

*San Francisco Daily Journal, 5/17/01, p. 18.
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The Marketing Department and the Law Library: Perfect Partners

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In today's competitive legal marketplace, only one thing separates successful law firms from unsuccessful ones: the ability to attract and retain clients. While that in itself sounds like a simple process, it is, in fact, much more challenging as the economy slows and the number of law firms competing for the same business increases. There is one secret weapon, however, that gives one firm the competitive edge over another, and that is its ability to locate, analyze and capitalize on information gathered through the use of a professional law librarian.

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals." As it relates to law firms, marketing is determining the client's needs and matching those needs with services. But how does one identify the needs of the client, of the client's industry, and potential practice areas that could represent an increase in business for the law firm? By using a library professional, of course!

Librarians are true information experts. With the information explosion and the availability of vast amounts of data from a wide spectrum of information providers, the major challenge for librarians has shifted from merely obtaining the information to obtaining it from the best possible source. Fortunately, their education and experience has taught them to quickly identify and evaluate the best resources by taking into consideration the credibility of the source and the currentness of the data. These two factors are vitally important and yet are often overlooked by the novice researcher.

In addition, librarians recognize the importance of obtaining the information in the most cost-effective manner. Because a large percentage of marketing research is not client-billable, it is important to ensure that the research is done as efficiently and as inexpensively as possible. Librarians, because they use the resources regularly, are often the best people to know how to obtain the information at the lowest possible price.

And a law librarian's expertise is not just limited to legal information. In fact, the amount of non-legal research law librarians conduct continues to increase significantly. The modern law library is a goldmine of resources related to market and industry information, biographical and company profiles, public records and financial data – all of which helps the marketing professional understand the context in which the firm – and the client – operates.

Lastly, one of the most important functions a professional librarian can perform is to sift through the data and synthesize it so that marketing professionals and attorneys see only the most relevant information in a user-friendly format. By weeding out irrelevant data, by summarizing information, and by adding indices or tables of contents, librarians can help marketing professionals make the most effective use of the data. It is no wonder that many

marketing departments see the librarian as the "secret weapon" which gives their firms the edge in identifying and retaining clients.

So if your firm's library is being under-utilized by your marketing department, there are concrete steps you can take to raise the consciousness of marketing professionals and firm management:

- Ask to be included in the next marketing meeting and offer to help pull information together for the next client pitch, freeing the marketing professional to figure out ways in which to best utilize the information you have located;
- Prepare a dossier on major clients (using services such as Lexis-Nexis's Company Analyzer) that bring together financial, legal, and public record information all in one place. Make sure they see the wide spectrum of information available to the professional researcher;
- Monitor newsclipping services (such as Lexis-Nexis's Eclipse service or Westlaw's Westclip) on major clients to bring the attorneys and marketing professionals up to speed on any changes or developments with clients;
- Purchase AALL Resource Guide #7 – "Using the Library As a Marketing Resource." This Resource Guide has been specially prepared for law firm administrators and managing partners to educate and inform them on issues related to the library. It contains practical suggestions on how the library can contribute to a firm's marketing efforts. (To order "AALL Resource Guide #7," contact AALL at 312/939-4764. The cost is \$11.25 for AALL members, and \$12.50 for non-AALL members. The Guide will be available in early July 2001.)
- Attend the AALL program at the [AALL Annual Meeting in Minneapolis](#) on Tuesday, July 17th at 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., entitled, "Perfect Partners: Teaming Up With the Marketing Department For Effective Client Proposals."

Marketing professionals need quality information, the very thing that librarians are trained to uncover efficiently and cost-effectively. Reminding the firm's decision-makers that they have a valuable resource at hand will enhance the value of the library and of the professional law librarian.

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