

# LEGAL MANAGEMENT

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## LI Feature

LEGAL INDUSTRY/BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

# Now Is the Time to Build the Library of the Future

*According to a 2014 SAP-sponsored study, 65 percent of organizations across sectors say rising customer expectations are their No. 1 challenge.*



**DONNA TERJESEN**

*President, Visionary Information  
Solutions*

Here is the law library paradox: Even as the necessary knowledge base expands — as does its increasingly pivotal role in business development and in building client relationships — many law firm libraries are contracting in terms of staff, space and print resources. And clients are not paying for any (or most) of it. According to The American Lawyer's 13th Annual Law Librarian Survey, 48 percent of firms surveyed are recovering 40 percent or less of their research costs.

In short, client expectations are increasing while their willingness to pay has decreased, which may be the essential definition of a client-driven market. Optimizing and leveraging technology lies at the crux of the solution to the paradox.

"There's a good deal of natural synergies between library services and knowledge management," says Tim Snider, Chief Practice Management Officer at *Perkins Coie LLP*. "And what has happened in the last few years, simply put – technology plays a much greater influence in what we are doing in that synergistic space."

Law firms need to leverage the value that lies in their knowledge resources through optimizing technology choices. They need to transform their libraries into information technology research centers, which require staff proficiencies in curating data to find the critical just-in-time data points that deliver value and keep a firm competitive in this tight marketplace.



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*“There is an overwhelming amount of information out there. The expectation is for our librarians to organize, vet and manage the materials and deliver the just-in-time valued information efficiently.”*

### ROBYN BEYER

Director of Library &  
Research Services,  
Pepper Hamilton LLP

### TURNING THE TIDE

Studies across sectors repeatedly show instinctive opposition to change initiatives, especially changes in technology. This opposition is the result of the disruptive change brought to the long-valued and rooted ways of getting things done against the uncertainty of the rewards from that disruption. Simply put, change is a vast undertaking, and the buy-in, cultural shift and return on investment (ROI) have to be established from the onset to succeed. Law firms, in particular, have a unique business model, complexity and tradition that make them more cautious when it comes to making changes to the way they conduct business.

How can firms provide the effective, value-rich solutions of this vital service when purse strings continue to be tight, recoveries weak and the resistance to change strong?

Proactive information professionals need to evaluate strategic approaches to running the library like a business, aligning their services with the firm's overall strategic plans and substantially increasing the value of the library services offerings. One of the most effective ways to do so is to take the firm's technology services contracts to market.

Robyn Beyer has been the Director of Library & Research Services for Pepper Hamilton LLP for many years. Throughout those years, Pepper Hamilton grew to a firm exceeding 500 attorneys in 13 offices across the nation. So, too, have its library operations and services grown in scope and complexity. Beyer recently completed an in-depth review of the online vendor landscape.

“I've seen a good deal of change in both the delivery and expectations of library and research services,” she says. “The library rarely delivers research materials in print any longer. Most document retrieval, output from research and various research products are usually provided via email or other electronic methods.”

Beyer says, “With that in mind, there has been a dramatic shift in the expectations of our attorneys, firm management and our clients to stay on top of newer technology delivery mechanisms. There is an overwhelming amount of information out there. The expectation is for our librarians to organize, vet and manage the materials and deliver the just-in-time valued information efficiently.”



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#### TIM SNIDER

Chief Practice Management  
Officer, Perkins Coie LLP

#### REFINING THE PROCESS

In 2014, when several of the firm’s online contracts were renewing, Beyer’s goals were to take a pro-active and strategic approach: Look at the current market offerings and select the products that would best support the firm’s research and information needs. As a result, she opened up the process to a request for proposal (RFP).

“As a result of the RFP process, we significantly improved our review of the current research products available,” she says. “We were able to cost-effectively invest in timely research strategies that deliver real value to the firm’s current business, marketing, business development and competitive intelligence efforts.”

Optimizing the value delivered by library services is pivotal to successfully navigating the gauntlet of increased client expectations and decreased willingness to pay — and that optimization is located at the intersection of technology and people.

Jean O’Grady, Director of Research Services and Libraries at [DLA Piper](#), says it best in her [blog post](#), “It Takes More than a Dumpster to Build a Digital Law Library”: The heroes and heroines of this story are “the information professional[s] who crafted the complex plan, re-engineered workflows, and aligned the licenses and resources on which the digital infrastructure rests.”

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donna Terjesen is President of [Visionary Information Solutions](#) (VIS). VIS is the premier management consulting company leading change for law firms and corporate counsel by optimizing the value of their research and knowledge operations at the intersections of workflows, people, processes and recovery strategies.

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