The CRIV Sheet

The Newsletter of the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors

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The Editor's Corner

As another CRIV year draws to a close and we reflect on all that has been accomplished in 1998–99, it is certainly gratifying to consider the relationships that have been forged over the past year. Not only has the CRIV itself coalesced as a Committee, but it has become a composite, if you will, of our lives as law librarians. As we have come together from various sectors of the country, we have been fortunate enough to realize, in the similarity of our professional experiences and the diversity of our private lives, that our world gets continually smaller. In addition to the close ties we have experienced as a Committee, we have succeeded in creating meaningful working relationships with many influential leaders in the legal publishing industry. Hopefully, these relationships will continue to benefit all of us, as we work toward greater cooperation and understanding of the value that each of us brings to our profession.

This final issue of *The CRIV Sheet* for 1998–99 is filled with tangible evidence of the hard work and dedication that has been demonstrated by the current Committee. In his "From the Chair" column, Frank Houdek reports on the presence of legal publisher representatives on the CRIV, the contributions they bring to our discussions, and the value of their insights. A sidebar to Frank's column is a list of CRIV membership guidelines which the committee has recently drafted. The CRIV is asking the AALL leadership to consider adopting these guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of the Committee in the future. Following Frank's column, the Committee as a whole reports on the recent site visit to LEXIS-NEXIS headquarters in Dayton, Ohio. In the Committee's opinion, this visit was a profitable undertaking, providing numerous opportunities for us to communicate the concerns and questions about LEXIS-NEXIS activities that had been forwarded to us by the AALL membership. My personal thanks to all CRIV members who compiled reports and got them to me in record time.

Immediately following the site visit report, Carl Mitchell addresses the related issue of state, court, and county law librarians' attitudes regarding being "underserved" by the legal publishing industry. These thoughts came as a result of the LEXIS-NEXIS site visit and discussions that arose in the CRIV meeting that followed. LEXIS personnel expressed their desire to address these issues as they continue to develop.

Susan Skyzinski, one of the publisher representatives on the CRIV, reports on the LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group and explains some of the development, history, and activities of this valuable resource group. Please use the contact information Susan has provided to reach the appropriate personnel whenever the need arises.

Following Susan's article, we have included print versions of two components of the current CRIVPage. Elizabeth Edinger has compiled Y2K Web sites from all legal publishers who currently have them available. Of course, these Web sites are "clickable" links from the CRIVPage, so we provide them here merely as added information, hoping that they might encourage you to access the CRIVPage and actually connect to these Web sites.

In addition to the Y2K piece, we have also included an article on the sample letters to publishers that have been compiled by Chris Graesser and Rosanne Krikorian. Chris and Rosanne have put a lot of time into designing templates for AALL members' correspondence with vendors, hoping that these tools will help to make theses tasks run more efficiently. These sample letters can also be viewed on the CRIVPage and we hope they will be used as shortcuts to communicating with legal information vendors whenever appropriate.

Besides Chris Graesser's excellent work on the sample letters, she continues to oversee the activities of the Complaint Resolution Subcommittee. This task remains one of the most difficult endeavors of our Committee, and the dedication which Chris and her Subcommittee continue to devote to this work is extremely important. Chris has provided an update on her group's work on these complaints, including a longer segment on the recent complaints involving West Group's shipping and handling practices.

The final piece is an abbreviated version of industry announcements that are posted on the CRIVPage. We hope AALL members will continue to use our Web page to access this information as well as all the other links and resources that are readily available on the CRIV Web site. Janeen Heath, CRIV Webmaster, works hard to keep all the information posted at this site as timely and accurate as is humanly possible. Please be sure to contact Janeen if you have questions, comments, or suggestions for enhancing this valuable resource.

The members of the CRIV and I hope that you find this issue informative, helpful, and encouraging as you continue your work with legal information providers. We should all bear in mind that none of the work we do takes place in a vacuum, that any problem or miss-communication we experience is likely happening on many other fronts. This realization should prompt all of us to communicate more thoroughly and effectively with one another, trusting that the better informed we all are, the better equipped our profession will be to meet the challenges of the future. I will continue my plea for interested authors to contact me, or any other member of the CRIV, if you have issues about which you would like to write. As always, happy reading!

From the Chair

Frank Houdek

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The CRIV has always walked a fine line, balancing the consumer advocacy needs of AALL members with its charge from the Executive Board to "facilitate communications between information vendors and the members of the Association..." Figuring out how to register a complaint or criticism without quickly shutting down the lines of communication—achieving this with publishers and librarians is almost as challenging as getting it done with one's children. I speak from long—and not always successful—experience with both.

In seeking to achieve this balance between advocacy and communication, one of the CRIV's strengths has long been AALL's commitment to having committees that represented a wide range of interests and experiences. This is most clearly manifested in the attempt of every president-elect to appoint committees that have balance between types of library representatives, but it also exists with respect to experience in the profession and previous service. The idea is that casting a wide net during the appointment process will ensure that diverse viewpoints will be brought to bear on matters handled by the committees.

In making his CRIV appointments for 1998–1999 last spring, then President-Elect Jim Heller went one step further by selecting three active AALL members who were employed by publishers to serve on the Committee. While not the first time that someone employed by a publisher has served on an AALL committee, it was definitely a first for the CRIV. While some may have questioned the appointments, Heller's thinking was simple: the performance of a committee charged with facilitating communications between librarians and publishers could only be enhanced by the addition of individuals bringing a key perspective to the group's work that would not otherwise be available to the committee—that of the publisher.

