

# **A Strategic Plan for the Law Library**

Washington and Lee University School of Law

2010-2014

## **Introduction**

Dramatic, rapid and continuous change in the content, creation, delivery and use of information in the study and practice of law is a fact of our time. Legal educators, practitioners and librarians alike are forced to reexamine the role of the library. A new digital order seems certain, although not yet arrived. We live in an interim, hybrid time in which books and electronic documents live side-by-side, and users possess a range of abilities and preferences regarding formats.

For now, librarians must continue their traditional roles in collection development and the organization of knowledge and information, even as the primacy of these duties begins to yield to a new vision of service. Identifying the information needs of students and faculty, developing effective delivery methods, and committing the library to ongoing self evaluation are not only good contemporary practices; they are imperative for the library's continuing contribution as an indispensable component of legal education.

Though the role of technology steadily increases, the library remains an institution of human scale. When we seek to enhance collaboration and professionalism among library staff, improve communication between the library and its constituencies, make physical spaces more inviting, and exercise stewardship over information resources; we are responding to both our organization's goals and the core values of Washington and Lee: honor, civility and academic excellence.

The librarians examined their place in this new information environment in order to produce a forward looking plan consistent with the University's culture. In the process of examining the library's place within the Law School, the librarians looked to the Law School's strategic plan. The vision of this plan responds to statements within that plan regarding: the cultivation of a first-rank faculty, a diverse and excellent student body, a desire to promote scholarship of the highest quality and an acknowledgement of the physical space issues confronting the library. Over the Fall 2009 semester the librarians analyzed the library's current strengths and weaknesses. A brief description of that process is included on Appendix 2. Upon completion of the traditional SWOT analysis, consideration of the Law School's strategic plan, the most recent ABA Inspection Report and through conversations with all levels of staff regarding their work, broad patterns of initiatives emerged. By matching needs with available resources, more specific goals were drafted, many of which affirm statements included in the Law School's 2006 strategic plan. Finally, the library committed itself to make planning an ongoing centerpiece of its operation. This plan enhances the library's value to the School of Law with library operations that are transparent in administration, responsive to user needs, and poised to exploit the changing information environment for the benefit of the library and its users. This process will ensure the library remains an integral component of the School of Law.

## Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to support legal education and scholarship by providing outstanding and innovative information services to our users.

## Our Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the primary information facilitator for the law school community and a leader in contemporary law librarianship.

## Our Values

1. Service is our only product.
2. The needs of our user community inform all of our work.
3. Washington and Lee's tradition of civility means we respect our colleagues and users, and embrace individuals of diverse backgrounds, skills, and needs.
4. We endorse intellectual freedom, as described in the ALA's *Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries* and the AALL's ALL-SIS Task Force on ABA Standards Review *Recommendations for ABA Standards Revision Relating to Academic Law Libraries*.
5. We recruit quality individuals to join our staff.
6. We seek to retain staff by making maximum use of their talents and enhancing their skills.
7. We strive to create a positive work environment through an inclusive approach that encourages mutual respect, open communication, informed decision-making, and accountability.
8. We maintain and enhance effective and cordial relations with the School of Law and the University.

## Strategic Directions Through 2014

The Law Library's five year strategic plan is aligned with the strategic goals of the School of Law and the University. It is also informed by noted weaknesses and threats. Five strategic areas of emphasis are identified: services, physical space, communication, technology and stewardship.

### Goals by Strategic Area

#### Services

1. Establish a Library Fellow program to start with the 2010 fall semester.\*
2. Develop methods of identifying and pushing content of interest to our students and faculty. – December 2010
3. Increase the library's awareness of faculty needs through a series of meetings, surveys and other means designed to identify interest groups and needs specific to them. – June 2011
4. Identify a reference model suited to the needs of our faculty and students, resources, and culture. – December 2011
5. Determine vehicle(s) for discovery of information surrounding the discrete research needs of students. – June 2012
6. Increase content created by the Law Library for the benefit of faculty and students and evaluate new and developing technologies as a means of delivery. – 2010-2014
7. Develop the ability to promote faculty activity and scholarship through online social media networks. – 2010 – 2014
8. Enhance the Law Library's print collection through culling and supplementation in consultation with our faculty and in a manner consistent with our Collection Development Policy. – 2010-2014

#### Physical Space

Enhancing physical space to provide a comfortable, inviting environment that promotes collaboration, research, and access to the collection and the library staff is a vital part of our plan. Actions toward these goals, however, depend on access to funds beyond our direct control. Furthermore, as much library space seamlessly flows into the space of students and other departments, our planning must be collaborative. With these caveats, and without the ability to state meaningful deadlines, we, nevertheless, recognize the following urgent needs:

1. Collaborative group study space.
2. Individual study space beyond the carrel.
3. Better access by students to public service librarians.

4. Work space for library staff that enhances workflow, collaboration, productivity, and is consistent with the evolution of the library to a service based institution.

We recognize that our current stacks space is limited. During the past two years the library has engaged in a massive weeding process intended to better utilize and manage our existing space. This process along with an increased digital preference for many materials provides much needed growth space within the stacks. Still, the existing space is finite and the library will encounter capacity issues within the coming decade. As contemplated within the Stewardship portion of this document, the library will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration on space matters with regional libraries and within the University.

