to serve the President of the United States in implementing his vision across the Executive Branch,” and it oversees the development and execution of the president’s budget, formally titled the *Budget of the United States Government*. The OMB website provides access to the current *Budget of the United States Government*, and the *Budget* from FY1996 to present is available on FDsys, <http://www.fdsys.gov>. In addition to the president’s budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year, the Budget is a wealth of information on government spending and finances, particularly the Historical Tables. In addition to providing access to the current *Budget*, the OMB’s website also has copies of various budget-related guidance distributed to federal agencies (under “Information for Agencies”).

7. Roll Call

<http://www.rollcall.com>

General news sources certainly have coverage of the federal budget and government



spending, but congressional news sources, such as *Roll Call*, can be particularly useful because the coverage is more extensive and the articles may include more detail. For example, where a general newspaper may state that Congress passed “a law,” sources like *Roll Call* include the proper name or the public law number. In regard to coverage of the budget, users can view all of *Roll Call*'s coverage by going to Policy > Policy Areas > Budget. They can also subscribe to an RSS feed of budget coverage or receive email alerts with news about the budget and appropriations.

8. Government Accountability Office

<http://www.gao.gov>

“The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress [and] investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.” The GAO website provides access to its various reports. Find reports on the budget by searching by keyword or going to Reports and Testimonies > Browse by Topic > Budget and Spending. The GAO also publishes and posts on its website a multi-volume treatise, *Principles of Federal Appropriations Law*, also known as the “GAO Redbook.”

9. USASpending.gov

<http://www.usaspending.gov/>

This website provides information on federal government awards—such as grants, loans, and contracts. Users can search for awards by recipient, department or agency, fiscal year (2010-), and a number of other parameters. USASpending.gov does not include all federal spending and the data quality has been criticized;⁷ however, the OMB is working to improve it.⁸

10. Stan Collender's Blog

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/stancollender/>

Stan Collender, an expert on federal budget policy and process, regularly posts insightful and

timely analysis on this blog, which was recently moved to Forbes from its previous home at Capital Gains and Games, <http://capitalgainsandgames.com/>. You can also follow him on Twitter @TheBudgetGuy.

Are any of your favorite resources missing from this list? If so, please let the author know at mms237@law.georgetown.edu. ■

Notes

¹See Mattea Kramer & Samantha Dana, Nat'l Priorities Project, History of the U.S. Federal Budget, 2011-2013 (Feb. 13, 2014), <http://nationalpriorities.org/analysis/2014/history-us-federal-budget-2011-2013/>.

²See *id.*

³For example, 31 U.S.C. § 1105 requires the President of the United States to submit his budget request for the upcoming fiscal year—which starts October 1—by the first Monday in February. However, the budget is not always submitted on time; President Obama did not submit his budget request this year until March 4, see Zachary A. Goldfarb, *Obama Sends Congress a \$3.9 Trillion Budget Plan*, Wash. Post, Mar. 5, 2014, at A1. In another example, Congress is required to pass an annual budget resolution each year. 2 U.S.C. § 632. Congress, however, has not done so since Fiscal Year 2010. See Bill Heniff Jr., Cong. Research Serv., *Congressional Budget Resolutions: Historical Information* (Feb. 7, 2014).

⁴The budget resolution is a “concurrent resolution (adopted by both Houses of Congress) that sets forth a Congressional budget plan for the year and at least four out-years. The plan consists of targets for spending and revenues.” Cong. Budget Office, Glossary 3 (Jan. 31, 2012), <http://www.cbo.gov/publication/42904>.

⁵The House and Senate Appropriations Committees currently have twelve subcommittees. See House Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittees, <http://appropriations.house.gov/subcommittees/>; Senate Committee on Appropriations, <http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/>.

⁶See Cong. Budget Office, *supra* note 4, at 2. A continuing resolution is a “joint resolution that provide[s] budget authority for a fiscal year until the regular appropriation for that year is enacted.” *Id.*

⁷See Clearspending, Sunlight Foundation, <http://sunlightfoundation.com/clearspending/>.

⁸See Jason Miller, *OMB Sets New Deadlines to Improve Data on USASpending.gov*, Federal News Radio, June 20, 2013, <http://www.federalnewsradio.com/513/3364282/OMB-sets-new-deadlines-to-improve-data-on-USASpending.gov>.

