



Using Technology (and Other Tricks) to Manage Legal Publishers

by Richard Vaughan

Just as the Golden Age of Television has passed, so too have the days when libraries had their own "personal" customer service representatives for each of their publishers/vendors. But, as noted by **Frank Houdek** (Southern Illinois University), this doesn't mean that law librarians and publishers/vendors are destined to have an antagonistic relationship. While the mega-publishers of today may have lost some of the personal touches of the past, they are attempting to develop new customer service systems, many of which attempt to replicate the services of the past, via the technologies

of today. As these systems evolve, it is up to law librarians to let the publishers/vendors know if they are (or are not) succeeding.

Providing attendees with a virtual tool box of electronic sources for building and repairing relationships, Houdek and **Rob Richards** (University of Colorado) led a tour of some of the most helpful Web sites that address Acquisitions and Collection Development issues. By using these tools, law librarians can improve the communication flow between themselves and their information providers, which in turn will improve their ability to fulfill their libraries' goals.

Houdek, the outgoing Chair of the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV), began by highlighting the recently revised CRIVPage Web site (<http://www.aallnet.org/committee/criv/>). No doubt, for many, the name CRIV conjures up thoughts of confrontations and controversies between librarians and publishers. A quick look at this exceptional Web site, however, will reveal that the Committee has evolved into a clearinghouse of resources to help law librarians develop a proactive relationship with legal publishers and other information vendors. While the CRIV also continues to communicate through its traditional publication, *The CRIV Sheet*, Houdek pointed out some of the new communication forums like e-mail-delivered CRIVGrams and detailed CRIV Site Visit Reports. Perhaps the most helpful section of the site is the CRIVTools list found on the Resources page. Here librarians will find sample letters, hints on dealing with customer service departments, lists of divested titles, and much more.

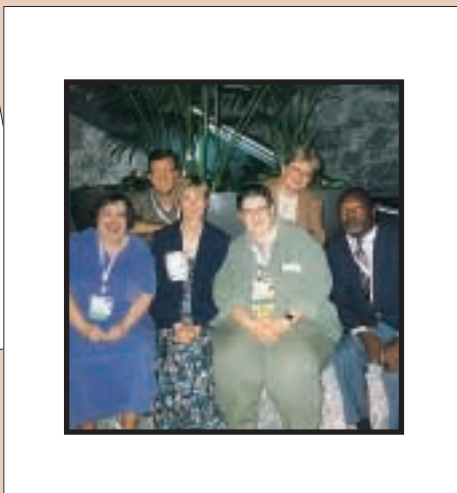
Rob Richards, creator of the well-known "Legal Publishers List," followed this with a review of some of the other important Web sites for today's acquisitions/collection development librarians. Types of sites profiled included publisher directories; tools for title discovery; bibliographic verification and format selection; e-commerce tools; and e-communication tools. As one of the attendees who was frantically trying to jot down URLs as Rob spoke, I was thrilled to learn that he has created a site that contains the entire program presentation, complete with hyperlinks to all of the cited (and many more) Web pages. To access the program, point your browser (Microsoft Internet Explorer works best) to: <http://www.colorado.edu/law/lawlib/ts/vendormaze>.

So while the Golden Age of Television has passed, and perhaps the Golden Age of Customer Service as well, don't assume that you have no alternatives. Take advantage of the information provided in this program and try using some of these new tools. By keeping abreast of the legal publishing industry, communicating with individual publishers/vendors, and letting your colleagues know the results of your communications, you might just discover that the age we live in is not quite as tarnished as you thought.

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