THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF LAW LIBRARIES

A Report of the American Association of Law Libraries
Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee

January 2015
This report is the result of the AALL Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee’s efforts to provide members with the best methods for reporting the law library’s value to its stakeholders. The Special Committee retained HBR Consulting to study and report on valuation methodologies law librarians can use to identify the most effective means for communicating value.

This study does not provide a dollar value for our services. Among the law libraries in AALL, our services are too varied and our parent institutions too diverse to render a single value meaningful.

What the report does provide is research and best practices for each library manager to use to determine the value standards held by their own organization and how those values are measured and reported. The report offers guidance for each librarian in determining how best to align their services to their organization’s mission. Since even the best services may go unrewarded if not recognized, the report describes methods for reporting the library’s value to its important stakeholders.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee, and our partners at HBR Consulting for their work on this project. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Robert Oaks
Chair

Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee

Members
Donna Bausch
Barbara Bintliff
Mary Jenkins
Monice Kaczorowski
Catherine Monte
Michael Robak

Ex-Officio
Margaret Maes
Patricia Scott

Board Liaison
Steven Anderson
## Contents

Executive Summary................................................................................................................................. 1

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1

Best Practices Takeaways: Tailor to Existing Aspirations and Perceptions of Value ................................. 3

  Takeaways from Each Phase of the Study ............................................................................................... 5

Phase 1 - The Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 7

Phases 2 and 3 - Qualitative Analysis - Institutional and Leadership Interviews ........................................ 8

  Law School Libraries................................................................................................................................ 11

  Court/Government Libraries.................................................................................................................. 13

  Law Firm Libraries ............................................................................................................................... 15

  Conclusion............................................................................................................................................ 16

Phase 4 - Quantitative Analysis .................................................................................................................... 17

  The Methodology.................................................................................................................................. 17

  Participant Profile ................................................................................................................................. 17

  Services Valued ................................................................................................................................... 18

  Communication Method Preferences...................................................................................................... 22

  Metrics ................................................................................................................................................... 24

  Reporting ............................................................................................................................................. 29

  Stakeholder Feedback and Data Application ......................................................................................... 34

  Communication and Reporting Styles ................................................................................................... 35

  Valuation Methodologies in Use ............................................................................................................ 37

  Additional Insights—Comments .............................................................................................................. 38

  Summary.............................................................................................................................................. 41

  Comprehensive Best Practices ............................................................................................................... 41

Phase 5 - Best Practice Definition: Report Conclusion ................................................................................. 42
The Economic Value of Law Libraries—
Report to the AALL Economic Value of
Law Libraries Special Committee

By HBR Consulting

Executive Summary
How are law libraries perceived by their organizational owners? How can law librarians better communicate their libraries’ value to stakeholders? By tailoring the ways in which they measure and communicate the impact of their services, law librarians can create best practices that work.

Occasioned by a widely shared sense that law libraries are undervalued by their organizational owners, the study examined current practices among law librarians for reporting on library services and activities. The study confirmed that commonly used methods offer room for improvement based upon the evolving role of the law library. There may not be a "silver bullet" solution that will heighten organizational stakeholders' appreciation of the library's value, but it behooves the librarian to measure the right things and communicate appropriately—in ways meaningful for decision makers—about their services and the impact those services have. The study presents 20 best practices. Four strategies for communicating qualitative measures and five strategies for communicating quantitative measures are defined. In addition, the study identified five actions librarians can take to enhance the likelihood of being heard by decision makers.

Briefly put, the overall takeaway from the study is: "It's not about the library. It's about the relationship the librarian has with those who do or could benefit from the library."

Specifically, library directors must assert their leadership and proactively implement strategic processes that align with the institutional mission and goals. Library directors are responsible for identifying opportunities, shifting services, and demonstrating law library contributions to institutional goals and stakeholder priorities.

Introduction
The library is no longer a “place.” The library is a collection of information across multiple formats, organized and disseminated in a method designed to provide access to high quality resources. Library services reach beyond the mere collection and organization of information. Library professionals provide services that deliver content, as well as providing instruction on accessing that content effectively through training, teaching, and demonstration.

This expanded definition of library and information services is applicable to law libraries. New approaches and new perspectives based on the value of law libraries and on how to communicate that value are required in today’s competitive environment and rich information resource landscape. Relying upon goodwill and a dedication to excellent service for end users as the value definition for law libraries is insufficient. Stakeholders require more than an occasional testimonial to prove the worth of the
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Executive Summary and Introduction

investments made in the provision of information services. Quantitative data presented within a qualitative context through a variety of communication methods is necessary to define, share, and tell the story of the value of law libraries.

The leadership of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) understands the evolving role of law libraries and the need to create best practices and tools for use by their members to assist in communicating relevance in this new reality. AALL engaged HBR Consulting to study and report on valuation methodologies for law libraries across law school, court/government, and law firm sectors as a means to identify trends and create best practices that will benefit Association members.

The study was conducted in five phases.

- Phase 1 – Identify Methodologies through a Literature Review
- Phase 2 – Institutional Survey (Focus Groups and Individual Interviews)
- Phase 3 – Leadership Survey (Focus Groups and Individual Interviews)
- Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis Survey
- Phase 5 – Best Practices Definition

The project was launched in February 2014 and ran through October 2014. The AALL Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee outlined goals for the project and worked with the HBR study team throughout the project.
Best Practices Takeaways: Tailor to Existing Aspirations and Perceptions of Value

The study points to a number of specific and proactive actions law librarians can take. These actions fall into three categories: Qualitative Information, Quantitative Information and Analysis, and Communication. In addition, six overarching best practices are identified.

Qualitative Information

1. Employ both formal and informal communications regularly.
2. Provide context with qualitative data.
3. Use testimonials to highlight the impact of delivered services.
4. Tailor the value message to stakeholder preferences.

Quantitative Information and Analysis

1. Go beyond the mere measurement of activities and utilize methods that measure and demonstrate success or impact on organizational services.
2. When reporting metrics related to specific library activities, report them in the context of the larger frame of importance to the organization.
3. Define the measurements within your organization used to demonstrate value to their stakeholders (clients, elected officials, board of trustees) and adjust library metrics accordingly.
4. Identify the external resources used by stakeholders to evaluate organizational success and especially law library success. Adapt internal processes as appropriate.
5. Identify current formal valuation methodologies used within your organization. Evaluate the applicability of that method for use by the law library and adjust the related processes accordingly.

Communication

1. Determine your stakeholder’s information delivery preferences, including distribution channels through a collaborative process with the stakeholder.
2. Create a schedule of reporting that fits into the strategic planning and decision making cycle of the organization to ensure that critical library data is delivered in a relevant timeframe.
3. Refrain from using library jargon when sharing qualitative data.
4. Find or make opportunities to present the information in formal meeting settings.
5. Determine the communication styles that match organizational preferences and get comfortable with different communication styles that can be easily adjusted to formal and informal settings as well as stakeholder preferences.

Comprehensive Best Practices

1. Form strong interpersonal relationships with stakeholders.
2. Employ short, frequent communication through existing channels as defined by stakeholder preferences.
3. Create templates that highlight the key considerations for current strategic initiatives in both narrative and numerical formats.
4. Adjust information delivery to meet a mix of demands and expectations.
5. Define foundational library services and emerging service opportunities within your organizations through a collaborative strategic process with stakeholders.
6. Embrace the leadership responsibilities and expectations of the management and director role.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries

Key Takeaways

Takeaways from Each Phase of the Study
This study examines the existing methodologies, defines qualitative expectations, and analyzes quantitative data in an effort to define best practices that can be customized and implemented by individual organizations.

For the purpose of this study, a stakeholder is defined as someone with direct impact on the budget or strategic planning with direct or indirect oversight of the library. Framing the value discussion about law libraries relies on understanding the metrics, methods, and approaches that stakeholders know and use to reach their decisions.

