

How Law Librarians Can Assist District Attorneys

We provide full print sets of USCA, state and regional reporters, and other resources that their office doesn't have. Also subscriptions to Lexis and Westlaw.com that they use occasionally, and that may be more comprehensive than their office subscription.

Since we are a small and relatively quiet courthouse, their office also uses one of our library rooms occasionally to prepare witnesses or otherwise prepare for trial.

I hope this helps.

We notify them about new law review articles that may be of interest to them. One of our staff scans the table of contents for new law reviews and does this for other departments as well.

District Attorneys in Minnesota are called County Attorneys. I am the law librarian for the Anoka County Law Library, which is a northern county in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Our County Attorney is the chief legal advisor for the County (County Board) and is responsible for felony prosecutions in the county.

You asked how I give assistance to the County Attorney. First of all, he and his Chief Deputy serve as Trustees on the Anoka County Law Library Board of Trustees. The Board is comprised of seven members and includes a private attorney, a county commissioner and three judges. The County Attorney and his Chief Deputy have been active on the Board for over twenty years and share in the responsibility of the law library's success. Over the years, the county attorney and his assistants (approximately 40 attorneys) have used the law library frequently and are impressed with our holdings, services and reference assistance. I have also provided advice on the legal materials his office holds, as well as electronic services. When other county departments are in need of legal research help, many times they are referred to the law library, before they consult with an assistant county attorney from his office.

I would say that the law library's biggest contribution to the County Attorney and people who work for him, is continuing to provide quality legal research reference assistance when they are in need.

In New York City three out of the five county District Attorney's Offices have professional librarians. However, we all use the Court Libraries quite extensively.

Some of the things we use the court library for are:

- Transcripts of court proceedings
- Out of State Statutes (especially old pre-1990 statutes)
- Unpublished judicial opinions
- Legislative history contained in the personal files of retired judges
- Copies of defense briefs
- Old jury instructions

Since the court library has a much more extensive budget, we also borrow law reviews and treatises.

Time is of the essence for our attorneys. They don't have time to research and most of their time is spent in the courtroom.

The services we provide for our own attorneys are:

- Legal Research
- Backgrounding & locating witnesses
- Maintain an expert witness database

Maintain a brief bank
Maintain a predicate felony database (is a foreign states statute equivalent to a NY felony for enhanced penalties)
Current Awareness (new cases)
Investigating companies (we do alot of white collar)
Training (web, lexis and books)
Tracking cases and subject areas (black boxes for cars, identity theft)
Chat with ADAs and give them a shoulder to cry on.

Having worked at Legal Aid for five years, in New York you have to be sure that you don't show favoritism. You have to equally serve the DAs and the defense bar (especially, public defenders).

Hope this helps.

I have given presentations both for the Bar and for the Idaho Prosecutors' Association. My seminars cover CALR and library resources. Plus, we are located just blocks from the prosecutor's office, and the prosecutors are frequent library patrons.

The State's Attorney Office (the Illinois version of the DA) receives no more rights and privileges than any other patron of the library. The only "benefit" they have is when they check a book out of the library, all they have to do is sign it out on a clipboard, rather than have to scan the book and library card, etc. This one benefit is accorded to all people who work in the buidling (other governement offices, judges, public defenders, etc.).

The library is part of the administrative office of the court, so we are neutral as to our relationship with all of the other participants in the court system, whether SAO, PD, private attorney, or pro se litigant.

Laureen,

When we were all in the same building years ago they used us fairly frequently. Now we occasionally assist them with legal research, particularly when they are researching old Alabama statutes, but they have Westlaw and do not seem to need a lot of help.

The person in charge of their law library has asked for a little advice regarding their collection but he seems pretty competent own his own.

We recently began holding Westlaw classes and sent them a registration form. No one signed up for any classes but we intend to extend the invitation again in November.

We provide for their every information need.

My library staff and I order, barcode, catalog, deliver, supplement, file, discard, etc, all the print books that go in the DA library.

One part time staff member is assigned to file and upkeep their library as her primary "Other" duty. Occasionally we do a big inventory/clean outs in there to fix the inevitable mess. The DA also means the county detectives and the remote located police task forces. We serve them too.

We also process ALL county bills for books, but take the money from their line items.

I give the offices spending reports at budget time and suggest things to cancel if needed.

I provide all DAs (and PDs and all other Attorneys in Lehigh County) with Westlaw and Lexis passwords. I negotiate the flat rate county-wide online contracts, the funds are in the Law Library

budget and the attorneys in all offices use what we manage to give them. All password management issues and billing issues are mine.

All employees must go through me to get any thing OUTSIDE the flat rate plans. I also help them with research when they need it, show them how to use programs, discuss hard research issues, get hardcopy ILLs if they need them, etc. We also make their PDF files for federal court, solve their tech emergencies, provide them with JNET connections, training and passwords, (that's a PA law enforcement network we are in charge of), help them find people/witnesses...

They are on the same floor as we are, and now they need us to function! We picked them up as "bill processing clients" about 8 years ago, and now we work together on several things. I bet they would never go back to doing it themselves.

1. We hold info sessions for the public and always ask the DA's office to offer a rep to speak.
2. We distribute DA office brochures and publications
3. We helped draft sections of FAQ and info on the DA's website (still being updated)
4. We let DA staff and interns take resources and books to their office for copying rather than using our copier and billing them (they're just 2 floors up)

I guess that's it, other than making sure we stay in communication about services and info that we share.

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