

As we all know, one of the challenges today for librarians is to design a functional library in the space provided. (Actually, it's probably been a challenge since the days of the first libraries!)

In Manhattan, this situation is critical due to three factors: high rental costs, a tight market for office space and the rapid growth of law firms. In addition, there has been a shift in client attitudes as well. In the past, having a large library with shelves and shelves of books was often a showpiece at law firms. Now, clients are demanding more technology from the lawyers, such as extranets.

At my firm, we approached this issue by utilizing existing space to maximum efficiency and made a concerted effort to accelerate the integration of technology in our delivery of information. Technology in the law firm library had given us tools for placing more legal research materials at the attorneys' desktops than ever before.

Proskauer Rose LLP decided to take its New York headquarters' library to the next step by actually relocating to the concourse (basement) level, away from the attorneys. I often tell visitors touring the facility that we are located two stories below Times Square! Our new research center is designed to be both functional as well as a pleasant place for the library staff and attorneys to work. Overall design incorporates lighting, functionality and comfortable surroundings. When you step off the elevator, you are immediately struck by the quiet. As you proceed through the glass doors and down a short hall, the whole space opens up. The use of light woods is contrasted by the color scheme of gold and green with touches of black. Instead of paintings, photographs of New York City landmarks adorn the walls.

Proper lighting was a high priority in our design strategy; four different kinds of lighting are employed. "Windows" were built in to give the illusion of natural sunlight. Over the reference area, lights that do not reflect off the computer screens were installed. For the compact shelving area, fluorescent lighting runs

perpendicular to the stacks. In the open stacks, lamps are placed on the waist-high units at the end of each row.

A combination of open and compact shelving was incorporated into the design to reflect the usage of legal materials. Practice materials, treatises, state and federal statutes, and regulations are located in the open shelving, providing easy access for the attorneys. The reference staff are positioned nearby to answer any questions as well. (Our

reference collection is also on open shelving near the librarians.)

Reports, digests, law reviews and periodicals are contained in the high-density shelving because these materials are used less often.



Photo credits: David Lubarsky

Top photo: In open stacks, lamps are placed on waist-high units at the end of each row.

Right photo: Functional, wide open spaces characterizes the library of Proskauer Rose LLP.



Due to the changing nature of staffing and the use of technology in law firm libraries, all staff areas were built with adaptability in mind. Each staff area has plenty of work space, adjustable chairs and movable file cabinets to fit individual needs. The traditional reference desk was eliminated; instead, the reference librarians are grouped together in the middle of the research center. This configuration also allows a better workflow and teamwork among the librarians.

This design allowed the adoption of more technology for the delivery of information to the attorneys. For example, Efax delivers faxes up to 30 pages to an individual's e-mail, which can then be redistributed electronically to the requester. The number

of current-awareness publications that are sent by e-mail has tripled. Practice pages for the attorneys' research needs are placed on our firm's intranet, which includes Internet or Web-based subscriptions. In addition, our firm's Web site includes our library of Internet resources, <http://www.proskauer.com/library>, which our attorneys use for their research projects.

The research center was designed with two PC training rooms, used for new attorney orientation and software/database/Internet training, and a large conference room. In this room, the furniture was configured for many different uses. For example, this space has been used for mock moot trials, depositions, online class instruction, CLE programs and arbitrations. Technology in this room includes analog and data lines, a retractable projection screen, and cable television for CLE programs.

Our research center is just over a year old, but it has already reflected the new ways we are interacting with our users. The phone and e-mail research requests to our reference staff have increased about

20 percent. The

demands on our librarians are as high as ever, reflecting our value in the firm. The regular users have not changed; they still visit us to do their research. However, more attorneys are coming to work in our space because it is so quiet. Thirty-four seats are provided for the attorneys, in a mixture

of carrels and tables. The attorney workspaces are wired for laptops, allowing them to draft legal memorandums or briefs right in the research center. This allows them to combine books and online research more effectively in their work products.

Although our research center is physically located in New York, technology allows us to serve our attorneys and clients around the globe.

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