

# **The Evolution of the Law Firm Library Function:**

Transformation and integration  
into the business of law



EDITED BY FRANCESCA RAMADAN

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# Executive summary

It is undeniable that the modern legal library is caught in a transformative stage. The aftereffects of the 2008 financial crisis continue to ripple through the legal profession in general; although global economies are in recovery, progress is slow and incremental, and support functions are at the forefront of the agenda as firms look to cut operational costs. Often seen by firm management as unnecessary and outdated, legal libraries are facing a double-pronged challenge: it is now essential for librarians to demonstrate the continuing value of their profession whilst battling with shrinking budgets and the development of new, disruptive technologies that are transforming working practices and processes at a rapid rate. This has meant that now, more than ever, libraries are at risk.

However, the traditional knee-jerk responses to such threats and challenges – such as downsizing and outsourcing – are now not enough. Instead, the modern librarian has been compelled to innovate, transforming their role to one that embraces the possibilities that new digital resources bring and which has become more centered on information management. Similarly, the way in which the library functions has been forced to change in response to economic pressures; like other firm departments, the law library increasingly must apply principles and practices from the corporate world to its operations, in order to reduce costs and improve services. Indeed, the role of the library is transforming in the face of a dynamic and sometimes hostile climate, reforming itself from a semi-autonomous department to a fully integrated and agile facility that must embed itself solidly in a firm's everyday activities and respond quickly and efficiently to its challenges and queries.

In this period of extreme upheaval, it is essential for both library and firm management to seek the right guidance in negotiating these challenges. Heavy emphasis is often placed on technological innovation and digital resources, and their current and future impact, due to the exciting and revolutionary potential these modernizations bring. However, what is of more value is tackling those difficult issues libraries face as they



reform their operations to more resemble a corporate model and as the focus shifts towards profitability. Packed with constructive advice and fascinating insight from a range of industry experts – from librarians to knowledge officers and consultants – *The Evolution of the Law Firm Library Function: Transformation and integration into the business of law* seeks to provide the most pertinent and practical intelligence about the current challenges and the most effective ways of negotiating them. Invaluable advice is supplemented by pioneering, real-world examples of alternative methods of library management that can provide a solid foundation for application and implementation.

The concept of the modern law library goes hand-in-hand with running your library like a business, which requires being fiscally responsible, utilizing metrics to measure ROI and value, and ensuring your target audience is knowledgeable of and satisfied with the solutions and services the library provides. The difficulty for most librarians and library management, however, is taking those first steps. In chapter 1, Monice Kaczorowski – principal of AGOG Consulting – provides guidance in understanding the various tools that support the running of a library like a business. The multiple ways metrics can be utilized – from monitoring usage and trends to adjusting a library's portfolio of products and contents – are discussed, before various metrics are offered as a starting point for implementation.

In the current economy and competitive marketplace, law firms have dramatically changed the way they conduct business. The impact of these developments has rippled throughout all departments; however, nowhere has it been felt more acutely than in the law library. Library staff have been tasked to wear multiple hats and take on more responsibility, whilst simultaneously being expected to do more with less. There is growing pressure to meet new demands or face being rendered redundant. In chapter 2, Kara Buzga and Tunisia Johnson – paralegal manager and legal information administrator at Mayer Brown LLP, respectively – make the case that it is the library's ability to collaborate that will guarantee its future. Employing their knowledge and expertise, they offer guidance to those who want to move from siloed working practices to a more synergic approach in order to continue delivering excellent service to both internal and external clients.

In these times of change, it is essential to revolutionize the library's ways of working; however, it is not always easy to be the pioneer. Difficult choices and unanticipated challenges are all part of the processes of transformation and innovation. To gain insight into potential pitfalls