During Phase 1 of the study, the HBR Consulting team determined that combining quantitative and qualitative valuation methodologies is necessary to relay the message effectively. Using processes that demonstrate the impact of library services is highly recommended. In terms of formal valuation methodologies that can be adapted by law libraries, the study team determined that both Contingent Valuation and Library Impact methodologies could be broadly applicable across all law library constituencies.

Contingent Valuation is a qualitative methodology used in economics to evaluate the cost and consequences of not providing a service. Library Impact analyzes the result of contributions of services and resources of the library to an organization’s success or an individual’s accomplishments.

Phases 2 and 3 of the study concentrated on qualitative insights from stakeholders and library directors. The information learned through focus group discussions and individual interviews directed the formulation of the survey questions used in Phase 4 of the study.

These qualitative insights highlighted the importance of relationships between library directors and stakeholders. These interpersonal relationships form the foundation of understanding that can help direct the most effective means to reporting value formally and informally. Communicating the numbers correlated to the services that are most valued in the context of final impact increases the relevance of the metrics.

The information shared by stakeholders in this phase of the study illustrated the need for library directors to be flexible in how they present information. Using multiple report options and working with stakeholders to define the frequency of reporting is necessary to communicate effectively and to provide useful information to the stakeholders. Reporting for reporting’s sake is a waste of effort. Reporting in a manner that affects strategic directives makes the effort of tracking data and communicating value worth the investment.

Using language that is free of jargon and that can easily be understood and communicated outside of the organization increases the meaningful application of the information. One of the most important takeaways from the individual interviews was that stakeholders and library directors must operate within the same frame, sharing a strategic commitment. If a disconnect exists between stakeholder expectations and what library directors deliver, the value of the library will be called into question.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries

Key Takeaways

The quantitative data gathered from the 673 respondents to the survey in Phase 4 serves as a baseline to customize processes and practices for individual organizations. Understanding the services that are most highly valued and the communication activities that are most effective allows library directors and stakeholders to examine their organizations and make comparisons.

Understanding the frame of possible reporting methods and communication styles will make it easier for library directors to create reporting processes that are effective within their organizations. Reporting schedules, presentation methods, and distribution opportunities will vary, but the quantitative data provided in this report can be used to define the individual organization’s valuation process. In addition, the recognition of existing formal valuation methodologies employed within the institution can be useful in applying those methods to the law library valuation process.

Defining and implementing the best practices requires effort and tailoring to individual organizational culture and expectations. The work necessary to define those organizational best practices will be facilitated by the data shared in this report. Recreating the wheel is not the goal; the goal is to identify trends and existing practices and adapt them to meet the needs of your library and your organization.
Phase 1 - The Literature Review

The Committee and study team reviewed the body of post-1990 literature related to measuring the value of libraries and library services. Key insights forming the basis for the study are outlined here.

A multitude of quantitative and qualitative methods are used to evaluate libraries, and none are specific to law libraries. The complexity of libraries makes it difficult to rely on a single method for library evaluation. Library services are professional services using tangible resources to provide intangible results. Therefore, libraries must combine evaluation of tangible resources, e.g., budget analysis of electronic sources with qualitative information to communicate a message of value to their parent organizations.

Defining the value of law libraries may be more challenging due to the uniqueness of the legal industry and the wide range of users and stakeholders within each varying constituency. Therefore, a method for evaluating and reporting value for a private firm may vary from the process used by a court/government library or a law school library.

It is, therefore, necessary to understand the advantages of, and best applications for, available methodologies in order to create the best process for individual organizations. With appropriate guidance, a library can choose a combination of methodologies that best fit the communication needs and reporting expectations for its organizational culture.

Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies offers law librarians an opportunity to meet the expectations of such stakeholders as the CFO, Comptroller, or the City Administrator, while providing the details used by CEOs, Provosts, or Chief Judges to tell the story of a library’s contributions to the institution.

The shared challenge for all law libraries is to select methodologies and apply them in an efficient and consistent manner that facilitates the reporting task. Overall, the use of Library Impact and Contingent Valuation methodologies may have the broadest application for law library constituencies.

Valuing library services through a stakeholder’s lens can be a powerful means in identifying new opportunities. It also allows for the reevaluation of current services and subsequent adjustments to enhance the library in a manner that provides user support while striving to meet and support organizational goals.

The fundamental goal for valuation activities is to measure and communicate the contributions of the library from the organizational perspective. Circulation numbers and volumes held no longer suffice to reflect the complex library environment, especially in a collection that incorporates digital resources. Evaluation must reach beyond mere numbers to explain the impact of delivered services, i.e., business won, faculty recognition gained, or access to justice provided.

Library and information professionals need to communicate the impact of their services in a manner that illustrates their value by relating the consequences of a potential cessation of services. Stories are useful tools but alone they may be viewed skeptically. Supporting the qualitative assessments with numbers that resonate with stakeholders is the ideal path forward for valuation activities. Neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone will suffice in communicating the full value of library services to stakeholders. Narratives, stories, and numbers should be combined to provide a complete report that sets out the value delivered.
Phases 2 and 3 - Qualitative Analysis - Institutional and Leadership Interviews

During the second and third phases of the AALL Economic Value of Law Libraries project, the HBR study team facilitated both focus group discussions and individual discussions with library directors and stakeholders from organizations in each law library constituency (law school, law firm, and court/government). Participants were chosen to represent organizations of varying size and service missions. These focus groups were conducted for two purposes: 1) to provide qualitative insights into what was important in the law library evaluation process and into how that process was conducted and 2) to provide information used to shape the quantitative survey for the study.

Questions were used as discussion prompts to highlight valued services, quantitative data that mattered, and communication method preferences. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts openly. The discussions were enriched by the back-and-forth that occurred among the group members.

From entities yielding a stakeholder as well as a library respondent, such pairs were selected to provide a holistic view of the valuation methodology for a single organization. Individual interviews were conducted with identified individuals who could not join the focus groups.

45 individuals participated in the qualitative interviews.

- 6 Focus Groups
  - Law school: 12 participants (8 Librarians/4 Stakeholders)
  - Court/government: 16 participants (10 Librarians/6 Stakeholders)
  - Law firm: 8 participants (5 Librarians/3 Stakeholders)
- 7 Individual Interviews
  - Law school: 2 participants (1 Librarian/1 Stakeholder)
  - Court/government: 2 participants (1 Librarian/1 Stakeholder)
  - Law firm: 3 participants (1 Librarian/2 Stakeholders)

Key Observations

The conversations held with stakeholders and library directors across all constituencies revealed a few consistent themes related to the effective communication of law library value propositions and how specific metrics impacted the demonstration of value.

First, relationships are essential to communicating value. Building a professional relationship between library directors and stakeholders allows information to flow easily up and down the chain of command. Brief and frequent communication\(^1\) is an important tactic with positive impact on a stakeholder’s understanding of the activities and value of the law library. The difference between library directors and stakeholders who have a strong interpersonal relationship and those who do not is striking. Those directors who formed a strong working relationship expressed a broader understanding of stakeholder information needs and library value.

---

\(^1\) Public disclosure or open government laws in some jurisdictions, such as the Brown Act in California, may limit informal or private communications in a government setting.
Second, library directors who are proactive in seeking opportunities to meet with stakeholders either formally or informally report success in understanding stakeholder expectations. The formal and informal communications also make it easier for the director to translate library activities into meaningful communications that are easily and quickly understood by stakeholders.

Third, numbers are important and context is essential to relate the value of the library to stakeholders. For the best results in using numbers to communicate value, statistics need to be communicated with a qualitative context. Reporting the hours spent on an in-depth research project (such as a legislative history project completed by a law school law library) has more impact when placed in the context of what the project would have cost if had it been outsourced.

