

**BIALL US Law Librarians Meeting
Tuesday 15th February 2011**

Venue: Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom (UK) LLP, kindly hosted by Marnie Ellison

1. Requests by vendors to join our meetings

Jas Breslin has received some requests from a couple of vendors (BNAI and Lexis) to come to one of our US Law Librarian Meetings to get to know the group, and to address any issues that have come up on their products/services. The group discussed whether we had enough issues to warrant devoting a whole meeting to a vendor. With these two particular vendors it was felt that there was not enough interest at the moment for a separate meeting. If the situation changes, we will contact the vendors to discuss a meeting.

Attendees mentioned that there issues with the new Westlaw UK platform and how that is being rolled out to the US law firms with our unique contract set up, and it was agreed that it would be useful to have a meeting with Thomson Reuters about this. A separate meeting would be preferred which would be advertised on our mailing list. At this meeting, we will want to discuss IP access to the new UK platform, and charging back options.

[Note: Thomson Reuters has already been in contact with Jas Breslin and we hope to set up a meeting for interested parties in early April. The meeting will be advertised on our US law librarian email list and the main BIALl list].

It was agreed that our meetings were more valuable to the librarians as a chance to share experiences, support each other and network, and any meetings with vendors would be done in addition to our usual meetings.

2. Ratio of library staff to lawyers in our firms (London and firmwide)

Many of those present did not have instant access to the ratio of library staff to lawyers firmwide, but we did discuss London office ratios:

No of London office library staff	No of London office lawyers	Equivalent ratio
1	120	1 : 120
3	350	1 : 116.7
5	350	1 : 70
2	120	1 : 60
6.5	300	1 : 46
3	46	1 : 15.3
1	55	1 : 55

However, these figures are not directly comparable as each library seems to have different responsibilities in terms of which offices they cover (some people had up to four additional offices in their remit), and often individuals within the library have other duties such as CPD training, knowledge management, or intranet/Sharepoint site development.

3. Enquiry databases and managing enquiries globally

The group discussed how they each managed enquiries across the offices, and whether there was a central database to record enquiries. Two firms present have central systems where lawyers can submit a research request which will be picked up by library staff.

One system used a form on the intranet where the requestor enters data, and then the library staff corresponds via the system with the requestor. This can be a slow means of communication and is not as good as using email. Some library staff has gone back to communicating via email

rather than through the central system. Reports can be run easily e.g. no of requests, type of requests, length of request.

The other firm's system uses web based software also. The requestor can send an email to a designated email address which then is auto-forwarded to the web system and pre-populates fields on the database. The system is accessible to all library staff across the firm and enquiries should be claimed within 15 mins of submission within US time 6am to 6pm Pacific. There are co-ordinators to ensure requests are picked up, and to triage complex or rush requests. Integration with the time recording software is imminent, so information about requests can be exported to the time recording database and charged out to the client. Reports can also be run.

There was discussion on the topic of dealing with requests globally, and how to make best use of the jurisdictional skills and experience of librarians in different offices, quality assurance on research, plus issues of access to specialist databases – e.g. the London office will normally have access to resources that will not be licensed in the US offices. Cross-training between library staff was one option mentioned, where for example the London librarian shows the US librarians how to access free sources of reliable legal information.

We moved on to discussion of outsourcing/offshoring of library services and how this can work for firms, as there have been some recent high profile partnerships announced – CMS Cameron McKenna / Integreon, Freshfields / Evaluserve, A&O / outsourced to Belfast, plus West Country-Welsh firms outsourcing work to Integreon in Bristol. Discussion about where savings are made. Mention was made of the SLA outsourcing seminar to be taking place at the end of March which many attendees said they planned to go to.

4. Which services are client billed for e.g. database use, research time

Discussion on whether firms are still charging back to the client the costs for Westlaw UK and Lexis.com. Generally most firms do, but not everyone does. Those on the new Westlaw UK platform do not charge back at the moment.

One attendee asked whether it was possible to charge back for services which PLC and Lexis Library which are paid for as a flat fee contract. Another person raised the issue that firms are not allowed to make a profit from items charged to clients. Some firms do charge back for Lexis Library – this can be done either from the usage stats that Lexis provides, or via Lookup Precision or Research Monitor, which is a piece of software that sits over the top of a website and collects data on who is accessing that website. It can force the user to enter a client matter no before they can get to the site. A number of firms represented at the meeting said they either had this software in use for some websites, or were looking to take something like this.

Generally it was agreed that trying to charge back for something like PLC would not work because lawyers tend to use this source for those questions they don't want to ask anyone else – 'there's no fear of asking questions on PLC' – lawyers want to be able to use the source freely.

5. What percentage of costs is actually billed back to the client

This was an area that most people did not have access to information about. We were running short of time so this topic was not discussed further.

6. Next meeting

We hope to hold the next meeting in the summer. Victoria Jannetta at White & Case has offered to see if she can host the next meeting. The meeting will be advertised on the BIALL lists as usual.

Meeting minutes: Jas Breslin 21/2/2011