After nearly a year's experience chairing a committee that included both librarians and individuals employed by publishers (all three of whom are former law librarians) as members, I can say without hesitation that Heller was right. Our work in many areas—creating CRIV Tools, developing the CRIVPage, conducting site visits, just to name a few—was aided by the full participation of these individuals. They worked just as hard and were just as sincere in their support of library- and AALL-related goals as any of the other members of the Committee. This did not come as a surprise to me and, truth be told, I seldom thought of them as anything other than fully-engaged CRIV members.

While working in this environment, however, it became clear that the CRIV (and perhaps other AALL committees) needed to explicitly state—and affirm—the principles by which the Committee and *all* its members operated. Dealing with a subject matter as sensitive as publisher relations, it was important to clarify expectations, both as to Committee makeup and to member participation. On March 26, 1999, the Committee did just that, adopting CRIV "Member Participation Guidelines," effective immediately. At this writing, they stand as internally adopted rules to which the CRIV will adhere. However, the Committee has forwarded the guidelines to the AALL Executive Board for its own consideration. To assure AALL members that the CRIV will continue to work in their best interests, the CRIV Member Participation Guidelines are published elsewhere in this issue of *The CRIV Sheet.*

I would be remiss if I ended this column, my last as CRIV chair for 1998–1999, without saluting each and every member of the Committee for their outstanding work this year. The CRIV has accomplished much—introducing CRIVAlerts, CRIVGrams, CRIV Tools, and a revitalized CRIVPage; conducting two intensive site visits; preparing three full issues of *The CRIV Sheet;* initiating the new CRIVNotes column in the *AALL Spectrum;* organizing two programs at the Annual Meeting in Washington; participating in the review of the *FTC Guides for the Law Book Industry*—but what really amazes me is that it was done by people who also work full-time jobs and maintain active and fulfilling personal lives. This is a special group of people and I am so pleased to have had the chance to work with them this year.

AALL Committee on Relations with Information Vendors Member Participation Guidelines

Adopted by the CRIV, March 26, 1999

The CRIV provides the Association and its members a variety of experiences and points of view pertaining to publisher relations. Thus CRIV members may be appointed from all categories of Association members.

CRIV membership may include up to three individuals appointed from the publishing community but the total should not exceed 20% of the Committee's membership.

CRIV members are appointed on a rotating basis to ensure geographic representation and equity and balance among members employed by different types and sizes of libraries and publishers.

CRIV members submit a statement that discloses any relationships with publishers that may affect the deliberations of the Committee. They also avoid inappropriate activities and recuse themselves from decision-making or voting on specific issues where they may have a conflict of interest.

The CRIV represents the interests of all law librarians. CRIV members do not represent nor advocate for the particular benefit of any one publisher.

The CRIV Chair uses his or her best judgment and discretion in appointing members to subcommittees and particular tasks, to avoid any real or perceived bias or conflict of interest.

LEXIS-NEXIS Site Visit

Introduction

On March 24–26, 1999, the CRIV conducted its second site visit of 1998–1999 by meeting with executives and others from all parts of the LEXIS-NEXIS Group at LEXIS-NEXIS headquarters in Dayton, Ohio. Although substantial parts of the company are situated in other parts of the country, the visit included discussion of issues pertaining not only to LEXIS Online, but also to Matthew Bender, Lexis Law Publishing, Shepard's, and Martindale-Hubbell.

The CRIV was pleased that open, free-flowing discussions throughout the day involved not only executives of the highest level in LEXIS-NEXIS, but also individuals who were directly responsible for particular areas of operation such as customer service, sales, and editorial. The CRIV came to the visit armed with a lengthy list of specific questions and comments that it had collected from law librarians around the country. The questions served as the basis for an excellent dialogue between CRIV members and LEXIS-NEXIS, especially during small-group meetings focusing on the online and off-line components of the business, but the discussion also expanded to include broad topics of interest to the whole profession.

The reports and articles that follow attempt to share the site visit experience with readers by describing many of the specific things that CRIV members learned during a most productive visit. However, perhaps the most important piece of information to pass on to AALL members is how committed LEXIS-NEXIS is to working with librarians to improve both its products and its services. It was clear to the Committee that the opinions of all librarians were highly valued and that the comments or questions of those who had specific problems would be particularly welcomed. This was good news to the CRIV and we are pleased to pass this encouragement along to all AALL members.

Integration

One area of interest to the committee in light of the recent acquisitions by the LEXIS-NEXIS group was the current organizational structure of the company and how integration is being handled. This topic was addressed early on in the site visit by both Hans Gieskes, President and CEO of LEXIS-NEXIS, and Paul Brown, President and CEO of Matthew Bender. They both made it made clear that LEXIS-NEXIS has begun the process of combining the work of the several "off-line" publishers it now owns (e.g., Lexis Law Publishing, Matthew Bender) and is determining how to integrate the entire set of companies into a logical whole. According to Gieskes and Brown, LEXIS-NEXIS is being very deliberate in approaching the effort, trying to learn from the experiences of others in the publishing industry about what has worked and what has not. Its goal is to develop procedures for customers that are as effective and efficient as possible, but without losing or interfering with methods that are already working well.

These integration activities touch all departments and responsibilities within the companies that comprise LEXIS: Matthew Bender, Lexis Law Publishing, and Shepard's. It was stated on several occasions that integration was "underway" but far from complete. Consequently, CRIV members discovered that this was a particularly opportune time to give input on what law librarians prefer in such areas as customer service and ordering/billing. The company representatives in attendance paid particular attention to these messages and indicated that these recommendations would be given full consideration as the integrated company and its procedures are evolved.

The process has begun in the LEXIS-NEXIS organization to integrate the sales, billing, and customer services activities of Lexis Law Publishing, Matthew Bender, and Shepard's. (For Matthew Bender and Shepard's, the integration began during the joint venture days with Times Mirror.) LEXIS-NEXIS plans a gradual integration process and hopes it will not be too fast for its customers.