In the conversations held individually with library directors and stakeholders, the study team heard reiterations of methods, measurements, and expectations shared in the focus groups. The individuals provided deeper explanations related to the processes used in assessing library value.

Organizational structure impacts the expectations related to the communication process. Organizations with flat hierarchies provide more flexibility. Institutions with a more complex structure may create an environment that may hinder opportunities for direct interaction between library directors and stakeholders. For instance, law firms that use a library partner or library committee may lose some of the context and impact the library provides due to the reliance upon the library partner for communicating the library’s value to the executive committee.

Organizational structure also impacts the flow of information to library directors related to stakeholder expectations for the library. Library directors may not know the methods used to track, report, and evaluate achievement of desired outcomes. When library directors consider the best means for communicating value, they must account for the organizational structure in which they operate. Understanding the organization’s culture, hierarchies, and structure is imperative to directing the metrics used, the reporting methods employed, and the strategic initiatives in which the library engages.

The individual interviews underscored the complexity of the library valuation process. Individual stakeholders expect information to be delivered in a manner that aligns with their preferences.

One stakeholder highlighted this desire for unique, individualized presentation in the context of a cost benefit analysis form. The desired model would make the evaluation of services or specific resources easier to comprehend (see Table 1). As he stated, “It is important to understand the improvements possible.” Another stakeholder recommended the use of graphics to represent how the library services are meeting organizational goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While meeting the individual expectations of everyone’s preferred communication method may not be feasible, it is important for library directors to recognize that the methods used should be flexible and adaptable depending upon stakeholder expectations and the underlying purpose of the communication.
Library directors should be conscientious about the language used in communicating with stakeholders. According to one stakeholder, “The library generally does a good job of communicating their services but it takes a long time to understand. The library director communicates things with a presumption that the stakeholder knows the terms being used. Stakeholders need to do a better job at understanding.”

While this stakeholder assumed responsibility for comprehending the message, library directors should refrain from industry jargon. Communications about the library should employ language that is familiar to stakeholders and the organization. For example, a public law library with a city administrator as a stakeholder should discuss budget needs in the context of services needed to support public service rather than discussing database electronic usage numbers and increased costs. A good example would be, “We need $10,000 to support an upgrade to our electronic content license to support the increased demand by pro se patrons. Our service to pro se patrons has increased 10 percent in the past year and usage indicates a need for additional family law material.”

This effort related to using common-ground language is an important component of another suggestion made by a law school stakeholder. For that individual it was important for the stakeholder and library director to be operating “in the same frame” for evaluations, strategic initiatives, operational goals, and services delivered. If the frame isn’t shared, the potential for disconnect is higher and may result in an undervaluation for the library.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phases 2 and 3 – Qualitative Analysis

Law School Libraries

The mix of stakeholders for the law school library focus groups included associate deans and faculty members. The library directors provided context to much of the information shared by the stakeholders.

Key Observations

Stakeholder is defined as someone with direct impact on budget or strategic planning, and with direct or indirect oversight of the library. An influencer is defined as a library user who evaluates library service from the perspective of satisfaction with the service. In law schools, these roles may be blurred, and who is a stakeholder can vary among institutions. In some law schools, the dean is the sole stakeholder; at least as far as budget authority is concerned. In other schools, the faculty, through faculty governance committees, exercises budget decision-making authority and/or library oversight, rising to the level of stakeholder. In almost all law schools, faculty develop the law school’s strategic plan together with the dean, and then approve the plan, further blurring the lines.

Many library directors are more engaged with faculty members than with their dean, regardless of whether the faculty are stakeholders or influencers. Directors must understand and be mindful of the roles played by the deans and the faculty in their law school.

Library directors should distinguish between marketing their services and communicating the value provided by those services. The message for each audience differs. Tailor the message to the audience. Stakeholders are more interested in impact, return on investment, and costs versus benefit of the services. When library directors communicate only what they are doing without providing details about who benefited and how the services impacted organizational goals, they miss an important element in the value proposition.

Best Practices

Use both formal and informal communications to deliver the value message. One-to-one interactions between library directors and stakeholders are essential to building strong relationships.

Informal communication can be achieved through casual interactions such as coffee, lunch, or a quick conversation in the hallway, as well as brief emails used to update interested parties. Formal communications are generally associated with a specific agenda and set time limits. Formal communication also includes reports, which may be delivered for consumption by stakeholders at their convenience or delivered orally by the presenter.

These interpersonal relations form the foundation for communicating and understanding the value required by stakeholders and the value delivered by the library.

When providing quantitative data about library activities such as electronic usage, qualitative context is required. Numbers alone do not translate to value.

Qualitative Best Practice: Provide context with quantitative data through narratives or stories.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phases 2 and 3 – Qualitative Analysis

For instance, if using metrics such as number of searches completed and number of full-text downloads, explain how the searches and downloads support the creation of a faculty presentation at a high value conference or summit. Providing context for the numbers creates a story about increased visibility for the institution that illustrates the impact of the content provided by the library.

Use testimonials from influencers to highlight impact of delivered services. For instance, the library provided support for ten classes in support of three faculty members with 150 students. Pair that with a testimonial from a faculty member that highlights how the students’ performance was improved based upon the information provided by the library.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries  
Phases 2 and 3 – Qualitative Analysis

Court/Government Libraries

Court and government law libraries face the challenge of serving a shifting constituency with funding methods that may be insufficient to meet new demands for required services. Information used to address that challenge underscores the types of activities tracked and the reports made. The reporting structure for these libraries presents an additional challenge. The stakeholders may be required to translate the library value to individuals and organizations outside of the library or even the court/government environment. Identifying the individual stakeholders and defining the message to ensure comprehension places law library directors in this environment in a unique position.

Regular communication through formal and informal means, as permitted by applicable laws and regulations, is imperative, and email is especially important because that may be the only consistent opportunity for delivering information to stakeholders.

Library evaluation is often more qualitative and anecdotal than quantitative. However, relying only on qualitative value messages when budgetary decisions rest in the hands of people unfamiliar with library operations, such as city administrators, is not advisable.

“*The law library line item stands out. Effort is required to communicate what that number means behind the scene in the larger context of the government funding provided.*” Court Stakeholder

Similarly to public libraries, the public law library may benefit from the use of a contingent valuation methodology. As one stakeholder explained,

“*I have never been to the Library of Congress but I’m glad it is there and it is important that it is there.*”

Another stakeholder put the value of the public law library into a more tangible context: “If we didn’t exist, where would people go?”

For court and government law libraries quantifications are extremely important. Understanding who is using what resources and the frequency of that usage as well as where the usage originates is important to communicate the value of services delivered. How the library director puts meaning around those numbers depends upon the organizational structure and culture. A librarian whose budget is determined as a single line-item in a budget review meeting may require more context than one who has regular ongoing communications with stakeholders who are directly served by the library.

For court and government law libraries, there is an imperative to understand how the libraries are funded (filing fees, legislative allotments, county budget allocation). Value conversations must be held with those parties in a manner that communicates library contributions in support of the larger mission.

Library directors should be wary of the comfort zone related to non-active evaluation services. When asked how the library was evaluated by the organization, one comment from a library director stood out to the study team.

“*We are not evaluated by anyone. We are floating in the ether; we can do what we want.*”

If no formal process exists for the evaluation of the library and/or its staff, library directors should be proactive. Directors should create a process for active reporting and share it with stakeholders. It is far wiser to be involved and be prepared than to be caught off guard because your organization isn’t “evaluating” the library. A formal process may not be in place but a judgment is undoubtedly occurring even if it is an unspoken one.
Best Practices

As with the best practices defined by the law school libraries, regular communication is a primary best practice for court/government law libraries. Directors should employ regular communication through meetings, email, and other interactions as the organizational structure allows, ensuring visibility and understanding.

