

Accounts and Billing Question

Here is a summary of the results of my survey. The question was: I would like to move away from keeping accounts and month billing for our member attorneys for copy/fax services and sales of forms. How does your law library handle collection of fees from attorneys or the public for copy/fax services or sales of materials that sometimes are mailed out? (8/2005)

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We eliminated it entirely because it was too expensive to process

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We fax and copy to attorneys but not to the public. For the attorneys, we bill them approximately every 3 weeks.

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Our printer is on the honor system, and attorneys have 24/7 access to the law library. Some leave money under my door, in response to my note on the printer, but of course I don't know who doesn't pay. The copier is cash only, change, or \$1, 2, 5, 10, or \$20 bills. For faxes that are sent out, we charge a minimum of \$5 plus \$1 for each page over 5 pages, and I usually tell the person the cost over the phone and then either include a statement with the fax and/or e-mail it to the requestor. I do the same for members of the public, but don't do research for pro ses so they are usually here and pay for copies in person. We also have a Lexis public access account that allows for faxing or e-mailing of materials, and I sometimes will do that if the person has the exact citations of what they want. I've been here for just over 6 years and have only had a few problems, with attorneys, of course, and for only a couple of dollars. One attorney died, and I mentioned it to his Personal Rep when he called to ask about old law books, but he never followed up, and neither did I. For some attorneys, it's just a matter of a reminder that they owe copying money. There is one that I've e-mailed twice, and he still owes a small amt from May. I can usually collect if they come back wanting to use my key to make copies and pay later: I remind them of what they already owe and/or just say we aren't allowed to do that anymore. Let me know if you come up with a better plan.

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We fax the bill with the fax (and a follow up fax if needed). Forms and everything else is prepaid (attorneys may pay by personal check with their bar card # on it, or firm check; all others cash or money order). We do not copy for anyone, and the copy machines in the library work with bills and coins (again, prepaid). The same principle works for the cassettes we lend attorneys... they pay a deposit in cash (no checks) and we take the lending fee out of their cash deposit, as well as any late charges.

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NH Law Library does not require prepayment from the public or from attorneys. We have a very informal method of keeping track: we keep the unpaid invoices by date and periodically go through them to see who still owes us money. We send a copy of the invoice with the materials and ask that they send us a check when the materials are received. Surprisingly few people don't pay us what they owe. Those people who don't pay, don't get further service until they do. I'm sure our volume is much lower than yours, so we can get away with this.

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We don't have a coin-op on our copier but have attached one to our eight public access computers. Law firms (and lobbyists during the legislative session) can establish copy/fax accounts and between legislative sessions we invoice roughly quarterly. When our legislature is in session, library users can establish a print code and we'll invoice monthly or they can pay as they go. We have established a \$10 minimum per billing period. Citizen users and those who are infrequent users pay as they go and we will issue a receipt for cash if they need one. If information is mailed and the customer has an account, we bill to the account; if the customer is an infrequent user and the request is more than 10 pages, we will mail or fax an invoice with delivery.

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We are a small rural county, so anyone who wants to fax or copy pays me at the time of purchase. I have not mailed anything out yet. Normally I fax or email. I don't do it often, so I just

eat the cost for that.

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The public or attorneys can buy copy cards in several different monetary amounts for one of our photocopiers. The other photocopier is a coin-op. As a general rule we do not accept checks and are not set-up for credit cards. Faxing is done with cash only and must be paid at the time the fax is sent.

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We use an in-house "copy card" that can be charged (\$ added to) by attorneys and firms. ~ a debit card. Cash copying requires the name & phone number of the user. The cash user pays after he/she is finished. No real cash is put on these "cash" cards -- they function more as a counter. While the debit cards can have cash/money added to them at any time. We charge \$5 and have an attorney sign a waiver of liability if we keep the card. We probably have 300+ cards held at the library. Our system has worked great for 5+ years.

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Our copiers will accept cash and vendor cards. My assistant has recently stopped manually billing for services the staff provides and is entering all billing information in Quickbooks. Monthly statements are printed from Quickbooks and attorneys remit payment from the statements. We do not bill out any services to lay people. The majority of service requests are generated when an attorney fills out a service request form on our web page. We print the request and keep it as proof of the service requested until payment is received.

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Our public is on a cash-or-local-check-with-proper-ID-only basis. We do bill attorneys with offices in our county. We usually fax them an invoice noting the client name or file # (saves on postage) with the requested material. They send us a check.

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Generally we invoice materials as they are sent out. Patrons are advised of the costs as we take the order the information and it is also available on our website <http://www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/service.html#photocopying>. We do required advanced payment of materials when mailing to county jails and in some but not all cases the security hospitals. Patrons provide a list of wanted materials and then we advise them of the cost. Once payment is received we then mail out the requested items.

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The Wisconsin State Law Library (which is not a membership library) routinely bills attorneys, gov't agencies and other businesses for fax/mail/email copies. We create invoices and track payments using QuickBooks. Payment is due on receipt and we do not issue monthly statements. We do have to hound some people for past due invoices. General public customers must prepay.

We would love to do credit card payment, but startup costs are beyond our budget. We're hoping that maybe other WI Court depts., such as clerk's office and/or bar examiners office, might go credit card and then we could join together and share costs. But there is no talk of this happening any time soon.

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Prepayment is required for all document delivery. To expedite requests, the library will accept a faxed copy of a cashier's check or money order in the required amount as proof of payment.

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For regular photocopying our library contracts to have copy machines in our library. These machines will take change, ones and five dollar bills. They also accept a copy card which can be purchases from a machine. I will add that the machines make change but we no longer have a "change machine" in our library. Our public access computers (internet, westlaw, shepards, etc.) all print to one central printer. It does not have a coin box on it. We take cash/check/credit card payments from this copier at \$.50 per page. We also have a microfiche reader/printer. These copies are paid for as above when copying is completed. We also have a document delivery service. We require advance payment for this service. Usually this is done by credit card. We mail or fax specific citations. We do not do research work. We also collect money by cash, check or credit card for rental of conference rooms, book fines, lost books, etc. Our credit card system is very simple. Due to the low volume we do the card manually and call it in using the phone key

pad. We used to have an automated card machine for visa/MC payments but it proved too costly to maintain. Be careful if you contract for services; be sure you are going to generate enough business to support the system and the vendors costs. Avoid at all costs doing business with a company known as Leasecom. Know who you are dealing with before contracting. We deal with Union Bank here in California now but had a bad experience with the Leasecom company.

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The old fashioned way ~ we use Quickbooks to generate invoices and mail 'em out and keep mailing them out until we get paid! We charge an extra fee (\$3) for billing to encourage people to pay on site.

Contributed by:

John Pickett, Director
Johnson County Law Library
Courthouse, Room 101
100 North Kansas Ave.
Olathe, Kansas 66061