

## LIBRARIES & INFORMATION

### Facing the millennium: law schools, law librarians, and information technology

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This article presents some of the administrative and organisational questions that technology poses for legal education, describes the solutions developed at one law school, and discusses possible new roles for library directors in managing and planning the growing integration of information technology into all aspects of legal education.

In legal education, as in business, technology increasingly touches everything and investments in technology make up an increasing part of the costs of providing a legal education. The role of electronic information and technology have extended far beyond the library to reliance on computers for word processing and the focus of computer-assisted research in the law school having shifted from the library to the personal computer resting on the desktop in the faculty office, a student computer lab or the home. Other developments are the full range of communications and information and other resources formerly available only in the law library or through a terminal on the office desktop now being available with the aid of the Internet through the home computer as well. Within the law school, network email systems have become the primary means of communication. Computer-assisted instructional tools have developed steadily to supplement classroom teaching. All these features are evident at Duke University's law school.

Many issues arise in relation to information technology and law schools, which have to decide how to ensure that the technology is used

productively to support what the particular law school is trying to accomplish. It is unlikely that funds will extend to meet all of the hardware and software demands of faculty, staff and students. Technically qualified staff must be hired to maintain networks and supervise and train users. How much of its resources should the law school invest in hardware, software, infrastructure, training, technical support and user assistance? What it comes down to is the need for the law school to have a networking strategy that aligns investments in computing to the goals of the school and shows how networking will contribute to the school's performance in meeting its goals.

Some administrator will serve, perhaps by default, as the equivalent of the chief information officer (CIO) in a business organisation, responsible for planning the development of computing services in the school. Consideration is given as to who should be appointed as the CIO. Law librarians would bring apparent strengths to the role through their experience in understanding and meeting user needs through technology, especially computer-based research services and systems for library data-processing. However, the key qualification is understanding the mission of the law school in order to make information technology decisions in the light of business considerations. It is likely that law deans will increasingly turn to librarians to take on these positions, in part so as to avoid establishing another high-level administrative position.

As information issues extend beyond the library walls to desktops in faculty and staff offices, and in the homes of faculty and students, they will be seen as law school issues requiring institutional solutions. It is likely that the law school librarian will be looked upon more and more as a law school

administrator and less as, simply, the administrator of the library.

## PURPOSE

### What are law schools for?

W Twining

46 *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly* 3 & 4, 1995, pp 291-303

Legal educators need to rethink the nature, the objectives and the actual and potential role of law schools as institutions. It is suggested that too much tends to be taken for granted about such matters when issues of legal education policy are debated. In particular, there is a need to draw a clear distinction between the process of professional formation of lawyers, only part of which takes place in the law schools of any country, and the nature and role of law schools as institutions. It is in the interests of the relevant constituencies that law schools should adopt a broader and more ambitious role than they have in the past.

A number of assumptions are made:

- The primary mission of a university is the advancement, stimulation and dissemination of learning.
- Everyone in society needs some legal education, not all of which will be formal and law schools do not, could not and should not have a monopoly of formal legal education.
- The modern university law school in most common law jurisdictions is largely a post-World War II phenomenon which means that expansion has facilitated diversification in respect of role and pluralism in respect of ideas. It also means that it is in the process of coming of age and there is still scope for rethinking institutional roles.
- Law schools have generally played a quite limited role compared to their potential. At least until recently, advanced or specialised study, where it has existed at all, has been almost invariably treated as marginal. While