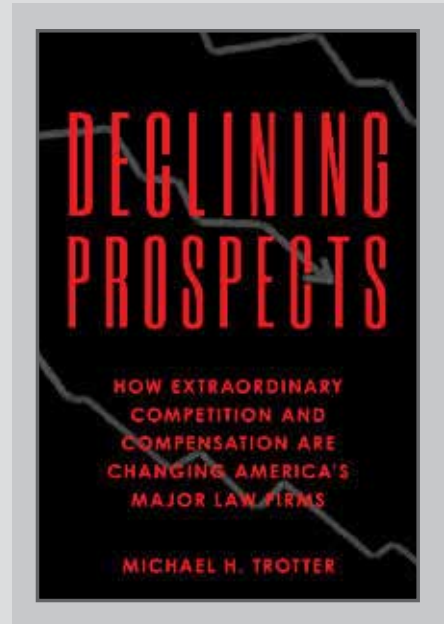


Book Review

Michael H. Trotter, *Declining Prospects: How Extraordinary Competition and Compensation Are Changing America's Major Law Firms* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2012)

Dawn Bohls

Reference Librarian, Bingham McCutchen LLP
dawn.bohls@bingham.com



This issue's theme is budget issues and doing more with less. I suspect we are all familiar with library budget cuts these days. For my book review, I thought I'd take a look at the picture from the "other side" and see the difficulties that law firm management has been facing over the past several years. Michael H. Trotter, currently a corporate partner in the Atlanta firm Taylor English, has written about the complicated challenges law firms are confronting and how the business of law has changed in recent decades. Trotter graduated from Harvard Law School in 1962 and has worked with a number of firms over the past 50 years, both large and small. During the course of his career, he has experienced firsthand the incredible transformation of the business of law.

Trotter's earlier book, *Profit and the Practice of Law*, traced the evolution of the legal industry from the 1960s through the mid-1990s, a period during which the country's premier law firms "transformed from small, prestigious, dignified, conservative, white-male professional partnerships into large, wealthy, aggressive, self-promoting, diverse business organizations with a dominant focus on making money" (Loc. 94).¹ I read the sequel *Declining Prospects*, which reviews the major points made in the earlier work and continues the story through 2012. Trotter offers a fairly negative view of large law firms these days, and, in particular, unsatisfactory working conditions and client dissatisfaction. If your employees and your clients aren't happy, your business strategy probably needs some tweaking!

Regarding attorney discontent, Trotter believes that "the growth in size of the major law firms in the United States and their increased utilization of leverage are two of the most significant changes that have negatively affected working conditions in the private practice bar" (Loc. 630). In today's large firms, it's highly unlikely that any attorney would know all, or even most, of the other attorneys in the firm. Many will not even know everyone in their own offices. Because so many firms are so large, they have

Book Review, Continued

to rely on impersonal but quantifiable metrics like billable hours and fees to judge attorneys. Subjective qualities like personal character, leadership ability, and intellectual prowess typically carry far less weight. The increased size of today's firms has also contributed to increased attorney specialization as new law school graduates are promptly assigned to narrow practice groups. The focus on practice groups from day one limits new attorneys' exposure to attorneys, knowledge, and skills outside the immediate focus of their practice area. This can lead to boredom, frustration, and even termination if a practice area finds itself in a slump due to economic conditions, or if key partners leave and their clients leave with them.

The strategic use of leverage has become essential as firms contrive to maximize their profits per partner (PPP), probably the key measure of success among today's large firms. As attorneys move up the ranks, the ability to create work for others becomes increasingly important; the more hours billed at each level -- by secretaries, paralegals, librarians, associates on up -- the higher the profits per partner. Similarly, to allow attorneys to bill more time at their higher rates, lower-paid (and non-billable) support staff are needed to handle functions such as recruiting, accounting, and billing. The impetus to continually generate work to maintain and grow the firm rewards those who excel in salesmanship. "As a result," notes Trotter, "the importance of marketing has become pervasive. . . . Sadly, it appears that most big firm lawyers now spend more time and give more attention to trying to sell and cross-sell legal services than on improving their legal knowledge and capabilities" (Loc. 722). The environment in large law firms results in

an associate attrition rate of almost 80% within five years (Loc. 890).

This use of leverage necessarily results in work being done less expertly and much more slowly by inexperienced associates than it could be done by more experienced attorneys (who nevertheless have to spend time reviewing the associates' work). What essentially amounts to paying for the training of new associates is a source of friction between law firms and their clients. The corporate counsel who hire law firms are typically former Big Law associates themselves, and while they are well aware of how the leverage system works, they have been increasingly unwilling to pay for it. In addition, corporate counsel can also be annoyed by law firms' constant attempts to cross-sell services, and the resulting poor relations between clients and their outside counsel may actually result in less work for a firm.