Qualitative Best Practice: Employ both formal and informal communications on a regular basis.

Court library directors offered a unique perspective on methods used to provide context to quantitative data. To achieve an alignment between library service and organizational mission, court/government library directors suggested going a step further. Tying the services delivered to individual stakeholders or organizational mission by highlighting support provided to big cases or unusual matters offers a higher level of meaning to the stakeholders. For instance, report quarterly statistics in the context of the types of questions asked and highlight unusual matters that were handled by library services.

“Statistics don’t show the whole picture. Tie work to big cases or individual stakeholders within the organization.” Court Library Director

“Metrics such as number of time judges and staff attorneys used the library reported in terms of time saved matter – it is difficult but these measurements validate the work done by the library.” Court Library Director
The Economic Value of Law Libraries  
Phases 2 and 3 – Qualitative Analysis

Law Firm Libraries

Similar to the court/government library stakeholders, law firm stakeholders demonstrated an interest in contingent valuation methodologies for the library. When asked how to most effectively assess the library’s value, one stakeholder responded,

“Send all the library staff home for a day. Lawyers’ dissatisfactions with service do not remain unnoticed for long.”

For many libraries, the “no complaints equals no problems” approach to evaluation is the standard practice, but that does not always meet the stakeholder expectations of value. This approach also suffers from a lack of tangible data that can be used to underline support of organizational goals.

Many of the stakeholders and librarians from this group discussed the importance of support for other departments or functions, such as business development and competitive intelligence. Understanding the trends within the legal industry is important to providing support services in a manner that resonates with stakeholders in the law firm environment.

One of the discussion points for all focus groups was related to whether the library was evaluated in a manner similar to other organization departments. In law firms, support for aligning the evaluation of the library to match the evaluation done for other support departments such as information technology, marketing, or human resources was not across the board. However, this is a trend that is gaining traction. When considering how the library supports those departments, it is a trend that warrants consideration by the library director. Preparing practices to demonstrate the value of the library delivered to those departments may be an important differentiator for the overall evaluation process. It is also important to collaborate with these peers to form interoffice best practices used in reporting to the same stakeholder. This contributes to strategic alignment throughout the organization.

In the firm environment, many of the quantifications used are budget performance driven. Some are based upon a year-to-year comparison of billable hours or costs recovered. Understanding how these quantifications are used to measure firm performance should be considered as library directors establish their own quantification processes.

Best Practices

For firm law libraries, it is important to explain on a regular basis what is being done and tie it to the goals of the organization. Quantitative data is seen purely as information for many stakeholders. In the absence of qualitative context, the meaning of the numbers can be lost.

“Why are things being done and what are we seeking to accomplish?” Firm Stakeholder

Stakeholders are very individual in their management styles, and this influences their expectations for report formats and procedures. Library directors must identify the stakeholders’ interests and preferences and tailor formal reports to deliver information in a customized manner that allows the stakeholder to understand and apply the data. For instance, a CFO may be more interested in billable costs and recoveries, while a CIO would find metrics about usage more usable.

The ultimate goal is to deliver meaningful data that can be used to direct strategies, justify decisions, and explain costs.
Create templates for various preferred reporting methods that allow for streamlined reporting processes that incorporate statistics in spreadsheets, visuals in executive summaries, and qualitative context in oral presentations. Review the template with peers and stakeholders; make critical adjustments and plan for year-over-year use. The use of year-over-year reports creates consistency and illustrates trends, thus contributing to the stakeholder’s ability to direct strategies and resources appropriately.

Conclusion
The qualitative phase of the study offered valuable insights that were utilized to inform the survey questions used in the quantitative phase. The participants shared experiences about things that worked well and that did not work well in their own organizations. The information learned confirmed theories about the importance of relationships between stakeholders and library directors. Being proactive and visible are key to sharing information up and down the reporting chain. How that information is reported should be defined by individual organizational requirements and stakeholder preferences.
Phase 4 - Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative phase of the Economic Value of Law Libraries study was designed to provide quantifiable data for the conclusions made from the qualitative phase. The information learned through the interviews and focus group discussions formed the basis of the questions related to valued services, metrics, reporting methods, and communication preferences. In addition, the study team sought to determine the types of formal valuation methodologies in use. It was the team’s goal to draw upon the quantitative data to formulate recommendations that can be employed and implemented by individual organizations in a manner that suits their institutional culture, requirements, and available resources.

The Methodology

The survey was designed to extract insights from library directors and stakeholders about the best practices for demonstrating and communicating value of law libraries across law school, court and government, or private law firm constituencies. The survey also sought input from library staff, library users, and non-users about the services they most valued and the best communication methods for relating library activities. The study team felt that asking these survey respondents about the services they valued would provide useful data for AALL and its members.

The survey was created with input from the AALL Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee. Questions were drafted based upon findings from the Phase 2 and Phase 3 focus group discussions and individual interviews. Questions concentrated on valued services, preferred communication methods, metrics, and formal reporting practices.

The survey was open from August 6, 2014, through September 17, 2014. The survey was marketed through the AALL membership and selected partners including the Association of Legal Administrators. A total of 673 individuals completed the survey.

Participant Profile

The majority of respondents, approximately 60 percent, were library directors. A total of 11.6 percent of respondents were stakeholders. For the purpose of this study, a stakeholder is defined as someone with direct impact on the budget or strategic planning with direct or indirect oversight of the library. Examples of stakeholders include Executive Directors, Chief Judges, or Law School Deans. Approximately 28 percent of respondents combined were library users, library staff members, and non-users of library services.

![Figure 1. Participant Profile](image)
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Respondent Groups

Law firm respondents represented 44 percent of survey participants. Respondents from laws schools or universities accounted for 40 percent, and nearly 16 percent of all respondents were from the court/government/public or membership law library communities. Within the user/non-user/library staff respondents, the breakdown leaned heavily towards library staff.

Within the stakeholder respondents group, individuals from court/government law libraries were the highest responders, followed by private law firm and law school/university respondents.

Within the library director responses, the majority of survey participants were from law firm directors followed by law schools directors and then court/government law library directors.

Services Valued

All survey respondents were asked to rate the value of select library services.

Users/Non-Users/Library Staff

The majority of the User/Staff respondents ranked the following services most highly:

1. Electronic Databases
2. Library Staff
3. Research Provided by Library Staff

Figure 2. Organization Profile

Figure 3. Users/Non-Users/Staff
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

In reviewing the responses, the study team noted a correlation between content and the value added services that make content more accessible including training, content delivery services, and technology support.

In examining the breakdown of services valued, the lower ranked services such as risk management, space availability, archival materials, and business development correspond to specific survey respondent types. For instance, business development may be more valuable to firm libraries than to law school libraries.

Stakeholders

Stakeholder respondents matched the rankings provided by the users/staff responses.

1. Electronic databases
2. Library Staff
3. Research Provided by Library Staff

Library Directors

Library directors shared a similar view with stakeholders on the highest value services. The most significant difference was that library directors ranked research services above the library staff.

1. Electronic Databases
2. Research Provided by Library Staff
3. Library Staff
Key Observations

Content, professional staff, and direct services related to research provided by the professional staff are across the board the most valuable services within the law library community. Across all respondents, there is agreement that electronic databases, library staff, and research provided by library staff are the most valuable services provided by law libraries.

Respondents indicated that all of the services listed for evaluation are valuable. The results illustrate that respondents ranked services highly, indicating that law libraries are providing services of value to users and stakeholders.

