

THE GO-TO PERSON: REFLECTIONS OF A SOLO LAW LIBRARIAN

One of the misconceptions about our field is that everything is online. I recently had my taxes done, and my job title was listed as Librarian.

I told the tax preparer that I work in the library of a law firm. He said, “Oh, I just get everything online.” I told him about obtaining case filings from the U.S. Tax Court by using runner services such as Lexis CourtLink or Westlaw Court Express, or by contacting the courts and speaking with clerks to obtain filings and dockets.



I’m not sure if I convinced him that there is more to a library than digital access, but he seemed to have a better understanding, at least from the point of view of tax lawyers, who must be knowledgeable about the law and regulations.

I have worked at other firms where I spoke to newly hired attorneys about the library. I mentioned the usual items—databases and cost-effective research—but I was trying to think of something more concrete, so I decided to talk about blogs. I explained the Supreme Court Blog and how you can set up real-time alerts to be notified about a case without having to use Lexis or Westlaw, which require a client/matter number. The students said they used this blog all the time in law school. It was very gratifying to connect with them and provide real examples of the library’s value, rather than describing it as just an abstract place with books.

When I started out in librarianship, I never imagined I would be working as a solo librarian. At first, I found the idea overwhelming, but library associations have been wonderful sources of ideas and support. I also get to use different skills, such as project management and database administration. Sometimes you have to be creative in answering a question because you don’t subscribe to a particular database. Other times, you provide the cost of the information and let people decide whether they want to purchase it. It’s great to be the go-to person at work. One of the best compliments I received was from a former co-worker. Someone was looking for something, and he said, “Call the library. She knows where to look and can provide it quickly.”

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