



Innovative Case Study

THE RIGHT DISCOVERY EXPERIENCE FOR A MULTI-FACETED LAW SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The library at Stetson University College of Law (FL) strives to provide a first-rate discovery experience in a demanding environment. It may be the same search button, but the searchers and their curricula are not the same. For example, “first-years” have a structured curriculum and need to learn new legal terminology — frolic and detours,” anyone? — and have to use specialized legal databases for the first time. Second- and third-years need broader content; in part because they are required to write publishable articles which hinge on their ability to find the best possible resources to support their claim.

What’s more, an alumnus that has returned to Stetson for a Master’s in Law in environmental or elder law may not have experience with the shift toward an electronic environment or a clear memory of what they learned about legal databases. The same goes for practicing lawyers and judges that use the library.

Challenge

“The first year curriculum focuses on traditional legal research such as statutes and court opinions. In later years, they need to learn to research like scholars.”

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JD, MLIS
Stetson University
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“The biggest challenge for library staff is that what we teach students differs from year to year,” says Ashley Krenelka Chase, Associate Director of the library. “The first year curriculum focuses on traditional legal research such as statutes and court opinions. In later years, they need to learn to research like scholars. Walking in the doors of the library on day one, they know more about devices than searching. Encore gives students the information they need from a simple search.”

To add to the challenge, subscription databases and harvestable sources on the Web have expanded exponentially in the last few years. That’s a good thing, but one that can make for an unneeded detour when a librarian can’t be there. “Increasing subscription eContent presents a challenge for searchers,” says Chase. “Students need results that are relevant to their coursework and easy to refine in a ‘big’ information environment.”

In short, evolving user needs and multiple content opportunities present challenges to providing an outstanding discovery experience at the Stetson College of Law’s library.



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Solution

Stetson College of Law implemented Encore Discovery a few years ago and recently implemented Encore Duet, which provides tight integration with myriad sources from EBSCO Discovery Service™ as well as the deeper faceting it offers. Branded by library staff as “CatalogPlus,” Encore Duet also keeps local print books in the mix — especially useful for the general public and students that are asked to cite print specifically. In fact, print has traditionally been the preferred method of legal citation. Says Chase: “We always encouraged our students, especially first years, to use Encore as their first stop for searching. With Encore Duet, we get to maintain the Encore experience and increase its effectiveness for our users.”

Chase says integrating open resources such as HathiTrust and US Patent Office Applications deepen the discovery experience for library users and are less costly than subscription content. Chase continues: “We have such a variety of programs and users that the broad resources and discovery tools offered by Encore Duet make for a near-ideal discovery experience. We hope Encore Duet will be their first point of reference; having everything in one place like this has been essential to our success.”

Multi-Faceted

Encore Duet offers a myriad facets directly from EDS, such as facets from content providers such as HeinOnline, HathiTrust, and USPTO Patent Applications. Facets that expose results from psychology and elder care journals support Master’s of Law candidates that major in these topics. For experienced students spreading their wings into research, source facets from social science journals and articles from trusted sources such as the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are there to support them.

Encore Duet also provides a localized experience by presenting professors’ names in facets, as well as reading lists relevant to their search. For example a search for “race and the law” pulls up a seminar on the topic with 50 books.

Legal-ease

In the case of a search like “frolic and detours” (which means “loafing on the job” in plain English) students need to get beyond legal language in their research. That’s why suggested search terms in Encore Duet, in this case “work and labor” for “frolic and detours,” matter so much. Says Chase: “Encore Duet does a great job of presenting students needed information sources not designed for lawyers as well as sources that fit with jargon to make a smarter search.”

Asked to pick one word that describes the experience of students, Chase says “overwhelmed.” They are learning legal databases and legal terminology for the first time, or they are trying to put together scholarly work from disparate sources. The Encore experience cuts down on the overwhelm and gives them relative peace of mind—at least at their library. Perhaps fewer “detours” and more “frolicking?”

Sustainable

Encore Duet provides a sustainable model of discovery for the library. Says Chase: “As we steer our students more and more towards electronic resources, Encore Duet will become even more essential to our students. Librarians also want the freedom to add open, harvestable databases from the Web in the future. While law libraries may never be print free, it’s nice to have a discovery layer that you know will adapt with change.”