Viewed as a whole, the three lowest ranked services were:

1. Records Management
2. Archival Materials
3. Business Development

Business Development is a service that may be recognized as more valuable within the law firm environment. The survey results found that, out of 23 respondents who ranked Business Development as “Not Valuable,” fourteen of those were from court and government law libraries.

As the study team reviewed respondent rankings for Risk Management, it is noted that only six library directors and stakeholders ranked this service as “Not Valuable.” Only forty-three total respondents ranked Risk Management as “Not Valuable,” with the majority of respondents operating in a court/government or law school library.

Archival materials appear to be more valuable to law school and court/government libraries than firm law libraries. While only seven respondents ranked archival materials as “Not Valuable,” none of those respondents were stakeholders and only four of those seven were library directors.

The study team wanted to explore these “lower ranked” services to explain further that the services offered by law libraries across all constituencies are valued. Within specific law library environments, and within individual organizations, the services that are most highly valued may differ. Library directors
have an opportunity to evaluate their services and determine those that are of greatest value to their users and those that are considered most valuable by their stakeholders.

Many of the comments from library directors indicate that there is a strong focus on specific services without an ability to view those services in the context of a broader category of service. To effectively provide services that are valued by the stakeholders, library directors must think strategically about their offerings and move beyond the minutia of daily operations. Services should support organizational goals as defined by the leadership. Directors must prioritize operations based upon organizational priorities. In that manner, the library is able to understand what the high-value priorities are and adjust operations to deliver services that have positive impact on the overall institution.

Further review of the comments exposes an opportunity to remind library directors about the need to tailor messages for specific audiences. For stakeholders, the value message is more about impact, while users and influencers may need to hear about service opportunities.

For instance, a law school library respondent commenting about the valued services referenced scholarly works, “Scholarship produced by librarians on law and policy of information management.” This indicates that this is an important and valued service for an end user but it does not illustrate a high value impact to the stakeholder. A service that is delivered, even with great quality, that is not tied to organizational and stakeholder expectations will miss the mark in communicating the library’s value.

Other comments indicated that respondents are tuned into potential new services that will have a positive impact on the organization. For instance, one respondent comment in the “rate the valued services” question indicated that being aware of emerging service opportunities and industry trends is important. Creating new services that support organizational priorities and deliver added value demonstrates the library’s adaptability and responsiveness.

Overall, the comments indicate a focus on individual services rather than broader categories as defined by the question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Defined Service Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Translating IT for faculty and students”</td>
<td>Technology (e.g. providing devices or support, managing services or intranets)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Librarians teaching of courses on advanced legal research”</td>
<td>Training or Teaching by Librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Password management for firm and attorney resources”</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Monitoring Dockets”</td>
<td>Current Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Market Intelligence (alerts/newsletters – internal/external) – Very valuable”</td>
<td>Business Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Best Practice

Define foundation services and emerging service opportunities within your organizations through a collaborative strategic process with stakeholders. Understand that within each organization the company culture will define the services that matter most.

Comprehensive Best Practice: Collaborate with stakeholders to define the high-value services that should be tracked within your organization.

While many may hold that content makes the library, the respondents of this survey indicate that content without library staff is less valuable. Professional service improves the use of the library’s content. The data indicate that stakeholders recognize the role that library staff plays in delivering high-value service. Professional library staff delivers timely, relevant services that maximize content investments. Quantifying how that is done can be an important component of the value message shared with stakeholders.

Communication Method Preferences

All survey respondents were asked to rate the usefulness of selected communication activities or methods as related to conveying the value of the library.

User/Staff respondents ranked the following to be the most effective communication activities:

1. Training
2. Intranets/Library Portals
3. Meeting Attendance

Stakeholders considered the following three communications activities as the most effective:

1. Intranets/Library Portals
2. Training
3. Meeting Attendance
Library directors rated communication activities in a slightly different order than stakeholders:

1. Training
2. Meeting Attendance
3. Intranets/Portals

**Key Observations**

When analyzed as a whole, the top three communication activities across all respondent types were ranked as follows:

1. Training
2. Intranets/Portals
3. Meeting Attendance

It is interesting to note that stakeholders held the Intranets/Library Portals as the most useful means of communicating the value of the library. This indicates that it is important to distribute information throughout the organization that can be accessed on an as-needed basis.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

While social media and video were considered the two least useful methods overall, there is potential for use of both of these in the right environment. We learned through the qualitative phase of the study that in court/government law libraries, social media was an important communication method used to reach end users. Law librarians should be aware that applied appropriately, new communication methods, video especially, may become an important means of communication, especially when distributed through important existing channels such as library portals.

When considering communication activities, library directors need to consider their end users and how their outreach efforts relate to organizational goals. For example, if a stakeholder needs to demonstrate that the library is providing remote services to the public, the director may wish to share analytics gathered from social media activities to demonstrate engagement.

Best Practice

Evaluate the communication methods used by stakeholders and adjust emerging message delivery options for distribution through those preferred channels.

If a short video message about a highly visible project can be distributed through the portal, it can serve as an effective means to explain impact related to a valued service. This type of qualitative value message offers stakeholders meaningful context directly related to library services. Using the intranet is supported by our data as an effective means of reaching stakeholders.

Combining qualitative messages with new delivery methods through a highly valued distribution channel offers library directors an opportunity to explain their value to stakeholders in a place stakeholders expect the message to exist.

Metrics

When asked to rate specific metrics in terms of importance to demonstrating library value, stakeholders and library directors agreed that the most important measurement was to “achieve expense and budget expectations.”

“In-Depth Research” and “Number Served” received the next highest overall ratings. Within each of the activities rated, law librarians should recognize that, depending upon their organization, any one of them may be important. The means of defining that importance requires an understanding of the stakeholders’ preferences and organizational goals.

Time spent on content retrieval ranked lowest overall but time spent on research was considered important.

Overall the metrics of least importance were “Type of Patron,” “Number of Items Provided by Content Delivery,” and “Time Spent on Content Retrieval.” Based upon the qualitative analysis, certain metrics matter more to specific constituencies. For instance, the court/government law library stakeholders and library directors indicated that the type of patron was important.

Tracking this data enables the library to measure how they are responding to organizational directives to provide more service to pro se patrons. For law school libraries, tracking the number of items delivered through content retrieval services can be used to underscore the value of a consortia relationship or help guide collection decisions.
Electronic Metrics

Analyzing the specific electronic usage measurements indicates that cost and usage are more important than time.

The Top Three Metrics Rated as Very Useful:

- Cost of Resources
- Frequency of Resource Use
- What Resource Was Used

"Time Billed," "Cost Recovered," and "Time Spent Using the Resource" were the three least useful measurements for electronic resource usage overall. It is likely that these metrics have a higher applicability in the law firm setting than in the law school and court/government setting. That organizational difference may account for the low ranking of these specific electronic metrics across all the constituent respondents.

When library directors consider what electronic measures they should monitor and report, they can use this data as a benchmark for analyzing the needs of their organizations. If budget management is the primary metric used to demonstrate library value, reporting resources costs and usage in a budgetary context makes sense. Take that concept a step further and library directors may create reports that incorporate visual elements that allow stakeholders to quickly grasp how these metrics fit into the budget.

Print Metrics

As law libraries shift to include more electronic content in their collection, it is important to understand that the view of stakeholders as related to the value of print resources may also shift.

For some libraries, historic collections and unique holdings hold great value. Relating that value to stakeholders may require more effort. As cautioned in the qualitative phase of the study related to print resources, it is important that stakeholders and library directors "share the same frame."
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Analysis of the quantitative data illustrates that respondents felt that the cost of resources was the most useful means of determining value of print resources within the law library environment.

Overall, circulation statistics were considered least useful.

As with reporting quantitative data related to electronic resources, understanding the context of print resources through the lens of budget goals is required to make the information meaningful.

Training

Increased use of resources was considered the most effective means of measuring the impact of training and teaching activities.

