



A Winning New Product

This summer, the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV) was pleased to give the AALL New Product Award to the Jenkins Law Library and American Lawyer Media-PA for their new product, palawlibrary.com (www.palawlibrary.com).

This commercial Web product provides user-friendly and inexpensive access to Pennsylvania state court opinions (most notably the opinions of the 67 Pennsylvania county courts), federal court opinions, Pennsylvania court rules, opinions of the Philadelphia City Solicitor, news articles from *The Legal Intelligencer* and *Pennsylvania Law Weekly*, verdicts, awards and settlements, trial listings, and selected court filings and notices. Since receiving the award, they have added an online Pennsylvania attorney directory, county practice pages, and a client chargeback feature.

Memorials

AALL Spectrum has been advised of the death of **George D. Jacobsen**. Jacobsen was the foreign, comparative, and international law specialist at the Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center Library since 1987. Prior to his service there, he held various positions at LSU as well as at the Lilly Library at Indiana University-Bloomington. He was also a Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador from 1965 to 1967.

A Brooklyn native, Jacobsen earned a BA from Hofstra University and an MA from Indiana University, where he also worked towards his doctorate. Jacobsen died on September 27. He was 61 years old.

AALL Spectrum carries brief announcements of members' deaths in the "Memorials" column. Traditional memorials should be submitted to Frank Houdek, *Law Library Journal*, Southern Illinois University Law Library, Mail Code 6803, Lesar Law Building, Carbondale, IL 62901, houdek@siu.edu.

I was curious about how a library teamed up with a publisher to create a successful commercial product.

Is this project time-consuming for the library? Expensive? Do they have any regrets? Assuming that some AALL members might be envisioning a similar product for their states, I decided to investigate and report my findings to you. I contacted **Kathy Coon**, deputy director of the Jenkins Law Library and project manager.

Perfect Timing

The Jenkins Law Library was looking for a full text project. It had hired an outside consultant to help with a technology plan and concluded that its Web site needed some unique content. Thus, the library was looking for an opportunity.

American Lawyer Media-Pennsylvania Division (ALM) was looking for help with its product, palawnet.com, an online resource for trial court opinions and legal news that it created in 1996 under a previous owner. The new company had recently undergone reorganization and had made a strategic decision not to continue supporting this online product. The technology it was using needed to be upgraded, and the company was unable to provide the personnel needed to maintain product quality. The content, however, was unique and was being used as a research tool by the Pennsylvania legal community. What could ALM do with that data?

An ALM customer suggested that the company team up with the Jenkins Law Library, and palawlibrary.com was born. This was a good collaboration—the mission of the Jenkins Law Library is to make legal information accessible and affordable, and the content provided by ALM had been difficult for Jenkins customers to obtain.

The Reality

Actually, it didn't happen that fast. ALM approached Jenkins in late 2000, and the first version of the site was not released until March 2002. In between were lots of meetings with staff from both organizations, hours spent understanding and standardizing the data, negotiations between their attorneys, testing of a beta site with previous users, and designing a new Web interface. Changes included search capabilities made possible by the use of MySQL databases and

SWISH-E (Simple Web Indexing System for Humans-Enhanced). For more information about SWISH-E, visit <http://swish-e.org>.

One particular challenge for the Jenkins Law Library and ALM-PA is obtaining opinions from Pennsylvania's 67 county courts. Since Pennsylvania does not have a unified court system, they must work with a variety of sources to get the data. Some of these courts have no computers or e-mail capability and others don't keep an electronic copy, so they have to send the opinions on paper via snail mail. In addition to those from the main content provider, ALM, opinions are received from a variety of sources, including judges, judges' secretaries, law librarians, law clerks, and county bar associations.

What about the staffing needed to maintain this site? Jenkins hired an outside consultant programmer. Otherwise, the existing 40-member Jenkins staff does the day-to-day work, such as Web design, indexing, scanning, opinion loading, customer support, system administration, training, etc. Each employee has a piece of the work, and it does not add too much to anyone's workday.

What would Jenkins do differently if it could go back in time? The library would have a programmer on site as an employee rather than use an outside consultant, although Jenkins is fortunate to use someone who works well with the staff and is truly committed to the project.

I asked Coon if she had any other words of wisdom to pass along for others interested in this type of project. She says that once you determine what it will cost, triple the estimate. This project is not breaking even, but the Jenkins Law Library's main intent was not to make money. ALM has hired an experienced sales person to market the product, and with the recent enhancements, it should break even in the near future. And Coon still recommends the experience.

If you get a chance, go for it, she says. Rewards include marketing your expertise to the legal community, opportunities to expand your technology knowledge, and teamwork for your staff.

The deadline for nominations for the New Product Award is approaching fast—January 15. Visit CRIV's Web site for information about submitting nominations, www.aallnet.org/committee/criv. ■

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