

# STATE OF THE PROFESSION 2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
OF LAW LIBRARIES

# INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) represents over 3,600 law librarians and legal information professionals across a range of roles and organizations—including research librarians, chief knowledge officers, technical services librarians, law professors, and law library directors. While law librarians perform tasks such as researching, analyzing, and evaluating the quality, accuracy, and validity of sources; teaching and training; writing; managing; and procuring and classifying library materials, they are also technology leaders and innovators who play key roles in their organizations.

In its third edition, the *2023 AALL State of the Profession* report provides organizations and law librarians with the insights needed to understand the current legal information landscape, as well as prepare for the future. The report covers demographics, budgets, user services, collections, operations, technology, professional development, pipeline to the profession, and more. This edition highlights how law libraries in various organizations have bounced back following the pandemic, especially with respect to budgets and remote/in-person work. This report also includes information on diversity to assist organizations and individuals in assessing equity and inclusion in law librarianship.

The *2023 AALL State of the Profession* is available for purchase on AALLNET ([bit.ly/AALLSOTP](https://bit.ly/AALLSOTP)) and is available in digital, print, and a digital + print bundle. The report is 248 pages and includes full-color graphics as well as data tables.

This report has been made possible due to the dedicated efforts of the [AALL State of the Profession Report Committee](#). The Committee created customized surveys for each main law library type—academic, firm/corporate, and government—to address the services, accomplishments, and challenges within each group. The surveys were sent by email to AALL members and other designated parties in October 2022. **In total, 2,967 invitations were sent (1,328 Academic, 1,214 firm/corporate, and 393 government)**, three removals were requested, and 37 bounced. We received eight additional requests from individuals to participate from outside AALL's membership. The survey was conducted by Association Research, Inc., (ARI), an independent survey research firm specializing in serving nonprofit clients. The total number of potential participants was 2,935. **Of these, 635 completed the survey—representing a response rate of 21.6 percent.** Of the 635 respondents, 354 were in academic law libraries, 192 were from firm/corporate, and 89 were from government organizations. The information in this Summary includes key survey findings from each library type.

## ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES

We received **354 total responses (26.7%)** from people working in academic law libraries. Of these respondents, 50 percent work in public schools, while 50 percent work in private schools.

### Technology

Academic law libraries manage technology services essential for research, general operations, and communication. Overall, 70.6 percent are responsible for research platforms and databases and 54.4 percent administer the library's website. In addition, 45.6 percent oversee the integrated library system (ILS) and the library management system (LMS). Further, 10.3 percent supervise law practice technology case management systems and course management systems, while 4.4 percent manage classroom technology, and 2.9 percent update the law school website.

### Current Working Environment

Organizations developed different budgetary strategies to cope with the impact of the pandemic. Most law school budgets have remained the same (an average of 53.2%), however, 19.7 percent reported a decreased professional development budget, 29.9 percent saw a reduction in print materials, and 23.9 percent saw a decrease in collection development. Some academic law libraries reported a slight increase to personnel budget (31.3%), to the overall department budget (31.3%), and to their electronic resources budget (37.3%).

## FIRM/CORPORATE LAW LIBRARIES

We received **192 (15.8%)** responses from individuals working in firm/corporate law libraries. In total, 95.8 percent (184 responses) were from law firm libraries and 4.2 percent (8 responses) were from corporate law libraries/departments.

### Current Working Environment

Firms/corporations reported that the pandemic has impacted their organizations in the following ways: 74.6 percent permanently expanded remote working practices, 42.9 percent permanently reduced physical space, 23.8 percent created new services, and 20.6 percent reported staff took on additional responsibilities. A little over half (54%) reported their department had not been impacted.

### Pipeline to the Profession

For organizations looking to hire in the next two years, 77.8 percent indicated that new hires will need the following skills: legal research and knowledge management (55.6%), business intelligence and competitive intelligence (38.9%), and technical services (27.8%).

## GOVERNMENT LAW LIBRARIES

We received **89 (22.6%)** total responses from people working in government law libraries—with 41 from the county/municipal sector, followed by the state (34), and federal (8) sector. In addition, six responses were from those working in other types of government organizations.

### Public Services & Self-Represented Litigants

Government law libraries provide their expertise to courts, judges, agencies, and legislative bodies—and 86 percent of responding government law libraries serve the public. Government law libraries also play a crucial role in providing patrons with access to legal information, and many assist self-represented litigants, also known as pro se litigants. Overall 53 percent of surveyed law libraries provide a self-help center, 33.3 percent provide both educational programs and legal clinics, and 20 percent host a “Lawyer in the Library” (or similar) offering.

### Partnerships & Marketing

Government law libraries collaborate with a wide variety of organizations. More than half have established collaborative relationships with other government law libraries (69.4%), bar associations (55.6%), and other government agencies (36.1%). Additionally, they partner with universities (27.8%) and private law firms (11.1%). About 25 percent collaborate with other organizations.



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