Introducing iPads to Courts, Law Firms, and Law Schools

Alyssa Thurston
Connie Smith (Morgan Lewis & Brockius LLP)

Connie began her presentation with praise for those law schools that have Advanced Legal Research (ALR) courses, as she can definitely tell which students have and have not taken ALR. A couple of suggestions she had for academic librarians included to provide instruction on options besides those of Westlaw and Lexis, and to consider bringing in law firm librarians to speak with students – Connie does this herself and finds it very valuable for students. Connie’s firm tries to simplify billing and cost-recovery by using an hourly method, whereby the prior year is used to calculate the rate for the following year. She underscored the importance of simplifying because her firm includes 1,400 attorneys, and the costs (time and effort) of engaging cost-recovery itself are expensive.

Cheryl Lynn Niemeier (Bose McKinney & Evans LLP)

Cheryl discussed how her firm does not focus on cost recovery and admits it is probably an “outlier.” Its philosophy for its attorneys is not to worry about costs, but rather focus on the goal of obtaining the answer. As an early adopter of WestlawNext, she opined that its transactional pricing supports this goal. Her firm has streamlined sources by reducing print titles and eliminating duplicate online vendor services.

After the speakers’ individual presentations, there was time for the attendees to ask pertinent questions. Questions ranged from ethical considerations in recovering research costs, use of gamification (games and incentives) to encourage legal research training, and real consequences when a new attorney has mediocre research skills.

If you did not have a chance to attend this program, I highly recommend listening to its recording. Firm and government law librarians can obtain ideas for better cost-recovery practices and how to reach out to summer and new associates. Librarians in the academic setting will have a better understanding of what and how to teach law students – costs, cost-recovery, and varying platforms. And public law librarians can get ideas on how to instruct their patrons to research effectively and efficiently, beyond using just Google.

Cindy Guyer is a Research Services Librarian and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Law at the USC Gould School of Law.

Introducing iPads to Courts, Law Firms, and Law Schools ... reported by Alyssa Thurston

In observance of the growing popularity of smartphones and tablet computers among attorneys and law students, AALL 2013 program E-7, It’s 2013: Do You Know Where Your iPad Is? - hosted by a panel of librarians from firm, county, and academic law libraries highlighted these libraries’ various experiences in implementing the use of iPads among their patrons.

Leading off the panel was an overview of examples of iPad implementation in the court system. The first librarian to present, Adriana Mark from the U.S. Courts for the Second Circuit, discussed how iPads were rolled out to judges -- who wished to adopt iPads primarily in order to view briefs -- in a joint effort between law library and IT staff. Challenges associated with the implementation included the varying levels of comfort with iPad use among the judges, as well as the relative ubiquity of competing PC devices in the courts. The Second Circuit iPad pilot program, coordinated by the law library and IT, had originally explored the adoption of other tablet devices but indeed found that iPads were the most popular. Other considerations in the courts’ iPad adoption ranged from deciding what accessories to buy for the iPads (such as Apple wireless keyboards and iPad cases) and security issues. To help their judicial users get started, the group created training documents for the judges, including PDFs and video tutorials, that were posted to the court’s internal site. A webpage devoted to iPad apps and ebooks was also made available to the judges.

Next, Julie M. Jones from the U.S. Courts Library addressed administrative challenges associated with the use of iPads in the federal court system. Among these challenges was how best to integrate Macs into a PC-heavy world; the variation in iPad usage policies between the court circuits; and some judges’ need for assistance with basic iPad use.
Regarding the publicizing of iPad resources to users, questions arose regarding whether any apps beyond legal research apps should be recommended, given that the librarians did not control app content. Finally, syncing problems sometimes emerged when judges used their iPads to write documents, but their clerks accessed it for editing from other devices.

Next, in a discussion of one law firm’s iPad experience, Karen Helde of Lane Powell PC provided particularly useful advice on how to successfully market iPads and iPad apps to attorneys. She first raised the concept of COPE – (Corporated Owned, Personally Enabled.) As opposed to BYOD (or Bring Your Own Device), COPE allows organizations to have more control over device security and over which devices to support in the first place. Helde offered useful tips on ways she has promoted use of iPads in her firm, such as creating an “Apps for Lawyers” list and sending out weekly email tips on iPad-related topics. These tips range from the practical (how to best conserve a device’s battery power) to the research-oriented (a review of the WestlawNext iPad app) to the fun (travel apps!). For those librarians interested in writing iPad tips at their own organization, Helde offered some useful advice, including: obtain recommendations from your user base, maintain consistency in the tone of your writings, and write tips briefly and in a less librarian-y style. Helde also recommended several websites where audience members could discover legal apps on their own, such as blogs, topical ABA Books, and UCLA Law Library’s popular guide on “Mobile Applications for Law Students and Lawyers”. Finally, she suggested several useful iPad apps, ranging from the strictly legal (FastCase and WestlawNext) to productivity (EverNote for research and note organization, Flipboard for digital curation of news stories from various outlets, and 30/30 for time management).

Last but not least were June Liebert from John Marshall Law School and Deborah Ginsberg of Chicago-Kent College of Law Library, who co-presented on iPads in Law Schools. (Ginsberg also served as the panel’s coordinator). Alternating their narratives, the two panelists first described how iPads were introduced in their law libraries. Liebert described an iPad pilot project at John Marshall wherein 20 iPads were purchased for a course on High Tech Litigation; the devices were well-received among students. At Chicago-Kent, use of iPads is more informal. The law library has its own iPad 2 which is used for demos by the Technology Development & Training Librarian. In addition, many of the librarians there already owned iPads; Ginsberg uses hers for everything from faculty training, notetaking, and testing new apps. Ginsberg has observed more and more faculty - even the more tech-challenged ones - bringing their own iPads to school and asking how to use it for research.

Both Liebert and Ginsburg, while highlighting the popularity of iPads among the students and faculty at their law schools, noted several issues that accompanied their increased use. First, law students in particular tend to be overconfident in their ability to use technology. Ginsburg observed that other, more technical issues include the lack of a reliable app for editing Word documents on the iPad and difficulty with printing from the iPad. For Liebert, challenges arose in trying to obtain time to meet with the High Tech Litigation professor, a busy attorney, to discuss how to better integrate the iPads into his course. Liebert and Ginsburg closed by sharing their thoughts on the future of the tablet interface - including developments such as “gesture computing”, where a computer user interacts with a computer by moving his or her hands in front of it, instead of using a mouse and keyboard; and Google Glass, the computing eyewear in development by Google.

Audience participation played a large part in the panel. At various times during the presentation, the panelists displayed a URL onscreen and asked audience members to visit the website to vote online on various questions. For instance, the first question asked participants to indicate whether they had a tablet. (Of active voters, the vast majority indicated that they did. Indeed, in scanning the conference room it was apparent that most attendees were taking notes on a tablet or smartphone. In addition to encouraging audience participation, the voting procedures thus immediately highlighted the relevancy of this particular educational session.) Following the panelists’ presentations, audience members were asked to group together to discuss and share their own favorite apps.

Alyssa Thurston is Research and Electronic Services Librarian at Pepperdine Law School Library in Malibu.