The relative increase in starting associates' salaries has contributed to a Catch-22 situation. While clients resist being billed hundreds of dollars an hour for the work of inexperienced associates, those associates are often receiving salaries in the \$160,000 range (not including annual bonuses). Lucrative pay was not always the expectation, even for the most talented new associates. In 1960, a New York associate would have earned a starting salary of \$6,000, which would have been equivalent to around \$44,000 in 2010 dollars (Loc. 1236). The steadily increasing relative salaries of the past decades have made law school a tempting option for ambitious new college graduates, and law schools have responded by increasing tuition drastically and enlarging their programs to allow for higher enrollments. Law students'



Book Review, Continued

loan debt has increased correspondingly, and new graduates have added incentive to seek out the highest-paying jobs.

Another factor in the rise of the legal industry has been the increasing complexity and volume of financial transactions, which have resulted in greater hours being billed at higher rates. At the same time, there has been a growing movement towards the “commoditization” of certain legal services, those services “that have become so standardized in concept and execution that any one of a number of law firms can produce a good enough version to meet the needs of most clients” (Loc. 1825). For these types of services, pricing becomes paramount. The trends towards high leverage and high turnover have contributed to the tendency towards standardization, as attorneys switch firms and share the practice strategies they have learned (Loc. 2018). Technological developments such as standardized software packages for document production and litigation have also contributed to the commoditization of many legal services.

The changes within the law firm world that led to increasing profits, salaries, and fees over the past decades are increasingly being countered by the evolution of corporate counsel and large corporate law departments. Trotter views the rise of corporate counsel as the key check against law firm excess: “The existence of capable and knowledgeable lawyers on the buyer’s side has fundamentally changed the lawyer-client relationship between the major business practice firms and their clients” (Loc. 189). As law firms have grown in size, so have in-house corporate legal departments. Corporations have developed the sophistication

to handle many legal matters in-house and the bargaining power to exercise greater control than in the past over the fees they pay outside counsel.

In the last section of the book, Trotter explores some recent attempts to address various issues facing the legal profession, but he sees little hope for the type of wholesale change that would be needed: “Rather than trying to ‘seize the future,’ most of America’s major business practice law firms are trying to solidify the present” (Loc. 2477). He does see some progress in the creation of “New Model” firms that are frequently characterized by “lower leverage, smaller size, lower overhead, and lower billing rates or other fee arrangements” (Loc. 2500), but he has little optimism for the future of the traditional “New York model” Big Law firm, for whom he predicts that “overall large firm profitability is destined to decline in the face of increasing competition (from private practice law firms and corporate law departments), disaggregation, commoditization, outsourcing, technological advances and other changes in the market for legal services” (Loc. 2695).

Given this less-than-rosy picture of the legal industry and its future, it’s no wonder that we continue to see cuts to our library budgets and our numbers. Rather than grumbling about the situation and trying to maintain the status quo, it would probably behoove us to take a fresh look at our services, our costs, and our capabilities to see how we can best help our firms face the future. ■

Notes

¹References are to location numbers in the Kindle version of the book.



Avoiding Email at Work

Roger V. Skalbeck

*Associate Law Librarian for Electronic Resources & Services,
Georgetown Law Library, rvs5@law.georgetown.edu*



In a world of connected social communities, status updates, and collaborative wiki-style editing, it's amazing that email still dominates the enterprise. It's a tough technology to avoid: It's easy. It's effective. It's ubiquitous.

Unfortunately, it's often not effective, and it doesn't facilitate collaboration. Beyond that, my inbox can easily turn into filing cabinet, contact database and project tracking tool. In this Tech Talk column, I explore alternatives to email for communication, collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Specific examples touch on private social networks, blogs, and group work spaces. They don't eliminate email, but they can help avoid its inefficiencies.

Communication and Collaboration

Blogs

For content syndication and distribution, blogs can be highly effective for communicating news and research tips. Private and secure blogs are easy to set up on a platform like SharePoint, and free and low-cost versions are available through dozens of providers.

Here are three suggestions for strategic use of blogs for communication to replace email:

- ▶ **Required Reading:** Circulate a weekly digest of all new posts via email. Requiring people to receive updates should help raise awareness, and effective headlines will be read.
- ▶ **Content syndication:** Use categories or tags in blog posts to syndicate content across platforms people already use, whether this is your intranet or a social platform like Twitter.
- ▶ **Comments as collaboration:** If people can easily comment on posts, this should move people towards considering a blog for collaborative ideas.