Within the LEXIS-NEXIS group, Congressional Information Services Inc., Marquis, Martindale-Hubbell, and National Register Publishing, etc., currently remain as sister companies. There is no immediate plan to integrate these companies with Lexis Law Publishing, Matthew Bender, and Shepard's.

Major Issues (Print Products)

Customer Service

Librarians have criticized the apparent lack of training received by the company representatives answering the customer service line. LEXIS-NEXIS has experienced a great deal of turnover due to internal growth and opportunity for customer service representatives, which in turn affects the level of experience a typical representative will have. To resolve some of the customer service problems, the company is creating a structure which will allow employees the opportunity for advancement, thus providing them with an incentive to stay with the company longer. The company already employs "senior service representatives" who can provide a higher level of service should a problem be more complex than the phone representative is trained to handle. The size of this "senior service" workforce will be increased as current staff are trained and receive skill certification.

LEXIS-NEXIS is consolidating the Matthew Bender and Lexis Law Publishing (formerly Michie) billing and shipping functions. This involves combining the databases of the two entities, and as anyone who has dealt with upgrades and conversions (not to mention Y2K considerations) knows, it takes time for all the systems to run smoothly. The company is striving to make sure problems are caught before the conversion, for which we all will be grateful in the end. Meanwhile, the customer service reps have to work with a database that does not always provide satisfactory results. The CRIV made several suggestions for improving customer service, such as a protocol to handle more complex complaints, and assigning some sort of number to particular problems to aid in tracking.

The company is also initiating a Large Account Management Program to assist larger libraries, which presumably have more complex billing and other problems. Each customer library will be assigned a single customer service representative to handle its account. The emphasis of this group is to provide personalized, proactive service to these larger accounts.

In dealing with Matthew Bender and LLP customer service, the CRIV recommends that customers insist on talking to a more senior representative if the phone representative with whom they are speaking does not seem to have the answer. If that fails, contact the CRIV's Complaint Resolution Subcommittee. LEXIS-NEXIS will provide "escalation" contact numbers to the CRIV, to be given out at their discretion. Problems needing this level of attention should be referred to the Complaint Resolution Subcommittee.

Shipping

Shipping operations for Matthew Bender and Lexis Law Publishing are being consolidated, hopefully resulting in fewer mistakes. The company has initiated a "zero defects initiative" which aims to significantly reduce printing and shipping errors.

Unfortunately for customers of overseas publications from the likes of Butterworths UK, shipping has reverted from Lexis Law Publishing back to the original publisher. This may slow the shipping time and can pose problems if a subscribing library needs to contact the publisher. LEXIS-NEXIS executives were not able to provide any concrete assistance with this difficulty, but CRIV members asked them to consider providing a U.S. telephone number where librarians could call to report problems with their foreign accounts.

Some customers have received material from subscriptions that had long ago been canceled. The company attributed most of these errors to titles acquired from other publishers. The lists for those titles were not always accurate, hence the errors.

Finally, the picky but pesky adhesive problem. Some customers objected to Lexis Law Publishing's use of cellophane tape to attach invoices to shipping boxes, preferring the method of gluing the envelope to the package used by other publishing companies. Lexis Law Publishing is exploring other packaging methods, which will require some changes in its packaging equipment.

Editorial Problems

Many librarians have experienced the odd Matthew Bender index which refers to nonexistent pages. The company recently initiated an index validation process that double-checks references for accuracy, so hopefully this problem will cease. If customers have problems with the content or index of MB publications, contact information for the editors is provided on the copyright page of every publication.

Add-Ons

The topic of add-ons was the result of recent shipments of unsolicited material. One example of this kind of publication is the *Maryland Mini Citator.* The initial discussion centered around how the LEXIS-NEXIS representatives perceived what they referred to as "product enhancements." They reported receiving positive responses from certain sectors of the market—e.g., solo practitioners or small firms—indicating the popularity of these publications. However, CRIV members informed them that many larger libraries felt these materials duplicated publications to which they already subscribe. There was some discussion, led by CRIV members, in which they related how some law librarians process these product enhancements in their respective organizations. The LEXIS-NEXIS representatives admitted that they had not considered the fact that these publications necessitate additional staff hours for cataloging and processing.

The CRIV's suggested recommendations regarding add-ons were:

1. Notify accounts before automatically sending them. Let each library decide whether it wishes to receive add-ons.
2. If an item is sent, have the invoice reflect it as a separate item. This would make it easy to mark it for return and deduct the cost from the payment.
3. Indicate in the system when the item is returned and when there is an indication to cancel future shipments of this particular title only. In other words, do not cancel the entire state code set because of the return of one of the product enhancements.

Pricing and Billing

CRIV members raised several issues concerning the pricing and billing of LEXIS-NEXIS print products. They were told that LEXIS-NEXIS did not expect prices to increase significantly in the coming year. Percentage increases will probably be somewhere close to the rate of inflation. However, librarians attempting to predict the cost of their Shepard's subscriptions should take note of the following caveat. Since Shepard's *Citators* have not received substantial revisions for some two to three years (after a period in which many of the citators, in rapid succession, underwent expensive revisions), the citators are now due for such treatment to eliminate multiple steps in the Shepardizing process.

