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## Order-to-Go: A New Trend in Law Libraries

Have you ever wondered what your local library and a fast-food restaurant have in common? Did you know that just like a fast-food restaurant, many libraries, including law libraries, have drive-thru windows where you can pick up and drop off books? And have you ever noticed that just like a fast-food restaurant, you pretty much know what to expect from a library and the basic services it provides? Libraries are a place where the patron, or customer, has access to a plethora of information resources. More and more, law libraries are moving away from the just-in-case model that is commonly used in collection development toward a just-in-time model.

### ON-DEMAND SERVICE

It is the customers themselves who may be to blame for what is called the "McDonaldization process" because they approach the law library as consumers would. They examine variables such as convenience and want to obtain the best-quality "product" for their investment in the shortest amount of time possible. Just as McDonald's and Taco Bell have a standard menu that customers are used

to ordering from, patrons want the same from their local law library.

Consumers of information seem to have this notion that information is abundant, already packaged to meet their individual needs, and ready to be delivered. Forget the old-fashioned research process. The use of the internet and social media is partly to blame. Patrons don't seem to want to sit down and spend time working on a computer, nor do they want to reference print materials such as books, journals, or maps—it takes too much of their time. Rather than patrons going to their local law library to perform research, they are now contacting the library via phone and expecting a librarian to retrieve information for them as if it can be delivered like a hamburger. Never mind the professional lawyers, who actually practice law.

There are many similarities between the food service industry and a law library. In both cases, customer service means everything from the look and feel of the environment to the particularities of the products they serve. It's all about the customer in the service industry, and both restaurants and law libraries alike

must strive to meet their customers' preferences and needs as best they can.

The library environment in general can be somewhat predictable, and there is a certain kind of expectation of what one's library experience should look and feel like. Patrons generally know what to expect, and it all comes down to control and standardization, providing information professionals with rules to identify, classify, access, select, communicate, exchange, and preserve information. Just as we have favorite meals we order from fast-food restaurants, most of us are aware of the basic services that our local law library provides. But do we really know about all of the different services and programs that every law library has to offer? There are common beliefs about what law library services mean and should include.

### JUST-IN-TIME

Law library patrons often have a different view from law librarians and other legal professionals on what legal services are, what these kinds of services should include, and how information is disseminated. They get frustrated when standing in line for reference assistance and are often not willing to wait for it. In a world in

which information seems to be just a short reach away, law library patrons are expecting services on-the-go. Thus, the accuracy and relevancy of information become almost secondary for the patron, while speed takes precedence.

Law librarians help patrons evaluate, repackage, and disseminate information. They offer instruction on how to access and use library materials, provide reference services, and do their best to deliver quick and in-depth answers to patrons' questions. Their skill set is priceless, and they do what they can to provide just-in-time services—a concept defined by Wikipedia as "a methodology aimed primarily at reducing times within the production system as well as response times from suppliers and to customers."

### MOVING AWAY FROM JUST-IN-CASE

Law libraries now inhabit a fraction of the space they once did, and the just-in-time model works well in smaller libraries. Just-in-time service is generally seen as patron-driven acquisitions based on a need. For example, law librarians might review interlibrary loan statistics to determine if the library should purchase a resource that is frequently requested. Many of them have agreements with ebook vendors allowing for the automatic purchase of an ebook after it has been checked out several times. Law librarians can no longer afford to project what resources they will need—many of them just end up sitting on the shelf. However, if statistics show that there is a demand for a publication, librarians are able to justify the purchase and buy it upon request knowing the resource will be used. The just-in-case model is seen more as a collection development practice, whereby law librarians attempt to anticipate their customers' needs and fill gaps in their collections. The just-in-time model tends to work better in environments where customer service is a major element of operation, as it tends to be more customer-driven and budget-friendly.

Patrons are expected to do more for themselves these days, including computerized searching, photocopying, printing,

### LINKS TO THE SOURCE

"The McDonaldization of Academic Libraries?"

doi: 10.5860/crl.61.3.248

"Standardization In Library and Information Science in Selected European Countries"

doi: 10.1063/1.4907822

"Definition of a Library: General Definition"

libguides.ala.org/library-definition

"One More Time: Law Firm Libraries Are Not About the Space"

geeklawblog.com/2017/11/one-more-time-law-firm-libraries-are.html

"How Law Libraries Can Meet the Demands of Modern Law Firms"

blog.hbrconsulting.com/how-law-libraries-can-meet-the-demands-of-modern-law-firms

filling out interlibrary loan request forms, and using self-checkout systems. Although many patrons claim they already feel comfortable in a library environment, others are quite timid about browsing and using reference resources. While law librarians are more than willing to provide basic reference training, they also have to think about an individual's skill sets and desire to learn.

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### LOOKING FORWARD

Law library users want things in a way that fulfills their expectations. However, there are many challenges involved with meeting a customer's demands. In the customer service industry, it is all about what customers desire and not so much about what you may think they need. Much like serving picky customers at fast-food restaurants, law libraries serve a variety of patrons who vary in learning types, beliefs, and personalities. Many of them have spe-

cific expectations they believe should be met, and when they don't get what they want, they tend to move on to someone or something else.

We live in a world in which people demand instant access and gratification. Locating good, relevant information takes practice, and librarians are working hard to meet the growing demands of their patrons. All librarians must start thinking of their patrons as customers in need of high-quality services, and they must be able to expand the channels they use to provide information. Libraries should lead the way in the use of technology and stay abreast of emerging technologies to ensure that they are available to their patrons. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for managing law library services, so it is crucial that law librarians continue forging closer relationships with partners that recognize their unique needs, especially in a time when the demands of a dynamic and constantly changing legal market continue to be a challenge.

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