

Small But Mighty - The Care And Maintenance Of Specialty Legal Collections By Small Academic Law Libraries

By Jane Woldow, Vermont Law & Graduate School, and Susan Drisko Zago, UNH Franklin Pierce School of Law

Abstract

Much has been written on collection development techniques used by large academic law libraries and how they maintain their myriad scholarly collections. Often, they describe large budgets with armies of selectors creating world-class collections. However, there has been a lack of representation in the literature on how small academic law libraries with lean staff, small budgets, and specialized collections create, maintain, and grow their collections within established parameters and explore e-books and other format changes.

This article will fill that gap and describe how the smaller academic law libraries might weather the ups and downs of institutional support, curricular developments, librarian expertise, and faculty chasing the new, trendy topic. Using a case study approach, we'll explore the experience of the law libraries at Vermont Law & Graduate School, a private standalone law school known for its environmental law and policy programs, and University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law, a former private standalone law school, now part of New Hampshire's land grant flagship public university, known internationally for its intellectual property programs. These law libraries have developed unique assets in their specialty collections in environmental law and intellectual property, respectively, and are facing the challenge of making them accessible to their online students. The authors will share the unique parameters used to develop collections beyond the ABA Core Standards to support their schools' curricular needs and which are the cornerstones of their academic programs. We will compare their similarities and differences in parent institutions, foundational and supplemental funding, and format preferences. This will include a review of acquisition strategies, tools and techniques as well as deaccessioning criteria for print and online materials used to maintain the specialty collections. We will discuss how these libraries manage parts of their collections that once supported programs that have been discontinued. In times of inconsistent year-to-year funding, keeping unique collections on track requires difficult choices and creative

planning for the long term. We are also fortunate to work with colleagues through NELLCO's Interlibrary Loan and NELLCO's Palmprint, allowing us to be confident that infrequently used or historical primary materials are available on demand. The authors will share strategies that have proven effective for the two collections, offering potential approaches for law libraries facing similar circumstances.

Academic law libraries, whether small or large, can employ similar hyper-focused strategies for managing specialty collections that are essential for both residential and online students. In evaluating and maintaining specialized collections, libraries might adapt the successes of the University of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce School of Law and Vermont Law & Graduate School by prioritizing holdings that align with their mission and adjusting their resource lineup on an annual basis, considering cost, format, and usability metrics in these decisions.