LEXIS-NEXIS outlined the different billing plans available to customers. Most Matthew Bender, Shepard's, and Lexis Law Publishing (LLP) print products can be billed and paid for as each supplement, release, pocket-part, etc. is issued by the publisher and received by the customer. However, annual billing plans are also available. Customers are able to have the combined annual cost for all their Matthew Bender subscriptions calculated, and then pay this total with a one-time payment each year, or be billed and pay one-twelfth of this total each month. The same is true for a customer's Shepard's subscription. The same is also true for a customer's Lexis Law Publishing subscriptions with the added wrinkle of "product dependent billing." Because of regulations of several state governments for which Lexis Law Publishing publishes annotated codes, LLP cannot compute in advance, with 100% accuracy, the cost to the customer of a year's worth of supplementation to the state codes. For this reason, customers opting for annual billing for Lexis Law Publishing subscriptions face a year-end "clean-up" charge (or credit) for their state code subscriptions.

CRIV members also brought to the attention of LEXIS-NEXIS officers problems AALL members have been experiencing with statements and invoices. These problems have included abbreviations for titles that even customer service representatives could not interpret. CRIV members stressed that titles appearing on billing documents should be stated in an intelligible and unambiguous manner, and customer service representatives should be able to interpret all abbreviations found on invoices and statements. LEXIS-NEXIS officers were also told of the frustration that arises when payments are applied to invoices other than those the party remitting payment intended. Librarians do not want payments to be applied to oldest invoices first when documentation enclosed with a check clearly shows to which invoices the payment should be applied. For their part, LEXIS-NEXIS officers asked that librarians call as soon as possible to have errors appearing on invoices and statements corrected and not let mistakes hang on for several months before contacting the company to have them corrected.

Major Issues (Electronic Products)

Advertisements

The CRIV raised the issue of delivering advertisements and gimmicks that have little or no educational value to law schools. LEXIS executives believe that they must engage in this over-abundant form of advertising to remain competitive in the current market, but expressed a desire to supply materials that would help students make informed choices about an information provider. LEXIS even seems to welcome an effort by law school librarians to stop the distribution of questionable materials from all publishers to pressure the industry into uniformly supplying more informative handouts to the students.

Y2K

The latest versions of the LEXIS-NEXIS proprietary software have been tested and certified Y2K compliant. These versions of the software, and a list of products retired because of non-compliance, are available from the LEXIS Web site (http://www.lexis-nexis.com/y2k/).

Customer Service

In the area of customer service, LEXIS has made a serious attempt to improve both the quantity and quality of its customer service representatives. With the soft job market, it has been a struggle to find the type of employee that LEXIS demands. Every service representative is required to have a college degree. Presently, over forty percent of the representatives have at least one advanced degree. Every service representative must go through a rigorous training period of eight weeks before being allowed to field live telephone calls. Even after this initial training, no representative is just turned out. Each sits with a coach until both the new service representative and the coach are satisfied with the representative's abilities to answer questions and provide the correct answer.

Training does not stop with the eight-week course. At any given time, twenty five percent of the customer service representative pool is in on-going training. LEXIS has also brought up a new Web-based knowledge base that allows representative's to search a continually expanding database for problem-solving answers. As of now, each service representative has also been trained in the new Universe product. If you cannot seem to get the answer that you are looking for from the initial service representative, Scott Brown, senior director of customer service, recommends that you ask for a supervisor. Supervisors are experienced customer service representatives who have been given increased responsibilities. Each customer service representative has been trained to pass on difficult questions to a supervisor and will not take it as an insult if a customer asks for a supervisor.

LEXIS has also made strides in expanding the job description of its customer service representatives. After three years of experience, additional duties and assignments are given to customer service representatives to allow them to broaden their work experience while still retaining the best employees for work in customer service. As much as fifty percent of a senior service representative's work can be outside the customer service arena. By expanding job opportunities, LEXIS executives are quite sure that the best representatives will remain within the umbrella of customer service and continue what LEXIS hopes is a tradition of high quality customer service.

Software: Web vs. Proprietary

Last Autumn, LEXIS introduced a Web browser version of software in addition to its proprietary software. In the past year, instruction has generally been given on this Web version and not on the proprietary software. Law librarians sent a number of e-mail messages to the CRIV, raising issues about the Web-based and software versions of LEXIS. Members of the CRIV spent a whole day with top executives at LEXIS discussing the law librarians' concerns about these online products.

First of all, some law librarians have had difficulties obtaining passwords for the Web version through Service Express. Jo McDermott (Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness) explained that new passwords for Web-based LEXIS and for the proprietary software are created in different systems. The former take 30 minutes to create, whereas passwords for LEXIS software can be created almost instantaneously. This difference in systems has also meant that passwords are not necessarily interchangeable between the two versions. She told the CRIV that LEXIS is also working on resolving this problem.

LEXIS executives told the CRIV that they are focusing on the Web version of their product because "the Internet is the future." The CRIV told the executives that law librarians are concerned about this attitude, since some libraries are not technologically equipped to search exclusively on the Web-based product. Some researchers prefer the proprietary software over the Web version for various reasons, including the fact that "power users" can find information more quickly on the software.

The LEXIS executives addressed this issue by informing the CRIV that they are trying to integrate some of the software features into the Web-based product. For example, the Web version uses "sources" rather than libraries and files. LEXIS is working to make the libraries and files available in the Web version. Command stacking and dot commands are some other features that LEXIS is also trying to integrate into its Web version.

Billing in the Web version is an issue for many firm librarians. The proprietary software allows for either hourly or transactional pricing. LEXIS has difficulty with hourly billing in the Web version because the company can only detect when the system is processing a query. LEXIS is working on finding a solution to this problem.

Additional problems that the CRIV discussed with the executives included: problems involved with entering client billing information into the Web-based product; difficulties with printing to a stand-alone printer from LEXIS on the Web; and "links that go nowhere" on the Web-based version. LEXIS asked questions about the nature of these problems, and the LEXIS executives promised to research the issues.