Comments included in the responses for this survey question indicate that the number of sessions and number of attendees are important components of tracking training activities.

Without the consequent analysis of whether the training resulted in improved usage, the numbers alone are meaningless. Translating the measurements to impact and results is necessary to create the stories that illustrate the value of the law library in a meaningful manner.

Best Practice

Measurements alone may be useful for relating activities and can be used to illustrate library staff activities, but, to be effective in communicating value, additional context is required. Quantitative data must be delivered to stakeholders in the framework of measures that matter to them. This will differ by
organization but the data provided in this survey offers library directors a foundation for working with their stakeholders to define the metrics that should be tracked and reported.

Quantitative Best Practice: Go beyond the mere measurement of activities and utilize methods that measure and demonstrate success or impact on organizational services.

When reporting metrics related to specific library activities, report them in the context of the larger frame of importance to the organization. If achievement of budget goals is the decision driver for stakeholders, then metrics related to electronic resource usage should be reported in that framework. Sharing that your users searched an electronic database x number of times in a month does not demonstrate the value of that database. Tying the access numbers to the cost of the resource and the percentage of the budget that resource constitutes provides a fuller picture to stakeholders.

Quantitative Best Practice: When reporting metrics about specific library activities use measurements that have meaning as defined by the organization’s framework.

Go beyond the mere measurement of activities and consider methods that measure and demonstrate success or impact on services. This is especially relevant to training and teaching activities. If training is provided that increases the use of an important new resource, show that increase. If possible, pair that numerical data with a testimonial or a story from the user that highlights how the training session helped in exposure to the resource or improved usage that helped finish a project.

Define the measurements within your organization used to demonstrate value to their stakeholders (clients, elected officials, Board of Trustees) and adjust library metrics accordingly. If stakeholders need to use data related to the library to make a strategic organizational change or justify current service levels, provide library data in a manner that will make the job of translating the requests to those external stakeholders easier to support. Using library jargon with stakeholders diminishes the impact of the value statement. Deliver reports in the language of the organization and more specifically the language of the stakeholder.

Quantitative Best Practice: Define the measurements used to demonstrate value to the organization’s stakeholders and adjust library metrics accordingly.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries  
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Additional Measurements

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional information about specific measurements used within their organizations. The responses provided examples of individual organization valuation methodologies.

A few of the comments revealed an unusual approach to metrics.

“Ratio of in depth requests to #staff/professional and paraprofessional; ratio of document delivery to #staff/professional, ratio of request to attorney”

“We have a home-grown statistics gathering system which serves a dual purpose as Library KM because we cut and paste the questions and description of the answer into the statistics-gathering instrument.”

Other comments verified the importance of qualitative data, such as personal interactions and satisfaction with results delivered by the library, to understand perceived value.

“We do a lot of research for faculty, so they are often not aware of what effort it takes- the final product we provide is the most important measure. i.e., did we give them what they wanted/needed?  

“Competitive Intelligence – Whether projects/pitches worked on are successful or projects/pitches not worked on.”

Many of the comments indicate an attention to the use of the library, its resources, and its services.

“I am interested in how admin departments use the library – marketing, HR, IT, etc. and how often this occurs. Sadly, I also have to consider who gets credit for what the library does.”

“Resources used consistently on course reserve for classes.”

Some respondents provided insights into how the measurement of activities was handled within individual environments.

“Number of teaching/training sessions and their participants.”

“Patrons in library by hour (most useful for determining hours of service and space needs).”

External Sources

Stakeholders were asked to identify external sources they use to evaluate the library. The purpose of this question was to inform library directors about reports, surveys, and other benchmarks that the stakeholders would use when considering strategic initiatives or other library service evaluation activities.

Many of the resources are familiar:

- American Lawyer Law Librarian’s Survey
- US News & World Report Top Law Schools
- Citi Private Bank’s Law Firm Group
- Association of Research Libraries Benchmarks
- TexshareData – Texas State Library
- Council of California County Law Librarians
- AALL Price Index
- American Bar Association Annual Questionnaire
- Law School Survey of Student Engagement
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

- American Library Association Survey
- National Labor Relations Board Monitoring
- Benchmarks with local libraries
- Wells Fargo survey of midsized firms
- PriceWaterhouseCoopers Firm Survey

**Best Practice**
Identify the external resources used by stakeholders to evaluate organization success and (where relevant) law library success. Use those same sources to inform strategic initiatives for the library.

**Reporting**
Survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to reporting methods. The purpose for these questions was to quantify expectations related to style, format, and frequency.

In the qualitative phase of the study, it was found that informal communications were regarded as highly effective. The study team wanted to verify the role formal and informal communications played in delivering the value proposition message. The data indicate a discrepancy related to formal reporting expectations for library directors and stakeholders. Library directors should investigate the needs and preferences of their stakeholders and implement reporting practices that meet the defined expectations. Assuming that stakeholders are not reading provided information may lead to a communication barrier that will be difficult to overcome.

**Informal Communications and Reports**
Overall, stakeholders prefer informal communications about library services. Many respondents (36 of 78) stated that informal communication was effective but only eight considered it to be very effective. The takeaway here is that while informal communication may be preferred, there is a need to back that communication up with formal reporting mechanisms that underscore and highlight the data being shared informally.

![Do you prefer formal or informal communication about library services?](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Stakeholders

Library directors should understand the need for and effectiveness of informal communications and make it a regular part of their routine as opportunity allows.

**Report Frequency**
When asked how often library directors should submit formal reports, stakeholders indicated that formal reports were indeed expected. Specifically, no
respondents selected the option for “Never.” While the discrepancy with library directors is minor, it is worth noting. Nearly two percent of library directors selected “Never” when asked how often formal reports should be submitted.

Stakeholders selected “As Needed or Requested” and “Quarterly” equally. Thirty percent of stakeholder respondents selected “Annually.”

The takeaway here is that library directors should have in place a formal reporting schedule. Comments received in the survey indicate that, for some library directors, a change in organizational procedure has not been met with an alternative means of reporting. This leaves room for separation between stakeholders and library directors that will result in shifts away from services important to strategic initiatives in the organization.

If as indicated in this comment, “My firm has done away with formal performance evaluations, which was my time and method for submitting an annual library report,” firms are eliminating formal evaluation processes, libraries must advocate for alternatives. Without a flow of information to stakeholders through formal channels, it may be easier to overlook or underestimate the value of the library to the entire organization. Library directors should be proactive in providing data even if it is not expected.
Best Practice

Identify how often your stakeholder is making reports out to external stakeholders and up the chain within the organization. Create a schedule of reporting that fits into the strategic planning and decision making cycle of the organization to ensure that critical library data is delivered in a relevant timeframe.

![Communication Best Practice: Create a schedule of reporting that fits into the organization’s strategic planning cycle.](image)

Reporting Method

Stakeholders revealed that a formal meeting with a written report was the best report format. It is interesting to note that visual presentations in a formal meeting were the lowest ranked report method. In contrast, library directors selected written reports as the top choice for report formats.

![In what format are formal reports provided? (Select all that apply.)](image)

Forty-eight percent of library directors selected email as the preferred format of delivery, while only 25 percent of stakeholders chose this option. These data reveal a disconnect in preferences that each law library will need to define internally. It may be necessary to provide data in multiple methods and distribute it through channels such as the intranet. Understanding the best method for direct communication and follow-up communications with stakeholders will allow library directors to get the message delivered. Varying the delivery options may provide the bridge needed to span the gap between current practices and the preferred methods.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

The comments from library directors reveal that they consider formal meetings without written reports as an effective reporting option.