#### Communication

1. Identify and implement ways to increase the effectiveness of library meetings and other forms of internal communication. – June 2010
2. Communicate and collaborate with law media and law tech to enhance the availability and utility of electronic resources. – June 2011
3. Promote library resources to members of the Law School Community -2011-2012

#### Technology

1. Examine new technologies as a means to promote effective communication with the students and faculty. – June 2011
2. Explore new software and license agreements to provide new resources to students and faculty. – June 2011
3. Create a position for an electronic services librarian as a JD/MLS position.\* – June 2014

#### Stewardship\*

1. Encourage professional development and participation in the library community. – June 2014
2. Investigate opportunities for collaborative agreements, creation of content and the creation or participation in institutional and regional repositories. – June 2012
3. Develop a succession plan in light of expected extraordinary turnover by retirement of staff in the coming decade. – June 2012
4. Identify preservation needs within the collection and create a comprehensive conservation strategy. – June 2011
5. Enhance the relationship between the University Library and the Law Library in areas of acquisition, space, and technology. – 2014
6. Identify and pursue funding opportunities to support the library's activities in collaboration with the Law School. - 2014

## Appendix-1

During the prior three fiscal years the library absorbed a significant loss of funding. The reasons for the loss of funding were multiple and in no small part dictated by economic forces outside the control of Washington and Lee. As of the submission of the budget for the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the Law School did not dictate any additional loss of funding but there was a cut in the library's information line of 10% dictated by the University Treasurer. The strategic directions as identified in this document do not contemplate restoration of the lost funds. As of the most recent budget, the Law Library's share of the Law School's operations budget is 36%. This plan is predicated upon the Law Library budget retaining that percentage of the overall operations budget of the Law School. Any further reduction in funding will impact the implementation of the plan. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the strategic directions identified in the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan for the Law Library are generally within the scope of the existing resources available to the library. However, the plan identifies instances in which resources beyond those presently allocated to the library are required. They are: (1) the law library fellow, (2) physical space, (3) the hiring of an electronic services librarian, and (4) creation of new services, the expansion of general reference and support services and, specifically, our ability to create content.

The physical space issues are real and impact our students directly, most acutely during exams. This is not a new issue. The need for study spaces beyond the individual carrel is a long standing need recognized by all and most recently noted in the report from the ABA following their 2009 visit. Any action on the physical space goals requires additional financial support.

The law library fellow and electronic services librarian positions are also outside the current budget of the law library. The strategic plan clearly defines our new vision of service as the focus of the library. Such a move requires the ability to provide needed and expanded services which in turn requires additional human capital. This is also reflected in the services and stewardship goals. Our ability to maintain and expand the level of services to faculty and students of a top tier law school requires access to JD/MLS librarians. Presently, the library has one JD/MLS position unfilled. The absence of this position strains the level of services that are currently offered and limits any potential for expansion of services. This plan also recommends the creation of a new JD/MLS librarian position. That position is identified as an electronic services librarian. The position of electronic services librarian is fundamental to meet the needs of the library in this evolving information environment. The need for an additional JD/MLS librarian is also a recommendation from the ABA following their 2009 visit.

For comparative information:

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Total Librarians</b>	<b>Dual Degree Librarians</b>
Boston College <sup>+</sup>	500	10	8
Boston University <sup>+</sup>	836	12	6
Duke <sup>+</sup>	700	8	5
Emory	739	8	n/a
George Mason	650		6.5
Georgia	650	8	6
South Carolina	680	8	6
UNC	692	12	10
University of Richmond	464	7	5
UVA <sup>+</sup>	1180	11	5
Vanderbilt <sup>+</sup>	630	6	3
W&L	395	6* Presently one position unfilled	3 *Presently one position unfilled
Wake Forest	497	8	5
Washington University School of Law <sup>+</sup>	700	9	7
William & Mary <sup>+</sup>	550	8	7

In summary, the library's commitment to service requires human capital necessary to support such commitment.

<sup>+</sup>Peer schools as identified by the Oakley Report.

## Appendix - 2

The following are the steps followed by the librarians in the planning process:

- 1) Create a mission and vision statement
- 2) Review our strategic position (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- 3) Agree on priorities
- 4) Establish 3-5 year plan
- 5) Develop annual objectives
- 6) Decide on “next actions”
- 7) Set in place methods for conducting regular reviews

The following matrix lists some of the matters identified during step #2.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p><i>Capitalize</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced, collegial and dedicated staff</li> <li>• Rapport with students &amp; faculty</li> <li>• Strong collection</li> <li>• New leadership of the library</li> <li>• Planning commitment</li> <li>• Increased services commitment</li> <li>• Budget fungibility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p><i>Invest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership of the law school – commitment to library change</li> <li>• Electronic resources and tools</li> <li>• Economic challenges spur creativity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p><i>Shore up</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional staff size &amp; credentials (J.D.)</li> <li>• Physical space – both shortage and best use of</li> <li>• Staff “issues”; lack of sense of cohesion, lack of “new blood,” etc.</li> <li>• Lack of strategic direction</li> <li>• Need to provide more faculty &amp; student services</li> <li>• Faculty and student perception of library as less necessary and central</li> <li>• Lack of affiliation with information resources of a large research institution</li> <li>• Lack of unified university libraries web presence</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p><i>Identify</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment by Law School to funding redistribution at library’s expense</li> <li>• Society’s perception of library as less necessary and central</li> <li>• People getting needed information from an ever widening array of sources</li> </ul>