Organization

LEXIS-NEXIS adds 3.3 million documents per day, which equals roughly 23.4 million a week. The editorial department employs over 300 staff members who are responsible for editing and adding data to the system. Users of the LEXIS-NEXIS service total subscribers is 1.6 million and serves more than .8 million active subscribers.

Sales Representatives

A LEXIS-NEXIS customer now may have one sales representative for Lexis Law Publishing, Matthew Bender, and Shepard's and another for LEXIS-NEXIS. The company is developing a new plan of having separate representatives for its online (LEXIS-NEXIS) and off-line (print and CD-ROM) products. Both representatives may report to the same regional manager. The online representative will be skilled in training for online services, and the off-line representative will be knowledgeable about Lexis Law Publishing, Matthew Bender, and Shepard's products. CRIV members believe that academic or large law firm librarians will prefer the two-representatives arrangement, one for online and one for off-line, but small law firm librarians may prefer one sales representative. In either case, law librarians appreciate competent and knowledgeable sales representatives. LEXIS-NEXIS plans to invest in training to ensure this result.

Conclusion

LEXIS-NEXIS made a major commitment to the CRIV and to AALL members generally by having various executives in attendance at the discussions and informal sessions over the two days the Committee spent with the company. It was clear that this site visit was just as important to LEXIS-NEXIS as it was to the CRIV.

The CRIV would like to express its sincere appreciation to Holley Thompson (LEXIS-NEXIS Senior Director of Strategic Customer Alliances) and Cindy Spohr (LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group) for making all the arrangements that contributed to making this site visit a success. Their tireless efforts at scheduling the appropriate LEXIS-NEXIS personnel and seeing that all of the CRIV's concerns were addressed helped significantly in the committee's achieving its intended goals. We would also like to express special thanks to the Site Visit Subcommittee, chaired by Elizabeth Rhodes. Elizabeth and her committee, including Frosty Owen and Janet Reinke, went to great lengths to assure that the meeting ran smoothly. The success of CRIV site visits ultimately depends upon the concerted efforts of all the parties involved, and we are grateful for all the assistance that has been provided, including that of all our AALL colleagues.

Are You Being Served?

Carl E. Mitchell

Community Legal Services, Inc. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

There are many different kinds of law libraries. This fact is obvious to law librarians. The CRIV site visit to LEXIS presented an excellent opportunity to examine the conundrum presented by the existence of law libraries that have novel purposes and organization. Very often in the world of legal information, segments of the law library community are underserved and overlooked by publishers and legal information vendors. These libraries, as well as the respective librarians, receive disparate treatment because of their remote locations, or their attachments to government entities, or because of the nature of their clientele. Marketing services, training, and customer support for these libraries vary greatly from the treatment given to their more traditional counterparts in law firms and law schools.

Marketing and support for two types of libraries were discussed during the site visit. Specifically, we examined those issues as they relate to state, court, and government libraries as well as libraries that are dedicated solely to the public interest community.

State/Government Libraries

State, court, and government law libraries are often victims of mischaracterization. Certain incidental factors help foster this errant portrayal—such as the library's procurement process and the fact that the courts themselves are sources of material for publishers. The courts' law libraries are generically classified as government libraries with no regard to the fact that they are specialized legal research facilities. These libraries are excluded from announcements about innovations in technology, opportunities to participate in training programs, and other functions that are advantageous to the legal researcher. The paucity of dissemination of information hinders the research process.

The overall library market is generally serviced by two divisions of the company: LEXIS, the portion that manages law firm and law school accounts, and NEXIS, the division that services corporate and governmental entities. The CRIV discussed the possible resolutions to the problematic profiling of these libraries. Several proposals are under consideration. Among them, there is overall agreement that all libraries that are related specifically to law should be serviced through the LEXIS unit, its specialized customer service, and support persons.

Public Interest Law Libraries

Another overlooked group of the library community are those that serve nonprofit organizations: public interest law firms, and *pro bono* institutions. Libraries for the impoverished and disenfranchised are often as underrepresented as their patronage.

Organizations in this sector would encourage publishers to increase their charitable support and establish pricing policies that are non-profit friendly. However, there is sensitivity to the nature of corporate economics; no one is advocating that these conglomerates degrade their bottom line by indiscriminately squandering resources. Librarians who work in these organizations tend to develop expertise at doing more with less. However, there are ways to ease the burdens of these librarians, who work with limited staff and tight budget constraints, that have minimal costs to the publisher. LEXIS, for example, agreed to investigate opportunities that are mutually beneficial to societal interests as well as its corporate identity.

Under established practice, LEXIS allows students who have public interest placements during the September through May school year to have *pro bono* access to its online services; however, this practice does not extend to students who fulfill their public interest requirements during the summer. Although they do not take place in the classroom setting, these positions are often required activities. Since LEXIS's established policy is to support public interest work, extending that policy to keep through the other three months of the year for some students seems logical. The student benefits by having resources available for research and learning. Additional benefits accrue to the organization, the community, and quite possibly a client who may otherwise have been turned away. Moreover, as the student goes on to practice in the fee-generating world and draws on the learning experiences, LEXIS benefits.

Additionally, LEXIS offers *pro bono* grants of time for certain public interest research. Access to the services with these grants is available only by using its proprietary software. As LEXIS continues to put product development resources into the browser environment, it seems expedient that it extend the use of this *pro bono* time to access Internet resources.

To focus greater attention on those libraries that are not afforded the greatest attention, LEXIS is considering re-segmenting market strategies so that one person would represent libraries in all market segments. This blended sales person will have the flexibility to attend to smaller and nontraditional law libraries and to travel to geographically remote locations. Librarians are also encouraged to take advantage of the amply available telephone training and materials that are available on various LEXIS Web sites.