- “Formal meeting without written report”
- “Formal meeting without written report—Written reports as requested”
- “Orally”

Some comments reveal the importance of knowing your audience:

- “Depends on the topic and recipient.”
- “Less formal presentation/discussion”
- “It really depends on what the Stakeholder needs”

The conclusion to be drawn from these comment sets is that a conversation with the stakeholder is necessary to understand the best practice to be established within individual organizations as related to preferred delivery and frequency of reports.

Best Practice

- Work with your stakeholder to understand their preferences for information presentation.
- Create templates that highlight the key considerations for current strategic initiatives in both narrative and numerical formats.
- Find or create opportunities to present the information in a formal meeting setting.

Report Formats

When asked about the most useful report formats, both stakeholders and library directors selected executive summaries and one page bullet-point highlights as the most useful.
PowerPoint presentations were considered to be somewhat useful or not useful. This does not mean that visual elements are not important. Library directors need to find effective methods of reporting data concisely and visually but in a distribution method that matters to stakeholders. The importance of visual elements such as infographics, charts, and graphs should not be underestimated, especially as the demographics of the leadership shift to younger, more visually and application-oriented stakeholders.

The comments from library directors for this portion of the survey reveal some interesting perceptions.

“Few recipients read the reports.”

“Our stakeholders would not take the time to read any report over one page.”

“My firm has done away with formal performance evaluations, which was my time and method for submitting an annual library report.”

“Formal reports not done.”

In contrast to the conclusions that could be drawn from these statements, stakeholders reveal that they do indeed value formal, written reports. Ninety-four percent of stakeholder respondents state that they read reports provided to them.

When considering these statements in light of the stakeholder responses, it is apparent that library directors must make the effort to understand what their stakeholders need and how they want it presented. When library directors accept a removal from reporting activities, which the data from this survey supports as effective for stakeholders, they are missing opportunities to communicate value directly to decision makers. Assuming that reports are not useful and not used removes library directors from the communication and decision-making hierarchy and ensures that they miss the chance to impart important information in a meaningful manner with their stakeholders. A change in procedure does not mean the need for the information has stopped—it means the method to gather and deliver the information needs to be altered.

**Best Practice**

Identify the preference of stakeholders for report formats. Create appropriate templates and deliver through identified, preferred distribution channels. For instance, if a stakeholder has demonstrated a preference for an executive summary with visual elements, use the executive summary to highlight usage/costs or budget goal achievements, and distribute through the Library Portal after a short presentation at a formal meeting.

---

**Quantitative Best Practice:** Create appropriate reporting templates and deliver through identified, preferred distribution channels.

---

Using the quantitative data benchmarks in this report will afford library directors with a foundation for implementation of reporting processes, customized to their organization that ensures the delivery of the value message.
Key Observations

Formal reports submitted quarterly or as requested coupled with frequent informal communications are considered by stakeholders as the best practice. While email is considered an important means of communication within many organizations, only 25 percent of stakeholders felt that was the best medium for formal reports. Library directors who rely solely on email delivery may wish to reconsider that practice.

It is important for law libraries to consider emerging trends. While approximately 16 percent of stakeholders indicated that a formal meeting with visual presentations were useful for formal reports, visual elements for reporting are predicted to become more important based upon the research and qualitative analysis conducted for this study. Trends indicate that visual presentations may range from infographics to video. Charts and tables are also important visual elements to include in the presentation of cultural preferences.

Stakeholder Feedback and Data Application

Stakeholders provide feedback to library management, mainly through informal channels. Only about 15 percent of respondents stated that they did not provide any feedback about reported library activities.

![Figure 16. Stakeholders](image)

Perhaps one of the most significant data points for this report comes from this question to stakeholders:

“Do you develop or communicate strategic priorities to your organization that are influenced by information learned from library reports?”

Ninety-five percent stated that information learned from library reports influenced strategic organizational priorities.

---

*95 percent of stakeholders stated that information learned from library reports influenced strategic organizational priorities.*
The economic value of law libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

The importance of informal communication with stakeholders and how they apply the information learned from those interactions should not be underestimated. If 95 percent of stakeholders are applying information learned through reports for directing organizational priorities, library directors must share information up the chain. If stakeholders do not have access to the right information, the potential to misdirect library strategic priorities increases. It is the responsibility of the library director to ensure that information is provided that can be used to guide initiatives that are in line with user needs, resource availability, and staff capabilities.

Communication and Reporting Styles

The survey sought to verify the information about effective communication styles discussed by focus group participants. Overwhelmingly all survey respondents rated a combination of narrative, metrics, and testimonials as the most effective communication style.

Examining the results further, the study team noted that only three percent of stakeholders selected stories and/or testimonials. Twenty percent of all respondents selected narrative and another 20 percent chose measurements/numerical data as the most effective style.

![Pie chart showing communication styles](image)

The comments from library directors reveal an understanding of the importance of delivering information in a manner that matters to the stakeholder.

“My direct report is the COO and numbers are what convinces him.”

“Again, the audience is key. My COO only recognizes metrics, so I have to fill everything with numerical data. However, he can be interested in hearing a few from-the-trenches stories, so I throw in a few of those. And for sure, he wants me to NAME NAMES. Everything becomes much more real when I can attach an attorney name to a request or comment.”

“Depends on the recipient of the information; individuals have their own preferences.”
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data confirms the conclusions drawn from the literature review and the qualitative inputs. No single communication style will deliver meaningful information about the library’s value. To effectively share data that explains the value of library services, a custom approach is required. Library directors must analyze their stakeholders and deliver the information in the combination that will resonate most effectively.

**Best Practice**

Determine the communication styles that match stakeholder and organization cultural preferences, and adjust information delivery to meet a mix of demands and expectations. Library directors must be comfortable with a variety of communication styles and reach beyond their own comfort zone to deliver data that has impact.

---

*Communication Best Practice: Get comfortable with different communication styles that can be adjusted to formal and informal settings as well as stakeholder preferences.*

---

Successful approaches may include sharing testimonials in informal interactions or combining numerical data in a formal report presentation with a story that explains the numbers.
Valuation Methodologies in Use
The survey was designed to benchmark current formal valuation methodology practices. The data indicate that use of existing, defined quantitative methodologies ranges from the very familiar (Cost Benefit Analysis and Return on Investment) to the less familiar (Intellectual Capital Valuation and Knowledge Value-Added).

Respondents were most often using Impact of Service within their organization, followed by Cost Benefit Analysis, and Return on Investment (ROI). ROI, while familiar to most professionals, presents problems when being applied in the valuation practices for law libraries. The study team and the AALL Economic Value of Law Libraries Special Committee discussed the expectations surrounding a single quantification for all law libraries. The challenge in applying that method to libraries in general, and to law libraries specifically, is that the differentiators for each law library are not applicable across the entire community. Even within each constituency, the organizational mission presents a variance that would make an ROI quantification inaccurate.
Nearly 30 percent of respondents were not using any of the listed valuation methodologies. This bears out the conclusions drawn in Phase 1 of the study that defined common methodologies and explained the difficulty in applying those methodologies in a law library environment. As stated in the Literature Review:

“The complexity of libraries makes it improbable to rely on a single method for library evaluation. Library services are professional services using tangible resources to provide intangible results. Therefore, libraries must combine evaluation of tangible resources, i.e., budget analysis of electronic sources, with qualitative analysis to communicate a message of value to their parent organizations.”

While formal valuation methodologies offer individual organizations an option for application within their own institutions, recommending a single path for all law libraries is inadvisable. Library directors understand the uniqueness of their organizations. That knowledge allows them to take the best of recommended practices and formulate a solution that meets the demands of each institution’s unique requirements.

**Best Practice**

Identify current formal valuation methodologies used within your organization. Evaluate the applicability of that method for use by the law library and adjust the metrics collected and reporting practices to make use of the formal process.

