

December 2006

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw

Michele Villagran

San Jose State University, michele.villagran@sjsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/slis_pub



Part of the [Law Commons](#), and the [Law Librarianship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Michele Villagran. "Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw" *Maximizing Law Library Productivity* (2006): 42-46.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Information at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

MAYER, BROWN, ROWE & MAW

DESCRIPTION OF Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw

Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw is one of the nation's largest corporate law firms with offices in seven US cities and eight cities overseas. The firm, founded in 1881, has headquarters in Chicago, with offices in New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Charlotte, Washington D.C. and Palo Alto. Overseas offices are in London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, Shanghai and Beijing. The firm has more than 1300 attorneys and 566 partners. We spoke with Michelle Lucero, Legal Information Manager and Director of the Houston Office.

All of the firm's US offices have legal libraries except for the Palo Alto office. Overall the firm's legal information department employs 32 full-time equivalent individuals.

The Los Angeles (90 lawyers) and Houston (24 lawyers) offices have one librarian and one paraprofessional each. The New York office (200+ lawyers) has one librarian and two assistants, while the main Chicago office, with close to 500 attorneys, has a library staff of nine, including the director of legal information and the library technical coordinator. In the overseas offices, only the Frankfurt, London and Paris offices have library technical coordinators. The London office has six full time library staff serving a lawyer population of 400.

USE OF FIRM-WIDE SITE LICENSES

The firm has at least 18 general site licenses that are firm-wide (and others for specific practice areas) but apart from these licenses each office library has a separate budget and generally makes purchases separately. The Houston office alone spent \$500,000 for online information in 2005 and \$201,000 for print information. These sums exclude any

firm-wide spending for licenses. Some of the firm-wide licenses include: Westlaw, Lexis, Hoovers Online, CCH Online, BNA, LIVEDGAR and others.

The Houston office does corporate appellate, finance, banking, international trade, and real estate and oil and gas. Oil and gas and real estate are the dominant practices.

PRINT COLLECTION DOWNSIZING

In the year 2000 the Houston office significantly downsized the print collection, reducing it by about half. This downsizing occurred in conjunction with a move to a new office. Next year, in 2006, the firm will once again move to new offices. Lucero believes that print downsizing often occurs as a result of a firm's moving to new offices in which the library often gets smaller spaces than in the past.

Lucero notes: "We have no reporters in the Houston office."

REFERENCE QUESTION PROCEDURES

"Each office has its own entity as far as research questions. The attorney will contact that librarian in their office and we will check here and then see locally first and then our other offices and then if not there are always outside agencies we use to get materials. I always follow up email reference queries with a phone call since in emails you don't get a chance to really interview them about what they need."

Lucero noted that the library has not kept track of the source or type of reference questions received but in 2006 she plans to start keeping in a central location a written record of all reference questions. "We would like to be able to run a report giving how many reference questions did we have in the month of June or how many questions did we get from the Corporate Department," she says. "We are thinking of using our records database system."

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

The library itself is not directly involved in content or knowledge management initiatives. There is a knowledge management department in Chicago so it is a separate department from the library; they handle the intranet and I call them more about the technology side. Knowledge management solutions – they answer basic questions.”

KEEPING TRACK OF LICENSES

The library keeps a spreadsheet with licensing and contact information and is not considering any kind of specialized software to keep track of electronic licenses. “We are not really big enough for that,” she says.

OUTSOURCING

“We very rarely outsource at all – my assistant does all the filing. The only time we do it is if we use retrieval services – we will outsource to information retrieval services – usually with articles that are not available online.”

USER TRAINING & INFOLITERACY

The library gets about 30-45 minutes to give an introduction to the library to new hires in orientation sessions. Sessions built around monthly visits from vendors have been successful.

“Once a month we bring in Westlaw, Lexis, LIVEDGAR, Courtlink, etc. We have it during a lunch hour and I host it and we serve lunch in a conference room with a power point training session. The first one we held we got only one person but now for the last one we had 12 (the Houston office has been doing the sessions for five months). We serve food. And we have started to offer CLE credit on some of the sessions and we are hopefully going to do more of that.”

DOWNSIZING THE RECORDS ROOM

The library reduced its size in the year 2000 and now occupies about 1300 square feet. Lucero expects the library to remain about the same size when the firm moves to new offices next year. However, Lucero also oversees the firm's Records Department, which is located adjacent to the library. The Records Department also has its own staff of three (supervisor and two assistants) and is separate from the library. "Records is separate from the library but I also oversee that department and I am losing space there," says Lucero, who notes that the downsizing of the records room has been enabled by reducing the length of time that records are stored in paper formats.

"We are going to archive our files earlier; they are scanned into a records database. They are starting from the beginning to see what they can archive now. We organize it by matter number and they all have barcodes and there is an online system, all organized by matter number. You can search by keyword, or the type of document so it is just like a library catalog. Now it has more space than the library I probably would say – guessing 2000 or more square feet. We are losing 20 shelves. It will be smaller and less space. The materials will be kept in print form until a certain date and that date is being moved up to save the space. Every year they have to do this to clear space."

ADVICE FOR PEERS

"One thing I know for sure is when you are manager of a law firm library you wear many hats and you have to be comfortable with that. There are so many other aspects of the job, the research and the administrative side and then the records side. I'm a busy bee so I have no problem prioritizing; research should be done first and then whatever needs to be done in the library that needs to be taken care of – that is second. It is a whole different world from the one that I came from: the public library world. I like law libraries a lot more since attorneys know what they want and they know the topic and the subject. The general public would tend to ask questions like 'well I need something on China' so it is great to work with more intellectual people who went to school for this and we are there

to help them to win, to support them in whatever they are working on, and it is very challenging.”

USE OF BLOGS, LISTSERVS

“We have a great Houston area law librarian’s organization, HALL – Houston Area Law Libraries. We meet, we have a listserv and we meet once a month and we have a great lending relationship and we usually meet at the South Texas College of Law. We have lunch and speakers.”

Other resources mentioned by Lucero were: SWALL – Southwestern Association of Law Librarians, LAW-LIB, and PLL which is for private law librarians, beSpecific, and TVC Alert.