The CRIV will continue to be a conduit to encourage publishers and vendors to recognize and support these libraries. Ideally, providers of legal information will confer to these libraries levels of support and training, accessibility options, and problem reconciliation resources that are similar to those that are abundantly available to our colleagues in more traditional libraries.

Are you being served? If you would like to share experiences about your library, especially if you work in a public interest or governmental organization, please contact Carl Mitchell by e-mail at cmitchell@clsphila.org or by fax at 215/981-0434.

Susan Skyzinski

LEXIS-NEXIS Regional Information Manager
Dallas, Texas

LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group

Overview

The LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group is entering its fifth year of working with the law librarian community. Its mission is to build strong, long-term relationships with librarians in legal settings and professional services firms, focusing on in-depth product training, professional development, and support of professional associations.

LEXIS-NEXIS established the Librarian Relations Group because it recognized that librarians require more in-depth information on the content and functionality of the databases than do other information users. In addition, the company recognized the importance of working cooperatively with national and regional library associations.

The Librarian Relations Group currently consists of 19 members. Seven are Dayton-based and are responsible for management and development of programs, newsletters, a Web site, and educational materials for librarians. The remaining staff members are "Regional Information Managers," or librarian liaisons, located throughout the country.

Headquarters

All members of the management staff of the Librarian Relations Group have earned a master's of library science degree, have previous experience in law library settings and have been active participants in the library profession for many years.

The headquarters staff is responsible for developing and implementing communication to and programs for the librarian community. This includes working with AALL and other law librarian associations on sponsorships and product demonstrations at national, local, and regional meetings and conferences.

Recent activities of the Librarian Relations Group include jointly underwriting with the PLL SIS, participating in the development of the *AALL Resource Guides* series, and participating in the educational program, the vendor area, and providing sponsorships at several Chapter meetings.

In addition to working with associations, the staff plans national educational conferences, such as Teaching Research in Private Law Libraries (TRIPLL), Teaching Research in Academic Law Libraries (TRIALL), and Advanced Management for Private Law Librarians (AMPLL). Many AALL members have taken advantage of opportunities to participate in these programs during the past several years.

The Dayton-based staff also works to ensure that the newest information on the company's products and services reaches librarians, by producing the monthly *LEXIS-NEXIS Information Professional Update.* The latest addition to this information support activity is a new Web site designed specifically for information professionals (http://infopro.lexis.com). The site includes a monthly column on professional and product issues, weekly research tips, new LEXIS-NEXIS features, downloadable reference materials, and database updates. Users can conduct searches and citations research directly from the site. In addition, a sidebar feature allows librarians to select from among a dozen frequently requested, pre-formatted searches, and conduct a search with only a few clicks of a mouse.

Regional Information Managers

The Librarian Relations Group includes 12 Regional Information Managers (RIMs), or librarian liaisons, strategically placed across the country. All members of this team have earned a master's of library science and have experience in law firm, law school, or professional services firms.

RIMs specifically focus on the information needs of librarians. As LEXIS-NEXIS product experts, they work day-to-day to meet librarians' unique information needs. For instance, RIMs provide individualized consulting on database usage, library marketing strategies, and the latest information technology and products. They also act as liaisons between the librarian community and product and technical development groups at LEXIS-NEXIS headquarters, communicating the needs and ideas of librarians. RIMs also take an active role in their local communities by providing professional development opportunities and participating in association activities.

Communication

The LEXIS-NEXIS Librarian Relations Group is interested in comments, feedback, and suggestions from the entire librarian community and has provided a number of mechanisms for communication, including:

> Librarian Web site (http://infopro.lexis.com): This site includes information on the entire group and how to contact individuals within the group.
>
> E-mail: info.pro@lexis-nexis.com
>
> Voicemail: 800/227-9597, ext. 5148

Y2K Compliance–Is your library ready for 01-01-2000?

Elizabeth Edinger

University of California
School of Law Library
Berkeley, California

Y2K Readiness Disclosure Act (PL 105–271)

> "An act to encourage the disclosure and exchange of information about computer processing problems, solutions, test practices and test results, and related matters in connection with the transition to the year 2000." (P.L. 105–271, official title as passed in the U.S. Senate, October 19, 1998)

In an ongoing effort to help connect law librarians to vendor information, the CRIV has been collecting Web site URLs for year 2000 disclosure and/or compliance statements. All of the links are created, written, and maintained by the publishers. As a Committee, we are not guaranteeing the accuracy of the information, nor are we able to review each site beyond a few brief notes about what one might find there. Our goal is to make the information more easily available, and to encourage vendors to supply concrete, useful data about their products in anticipation of Y2K questions. We invite librarians and vendors to provide us with additional links and annotations not listed here. If you find a dead link, please inform the Webmaster.

ABA—http://www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/2000/y2kmisc.html
ABA's information page and toll-free phone number.

The toll-free Y2K phone number is 888/USA-4-Y2K. This toll-free number will offer recorded advice 24 hours a day on frequently asked questions and have experts available for additional information from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday.

Aspen—http://www.aspenpub.com/Y2000.htm
A general, undated compliance statement. There is neither a list of products by title, nor any contact listed for Y2K-specific questions. The stated goal is that all the programs will be compliant by the end of the first quarter of 1999.

BNA—http://www.bna.com/corp/y2kcdcmp.htm
The disclosure statement is set up as a FAQ. Products are generally listed by platform (CD-ROM, Windows, Web) rather than by title. A link is provided to the disclosure statement for Folio. The statement is dated December 1998. An e-mail link to customer services is also provided.