—if no formal methodology is used, explore the possibility of selecting one that would have impact in your organization. Based upon findings from earlier phases of the study, librarians may wish to explore the viability of using either the Contingent Valuation or Library Impact methodologies as a formal methodology within their own institution. Applying existing frameworks to deliver data is a useful approach to deliver information with meaning and make that information impactful. The goal of these valuation activities is not just to share information --it is also to make the information shared actionable.

**Additional Insights—Comments**

The survey provided respondents the opportunity to contribute additional insights about what and how library value to the organization can best be communicated for the most positive impact. A selection of those comments is included here.

**Services**

Several comments indicated the need to adapt core professional library skills to new services.

“Librarians should define themselves by the skills they offer, not the things or places they represent. For example, Boolean searching is applied to eDiscovery searches - why aren’t more librarians saying, ‘I can help with that?’”

“Risk management”
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Qualitative Methods
Some comments highlighted the value of stories as related to communicating value. What is told in the story depends upon the organization but demonstrating value to stakeholders through stories is a path to success.

“Stories that demonstrate value added (and cost saved, risk averted) told to key decision makers.”

Quantitative Metrics
Comments related to specific quantitative measures were shared by the survey respondents. While many of the comments are specific to a particular library type, the comments do provide insights into things that have been tried as well as some of the challenges associated with quantifying library services.

“Usage by the lawyers through billable hours or frankly non-billable as well…”

“With the imminent demise of research recoveries, we need new strategies and metrics to clearly demonstrate the value of legal research resources to the business. Everyone agrees we need online research and information resources, but the question is: “How much? What mix? At what cost?”

“It’s difficult showing that the library has any value – the only interest is in how we can cut costs.”

“Time and costs compared. Time saved for lawyers and cost to achieve that goal (human resources costs within the library; collection costs; etc.) Trade-offs: if I want something new, I must evaluate existing resources and trade off something, if possible. That’s how I go into every budget year...if I want something new, I usually have to try to drop something similar. No duplication allowed if at all possible.”

Reporting Methods
Many of the comments related to how the message of value is communicated also provided useful information about getting the message delivered to the right people through an effective means.

“Appearance before our management committee…”

“I have very little idea what the methodologies above are, and I wonder whether the time devoted to learning more about them and implementing them would be more important than current more informal approaches that have been successful at my institution.”

“In the law school setting, the library must constantly tell its story to the Dean and faculty and remind them of how the library contributes to the success of legal education. This can be done through formal reports, memos, and other writings, or through informal meetings, talks, newsletters, and emails.”

“Regular attendance and interaction at practice group meetings; participation at attorney retreats and strategy sessions.”

“Individual meetings with stakeholders, when I can get their attention.”
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Impact

One respondent provided a thoughtful comment related to the importance of organizational alignment and the need to ensure that the impact delivered by the library, relevant to institutional goals, was communicated.

“Librarians need to know what the organization’s goals are and align services to support those goals. Our communications can then focus on how we are impacting the organizational goals, instead of traditional measures of library value such as circulation, volume count, and usage numbers. These types of numbers have no meaning without context. For example, the library needs to show that it has had a positive impact on faculty scholarship or new business development, if those are the things the organization values. Qualitative measures are also important even though they are difficult to come by. Finally, we need to present the value story in easily and quickly understood ways instead of relying on traditional, text-heavy formats. Presentation is half the battle, because users don’t have the time to learn more about the library.”

Testimonials

Testimonials are a powerful means of providing context to services delivered. Use testimonials to illustrate relevance and positive impacts created by library services.

“Partners who provide candid, unsolicited, documented comments on how library services have helped produce positive outcomes for clients are the best communicators of value.”

Cautions

The selected comments below should be viewed as tales of caution. Relying only on user interactions and user testimonials to relay the value message may indicate a disengagement with stakeholders. Library directors must rely upon interpersonal relationships with users and stakeholders to deliver an accurate and complete view of the importance of the library. Responsibility for enhancing the message of capabilities and worth throughout the organization rests on the shoulders of the library director.

“One on one interactions with users.”

“In my situation the law library users fulfill this function.”

“With the onset of Google, more and more people see the library staff as the last resort for research rather than the first. Once again librarians are having to try and figure out how to move the library to the front.”

Key Observations

In reviewing the comments there is an opportunity to draw upon the experience of current practices. The majority of comments appear to originate from library directors.

Rather than reacting, library directors should embrace the opportunity to assert their leadership and be proactive in strategic processes that are in alignment with the institutional mission and goals. Library directors are responsible for identifying opportunities, shifting services and demonstrating law library contributions to institutional goals and stakeholder priorities.

The confusion between marketing to end users and reporting meaningful, actionable data to stakeholders is evident. While end users are certainly influencers and important, law libraries will remain in the shadows if stakeholders do not get the message about impact and outcomes.
The Economic Value of Law Libraries
Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis

Library directors have a responsibility to recognize the difference between stakeholders and influencers. Relying on end user interpretations and communications of value is unwise. Messages from the library have multiple audiences and multiple goals. Tailoring communications to end users for marketing and to stakeholders as value propositions is necessary.

Best Practice

Embrace the leadership responsibilities and expectations of the management and director role.

Best Practice: Embrace the leadership responsibilities and opportunities.

Summary

Law libraries exist in an environment that spans a multitude of realities and priorities. When exploring the best methods to impart the value of the library, stakeholders and library directors must examine their individual organizational cultures and customize the processes and reports to match and support that culture.

Library directors who wait for recognition may find themselves struggling to find an audience or even a supportive supplemental messenger. Comments such as this, “It is close to impossible to grab anyone’s attention to focus on the library” should be viewed as a call to action. There is a need to be proactive and apply the best practices suitable for your organization to open the dialogue about the valuable contributions made by the library.

The analysis reveals that stakeholders pay attention when the information is presented in a manner that is meaningful to them. Identifying the metrics that matter and delivering data through a method that has impact for stakeholders is not impossible. This report has quantified some of the trends and preferences that can be used to define the preferences necessary for your own environment.

Comprehensive Best Practices

The data indicates that these practices have broad reach across all constituencies.

1. Form strong interpersonal relationships between library directors and stakeholders.
2. Employ short, frequent communication through existing, preferred channels as defined by stakeholder preferences.
3. Create templates that highlight the key considerations for current strategic initiatives in both narrative and numerical formats.
4. Adjust information delivery to meet a mix of demands and expectations
5. Define foundational library services and emerging service opportunities within your organizations through a collaborative strategic process with stakeholders.
6. Embrace the leadership responsibilities and expectations of the management and director role.
Phase 5 - Best Practice Definition: Report Conclusion

Using the methods, trends, and best practices identified in this study, law librarians can establish processes within their organizations that will ease the valuation discussion. The quantifications and models are adaptable based upon cultural demands and needs.

Identifying stakeholder preferences and organizational needs is the first step. The measurements used are familiar to most library directors and may already be in use within their organizations or organizations of their peers and can be adjusted to meet shifting demands. Selecting the most effective communication channels and creating a reporting format that provides context and meaning forms the necessary framework for the valuation discussion. Creating the custom model that best fits the organization, based upon the recommended best practices, will facilitate and inform strategic initiatives that impact the institution positively.

Using easily adaptable models eases the challenge of defining, describing, and communicating the value of the law library. A single method for valuation processes in the law library community is impractical. Adapting proven methods that align with organizational needs, stakeholder preferences, and valued library services will define context and can easily be communicated within the organization and beyond.

The foundation of delivering a message of value that is understood and used relies upon the formation of strong interpersonal relationships between the library director and their stakeholders. Proactive, adaptive, and informed leadership by library directors will support the maintenance of those relationships and will create the best practices needed for their individual organization. The message of value will be heard and used when the right combination of metrics, narrative, and communication activities are implemented.