

AALL STATE OF THE PROFESSION **2021** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) represents nearly 4,000 members across a range of roles and settings—including law school professor, law firm chief knowledge officer, reference/research librarian, county law library director, and competitive intelligence analyst. They are tech gurus, legal scholars, innovators, and knowledge managers. No matter their title, AALL members use their research expertise, technology acumen, and problem-solving skills to facilitate access to quality legal information, lead innovation efforts, and strengthen and empower their institutions.

In its second edition, the *2021 AALL State of the Profession* report seeks to understand the data, trends, and individuals driving the legal information field. The report looks at demographics, budgets, user services, collections, operations, technology, required skills, professional development, and more—including staffing, policies to AI initiatives, and product testing. This edition captures the impact of COVID-19, outlining how the legal information profession adapted to sudden needs, limitations, and opportunities. Notably, it also includes information on diversity to assist organizations and individuals in assessing inclusion and equity in law librarianship.

The *2021 AALL State of the Profession* is available for purchase on AALLNET (bit.ly/AALLSOTP) and is available in digital, print, and a digital + print bundle. The report is 280 pages and includes full-color graphics as well as data tables.

This report is possible due to the dedicated efforts of the AALL State of the Profession Special Committee. The Committee created surveys for each main legal information library type—academic, firm/corporate, and government—in order to address the services, accomplishments, and challenges within each group. The surveys were sent to AALL members and other designated parties in January 2021. A total of 537 responses were received.

ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES

Technology Leadership

Academic law libraries are responsible for managing technology platforms and services internally as well as throughout the law school. Over 90 percent manage research platforms and databases (93.0%) and the library website (93.0%). Additionally, 79.1 percent oversee their organization's integrated library system (ILS), 48.8 percent are responsible for the library management system (LMS), and 18.6 percent oversee course management systems, classroom technology, and blog platforms.

Impact of COVID-19

Academic law libraries used their agility and ingenuity to adapt to COVID-19—with more than 80 percent (81.8%) creating one or more new services and 78.2 percent of staff taking on additional responsibilities. Operational changes include expanded remote working practices (98.2%) and the creation of new policies (45.5%). Some other metrics point to the challenges of the pandemic—including staff not taking vacation time (47.3%), staff working longer hours (29.1%), and staff resignations (16.3%).

FIRM/CORPORATE LAW LIBRARIES

Technology & Innovation

Nearly all firm/corporate law libraries utilize their research and technology mastery to test new platforms (95.6%) and recommend products for purchase (97.1%). All firm/corporate law libraries negotiate contracts (100%).

Providing Value & Expertise

Firm/corporate legal information professionals provide value and expertise far beyond traditional notions of the law library. More than 30 percent of firm/corporate law libraries are formally responsible for curated newsletters (35.8%), competitive intelligence (35.2%), and conflicts/new business intake (NBI) (31.5%). Additionally, more than 30 percent regularly contribute to the following: marketing (55.8%), business development (52.7%), management (50.0%), litigation (44.2%), professional development (38.9%), and information technology (32.7%).

GOVERNMENT LAW LIBRARIES

Public Services & Pro Se Litigants

Government law libraries provide their expertise to courts, judges, agencies, and legislative bodies—and more than 70 percent of government law libraries serve the public. They are essential partners in the access to justice movement and many provide assistance and training to self-represented litigants, also known as pro se litigants. More than 40 percent of government law libraries surveyed offer a self-help center and 31.0 percent provide educational programs and legal clinics to self-represented litigants.

Reference Services

Government law libraries utilize a variety of tools to deliver reference services to their constituents. Nearly 97 percent (96.9%) provide email assistance and in-person help, while 93.8 percent offer reference services over the telephone. In addition, 31.3 percent use chat/IM/Ask a Librarian, 9.4 percent employ text, and 6.3 percent have a chatbot. In addition, 9.4 percent use other methods.



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