Butterworths—http://www.butterworths.co.uk/content/y2k/compliance.htm
A general, undated compliance statement. There is a list of products, but it is not specific as to which are certified as compliant and which are not. There is an assurance that the products will be tested, but no time frame is given. No contact is listed for Y2K-specific questions.

CCH—http://www.cch.com/y2kcomp.htm
Information is set up as a FAQ, but it is undated and does not list specific products. No contact information is given. Updates to this information will be through an announcement or the Web site.

Gale Group—http://www.gale.com/gale/techsupp/techcare.html
The date of last update to the page is prominently listed at the very top of the document. CD-ROM products can be checked by title by following a hypertext link on the page. No other titles are listed, but there is a note that affected customers will be notified of non-compliance; how is not specified. Both an e-mail and a U.S. postal address are given for customers to contact the vendor with Y2K questions.

General Code Publishers—http://www.generalcode.com/y2k.html
No date is given on the page to tell the customer when it was last updated, but there are links to the compliance statements of other software vendors that would be used in conjunction with the products, and an e-mail and U.S. postal address for customers to contact the vendor with Y2K questions.

Gould—http://www.gouldlaw.com/y2k statement.txt
A simple disclosure statement, dated February 22, 1999, to let customers know that all of the electronic software is compliant. There is no listing of contacts for customer questions.

Information Access—http://www.informationaccess.com/y2k/index.htm
[connects to Gale Group page]

LEXIS-NEXIS—http://www.lexis–nexis.com/y2k/Presidentletter.asp
In addition to the undated statement from the President, there are links to a FAQ, schedule for remediation, product list, and a list of retired products. An e-mail address is provided for customers with Y2K questions.

Matthew Bender—http://www.bender.com/bender/open/Webdriver?MItab=WebPages&MIval=faq_y2k
Product line updates are available, along with a current status and schedule (all undated). Links are provided to Capsoft and LEXIS-NEXIS. No contact is listed for customers with Y2K questions.

NILS Publishing—http://www.nils.com/2000.htm
A general compliance statement is provided, and a link by which one can e-mail the company's Y2K Compliance Administrator.

Ovid Technologies—http://www.ovid.com/support/y2k.htm
A schedule of the company's Y2K project, with a summary of changes and progress to date is posted, with the date of the last time the page was revised.

Reed Elsevier—http://www.r–e.com/y2k.htm
A simple disclosure statement, without specific titles/products listed. An e-mail address is listed to someone in the company to whom Y2K question may be directed.

RIA Group—http://www.riatax.com/y2k/index.htm
The site is divided into a FAQ, update on the project (undated), and a contact for customers with Y2K questions. No products are specifically listed.

Shepard's—http://www.shepards.com/helpcite/refdesk/y2k.htm
Brief statement of compliance, undated and without a products list. Customers are informed that a letter will be sent to those affected when testing is complete.

Tax Analysts—http://www.tax.org/about/tay2k.htm
A copy of the federal legislation is provided, along with the company's statement, its definition of readiness, project overview, and the project's status. Information about whom to contact with question can be found by following the link to project overview.

West Group—http://www.westgroup.com/newsinfo/year2000/
The site offers a FAQ, disclosure statement, project information, and a compliance chart for specific titles listing them as compliant, retired, or usable. West also offers a brief summary of its contingency plans. A Y2K-specific e-mail address is available for customers with questions, or the general 800 number.

Sample Letters Now Available on the CRIVPage

Chris Graesser

Brown Rudnick
Freed & Gesmer
Hartford, Connecticut

Rosanne Krikorian

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Costa Mesa, California

Introduction
The CRIV has drawn up a collection of sample letters which law librarians can use as a guide for their own correspondence with publishers. A list of the letters that are currently available is provided at the end of this article. These letters can be accessed on the CRIVPage Web site (http://www.aallnet.org/committee/criv/crivtools/html). The language can be used verbatim, or tailored to fit specific circumstances. Often a streamlined version of these letters will produce the desired result. The CRIV will continue to add to this list of sample letters as the need for others arises.

Time savers
You don't have to take the time to write an original letter for most problem correspondence. Try doing the following:

Have on file **preprinted letters** for the most common forms of correspondence, such as cancellations, unsolicited material or routine returns. Then you can simply fill in the blanks and mail.

Keep **templates** in your word processing program which you can edit and print.

The CRIV suggests that in communicating with information vendors, librarians do the following:

- **Check all the facts** available to you in-house, including library and accounts payable records, and the recollections of library and accounting staff who have worked on the matter.
- **Gather all documentation** and use it in your communications. Crucial information to include would be account and invoice numbers.
- **Use at least two forms of communication.** Send a letter by mail, by fax, and e-mail, contact your local sales representative (when appropriate) as well as customer service.
- Try to **address your correspondence to a specific individual** or position title, if you are able to ascertain the name or position of the person in the vendor's organization most likely to be able to solve your problem.
- **Keep the tone of the communication objective.** It is possible to tell a company that you have been inconvenienced and that you would like the problem to be corrected without getting personal or sarcastic (as tempting as that may be).
- **Keep copies of all correspondence,** with the most recent on top. This includes e-mail.
- **Take notes** on all phone conversations with customer service reps and sales reps. Note the date, time, the name of the rep, questions asked and answered, and any promised action.
- Consider keeping a **publisher log.** This is a master record of conversations, correspondence, and decisions made in regard to a particular vendor situation.
- **Allow time** for a company to sort out a problem. Two weeks is not unreasonable, unless the problem is severe or has been unresolved in the past.
- Allow for the possibility that **correspondence may get lost** (see "Using at least two forms of communication" above) or simple human error may occur.
- The CRIV has observed that **written correspondence** tends to get more satisfactory results than phone calls.

