

ASK A DIRECTOR

The Impact of COVID-19 on Organizations' Tech Plans

Question: How has COVID-19 impacted your organization's technology plan? Are you accelerating the adoption of AI technologies?



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Our world changed dramatically this year, and everything we thought we knew about work was suddenly inadequate as we shifted to working from home. At O'Melveny & Myers, we are using this time as an opportunity to innovate and rethink our goals. The firm's remote working group—which I am a member of—has been focused on finding new ways technology can improve our work and maintain our inclusive and collaborative culture.

Fortunately, the firm's technology infrastructure already supported a robust remote work environment, and omni, the firm's intranet platform, had extensive internal and external information about every client matter. IT was able to accelerate the implementation of new tools for video conferencing and online teamwork.

The firm has also worked hard at preserving our unique culture through virtual town hall meetings, diversity and inclusion discussions, cookie exchanges, and partner office hours. Internal teams, such as the Library, have held regular virtual team meetings to keep everyone engaged and in the loop.

I oversee both the Library and Records operations, and our biggest challenge was meeting the sudden demand for more online access to people, resources, and documents.

On the Records side, we are expanding the use of Relativity, an eDiscovery tool that utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) to speed up the records review process. We are creating a process to file more electronic documents

automatically, so our attorneys can quickly find them within ommni. Our staff also spent countless hours learning how to use these new technologies.

In the library, data analysis helped us better understand how our remote services and resources were being used, and the changes we made included:

- Creating targeted research guides
- Adjusting staff scheduling and balancing work loads
- Restructuring the on-boarding process
- Adding more direct links to the library catalog
- Providing easier access for mobile devices

- Automating the online resources (A to Z) list
- Shifting the majority of print titles to online-only format

While the future of COVID-19 is unknown, it is clear that some version of remote work is here to stay in most legal organizations. We are keeping an eye on new technologies that may help address the many challenges of remote work. For example, virtual reality conferencing may provide people with a stronger sense of connectedness and community, once it becomes a feasible option. Whatever efforts we put in now to understand and improve remote work will only help prepare us for the future.



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Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of North Texas – Dallas (UNT Dallas) College of Law was already in the vanguard of technology adoption for legal instruction, using Canvas as our course management system to tie together our lecture capture recordings, classroom response tools, and the secure student assessments that we administered using ExamSoft. We were also already using a recording service, Panopto, that could be connected to Canvas. Launching from this platform, our faculty were able to take flight with very short notice, delivering distance learning to our students.

The biggest change for the faculty, like that for nearly all law schools and everywhere else, was adding Zoom to the mix. Zoom raised challenges, such as how to get the correct login information to students for their many different classes, and faculty struggling to move videos over to Panopto. Zoom was overwhelmed and slow to provide Pro accounts. As the spring semester ended, planning moved to launching the fall semester, when life should be easier by our having integrated Zoom with Canvas and Panopto. Recordings made to the cloud will be automatically moved to the user's folder in Panopto,

which will allow us to move the recordings into their class folders quickly and easily. In addition, the Canvas integration provides easy and uniform access to remote class sessions.

One of the gaps identified concerning our students was reliable internet access. Using seed money from student technology fees, we subscribed to a cellular data service that provides Alcatel JOY TAB tablets to serve as Wi-Fi hotspots for our students with the most urgent need.

Another gap, from the faculty's point of view, is an audience response system separate from Zoom that can

be used by both in-person and remote students.

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have long been integrated into the delivery of legal information through research databases, such as Westlaw and LexisNexis products. The pandemic has led us to integrate multiple products and technologies, some of which include AI tools, into one platform, a trend in which Canvas has a solid lead. We are not, however, focusing on AI tools in particular.

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