Private Social Networks

Private social networks include tools such as Yammer and Jabber. These allow people within one company to share updates in a way similar to a social network like Facebook. Features include the ability to 'like' posts, tag content, comment in-line and share documents. Groups can be pre-defined, such as employees in a department or self-identified, such as staff working on a particular client matter.

Tech Talk, Continued

Yammer

For a conference I attended in New York, we used Yammer for speakers and attendees to share news and talk before and after the event. Yammer is owned by Microsoft, and it will be integrated with SharePoint 2013, so it may be coming to a network you've already got at work.

In demonstrating how it works, one of the first posts asked about knowledge of private social networks. Ten of the fifteen people responding

had already used one. This screen shot shows several of the site's features, which looks very similar to Facebook.

As shown here, survey results show up immediately and comments are in context, not locked into email. In this same Yammer group, we were able to share presentation materials privately between presenters, and form groups around the day's themes. All content was indexed by tags and searchable.

Katherine Lowry
To All Network

Is this your first time using a Private Social Network?

Yes: 33%

No: 67%

15 total votes · Change Vote · Reload

Like · Reply · Share · More · January 27 at 5:18pm

Enterprise Social · Humanware

Show 3 older replies »

Katherine Lowry
Greg: Is Jabber like Lync- an instant message application?
Like · Reply · Share · More · January 29 at 9:54am

Greg Lambert
Yes. It actually interfaces with our phone system and outlook calendars. It is very useful.
Like · Reply · Share · More · January 29 at 10:26am from iPhone
Mark Gediman, Zena Applebaum and Katherine Lowry like this.

Write a reply...

Tech Talk, Continued

In talking with others who have rolled out private social networks, here are some tips on how to do this successfully:

▶ **Say “Private” not “Enterprise”:** As a class, Yammer & Jabber are often called “enterprise social networks.” By substituting the word “private,” this helps stress the platform’s internal nature.

▶ **Foster organic structure:** It’s necessary to have structure and defined areas in a collaborative work space. It’s also important to let others define how the communities are formed. The unintended consequences from casual topics can create unexpected benefits in the area of client development or knowledge transfer.

▶ **Lead by example:** Constantly contribute content to a private network, and show meaningful examples of how they can work for collaboration. For instance, you can seek input on new resources or services to engage coworkers in making decisions on everything from pizza to Powerpoint slides.

▶ **Talk ‘IRL’ about online content:** If you see others contributing to an enterprise network, mention this *in real life* (IRL). On Facebook, this balance can be tricky, but at work, somebody who shares content should expect that others will notice and make connections.

Another feature of private social networks is that they allow you to communicate with people in real time chat. This works like instant messenger or the live chat function on Facebook. Live discussion is a good feature to add onto the asynchronous nature of sharing messages and commenting on content.

Use of a tool like Yammer or Jabber requires buy-in from decision makers, but it also requires IT cooperation. If you think a collaborative space

could work for you, talk to the people who manage your infrastructure to see how it can work.

To explore a social collaboration space without requiring investment, consider looking at: **Slack** (www.slack.com). It’s a relatively new platform developed by one of the founders of photo sharing platform Flickr. For no money, you can create a collaboration group with room for up to 10,000 messages and free apps for iOS, Android and Mac computers. On Windows, it runs in the Chrome browser, and enables desktop notifications and a good replacement for an instant messenger client.

One great feature of the app on the iPhone is that messages show up as notifications, prioritized over your email. If you fine-tune your settings, you can get an alert at lunch or on the metro to see important news without opening Outlook. Yammer has a mobile client with similar features.

Concluding Thoughts

Blogs and private social spaces can reduce email, but they’re not a perfect replacement. The email habit is hard to break. Also, email is a convenient connection with other platforms. When using Yammer, Slack and even a SharePoint blog at my desk at work, I regularly see activities first as notifications in email. With every notification I receive this way, it sends a hopeful message: Somebody else is trying to avoid email at work. I take comfort in knowing that I can participate in that conversation on my own time but in a space where others can benefit.

If you’re using a private social network or other tools to avoid email at work, let me know. ■



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Roger Skalbeck

202/662-9158

rsv5@law.georgetown.edu

Member News

Ann Baum

410/878-1988

abaum826@gmail.com

Publisher/Graphic Designer

Catherine Walter

847/708-4047

cswalter@gmail.com

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