Sample Letters: Contents

The CRIV Complaint Resolutions Subcommittee

Chris Graesser

Brown Rudnick Freed & Gesmer Hartford, Connecticut

Since the Complaint Resolution Subcommittee began monitoring law-lib and other law librarian listservs, the number of complaints it has addressed has increased tenfold. While the number of complaints has grown, the response time in many cases has been reduced to a matter of days (on a good day, hours). While it isn't possible to relate every single complaint resolution in this brief article, it is possible to present a glimpse of the types of requests that are being handled and the resolutions the Committee has been able to bring about.

CCH Internet Pricing

A member posted a complaint to the effect that she was not able to get a clear answer from CCH regarding its Internet pricing. The CRIV contacted Leslie Bonacum, Library Liaison at CCH. Leslie was able to provide an explanation of CCH's current pricing structure.

Status of Publisher

A librarian posted that she was having problems contacting a vendor, A.S. Pratt. In addition to a number of librarians posting what they knew, the CRIV actively pursued the issue and the librarian was finally able to reach someone at the company.

University Press of America Advertisement

A formal complaint was filed with the Committee, relating that UPA was currently advertising a new book, neglecting to note that the book's contents were a reprint of an earlier law journal article. A request was made by this Subcommittee that UPA correct its advertising copy. UPA complied with the request.

Cross-posting Law-Lib Postings

The Committee frequently cross-posts messages that pop up on law-lib to privatelaw-lib, statecourtcounty-lib and the academic listserv, if it feels the information is important enough that everyone on the grapevine be informed.

Posting Publisher Announcements

From time to time, vendors have asked the CRIV to post announcements. The CRIV scrutinizes these announcements and often asks the vendor to amend language that the Committee feels might be considered promotional. When we do agree to post for a vendor, it is because the Committee believes that the message will improve customer service or that it provide useful consumer information. A recent example was the announcement of the launching of West Group's Service News, which provides ongoing consumer information, like announcing problems with shipping or the issuance of misprints.

West Shipping & Handling Charges: An Explanation

The inconsistencies of West Group's shipping and handling charges has appeared regularly as a complaint on the law-lib listserv. The CRIV received a formal inquiry last fall, which the Committee subsequently investigated. Carl Mitchell of the Complaint Resolution Subcommittee contacted West's customer services personnel to communicate the concerns regarding these inconsistencies and received the following reply.

> *West Group's shipping and handling charges for print products issues subscription vary depending on the product's brand. The charges for West Publishing, Lawyers Cooperative, and Bancroft–Whitney brands are based on a formula using the number of volumes shipped under a single packing slip. For 1999, the charge for a one-volume shipment is $5.25, and for two volumes is $8.00. The incremental charge thereafter is generally $1.75 for each additional volume. Similarly, shipping and handling charges for pamphlets of these brands are based on a formula using the number of pages shipped under a single packing slip.*
>
> *The shipping and handling charges for Clark Boardman Callaghan (CBC) brand print looseleaf products are calculated at 7.5 percent of the subscriber price.*
>
> *Mary Ellen Marlowe*
> *Senior Director, Customer Service*
> *West Group*

West Group posts shipping and handling information on its Web site (www.westgroup.com/custserv/custinfo.htm). Marlowe's response is consistent with the information the CRIV was given during our visit to West Group last year, namely, that the various companies who merged to form the new West Group continue to use their own formulas to calculate the charges for shipping and handling.

The variations in these separate pricing formulas can be confusing to the consumer. The CRIV suggests that, if enough people express their displeasure with the current shipping and handling procedure, West may feel some motivation to change. However, law librarians also have to realize that such a change would require drastic conversions in West's current accounting system. This is not to make excuses for the present procedure, but merely to point out that publishers have to consider many factors when anticipating major alterations to their operating procedures.

Conclusion

The examples noted above demonstrate the Committee's strengths as well as its limitations. The CRIV can often get an answer to a question or provide some degree of guidance in solving a misunderstanding. However, the CRIV by itself cannot impel a publisher to reduce prices or change major policies. Overall market forces, driven by the legal information community, will continue to have more impact with these issues.

Our Committee's goal this year has been to increase communication between members and vendors and to reduce the time it takes to get an answer. We feel that we have achieved this goal, but we need the support and participation of all our members in order to maintain our momentum. Please continue to forward formal complaints to the Chair of the Complaints Subcommittee.

Industry Announcements

WestGroup Launches Service News Listserv

The West Group has developed an electronic mailing list, more commonly known as a listserv, to provide law librarians with the most current news and information regarding West Group and its products. Listserv subscribers will receive e-mails notifying them of enhancements and changes to customer service offerings, as well as product information.

If you are interested in subscribing to West Group's listserv, please fill out the form located at http://www.westgroup.com/custserv/servicenews.htm.

West says it is confident this listserv will help its continuing effort to provide librarians with unparalleled customer service. If you have any questions regarding the listserv or how to subscribe, please contact West Group Customer Service (800/328-4880, ext. 65612). Our Customer Service representatives will be happy to assist you.

If you choose not to subscribe to the listserv, you will continue to receive timely news and information from West Group Customer Service by mail, or by visiting West's Web site (http://www.westgroup.com/custserv/).

CCH Names New Leadership

(CHICAGO, March 12, 1999)—Wolters Kluwer U.S. said today that it has named Rebecca Karnes Hensley as president and CEO of CCH Incorporated (CCH), Riverwoods, Illinois, a leading provider of tax and business law information and software. In addition, Hugo Van haecke will join CCH as chief operating officer, and it has appointed Kevin L. Robert as publisher, CCH Federal and State Tax group.