

Collections

ABA Standard 604. LAW LIBRARY COLLECTION

- a) The law library shall provide reliable and efficient access to a collection of materials and information resources that is complete, current, and with sufficient continuing access for the law school to operate in compliance with the Standards and to carry out its program of legal education.
- b) The choice of format, ownership, and means of reliable access for any part of the law library's collection shall be sufficient for the law school to operate in compliance with the Standards and to carry out its program of legal education.
- c) The law library shall formulate and periodically update a written plan for development of the collection.

Interpretation 604-1

The appropriate mixture of collection formats depends on the needs of the law library and the law school; it need not entail a mixture that includes physical books.

Interpretation 604-2

Reliable access to information resources may be provided through:

- a) databases to which the library or the parent institution subscribe or own and are likely to continue to subscribe and provide access;
- b) authenticated and credible databases that are available to the public at no charge and are likely to continue to be available to the public at no charge;
- c) participation in a formal resource-sharing arrangement through which materials are made available, via electronic or physical delivery, in an efficient and effective way to users; or
- d) print materials.

Standard 604 is not satisfied solely by arranging for students and faculty to have access to other law libraries within the region.

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AALS Bylaw Section 6-8. Library.

- a. A member school shall maintain access to a library that supports the curricular needs and research of its faculty and students. A law library of a member school shall possess or have ready and reliable access to a physical collection, electronic resources or other information resources that substantially:
 - (i) meet the research needs of its students, satisfy the demands of its curricular offerings, and facilitates the training of its students in various research methodologies;
 - (ii) support the individual research interests of its faculty members;
 - (iii) serve any special research and educational objectives expressed by the school or implicit in the missions and role of the law school.

- b. Whether physical or virtual, the library is central to the law school and shall be organized and administered to perform its educational function and to assure a high standard of service.
- c. A member school shall have a full-time director of the law library and a staff of sufficient number and with sufficient training to develop and maintain a high level of service.

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For historical information on ABA Standards and AALS Bylaws relating to law library collections, I recommend: Michael Whiteman, *Book Burning in the Twenty-First Century: ABA Standard 606 and the Future of Academic Law Libraries as the Smoke Clears*, 106 LAW LIBR. J. 11 (Winter 2014).

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Framing the Discussion Questions

In 1973, the ABA Standards included extensive schedules of specific titles that every academic law library should contain. In 1995, the ABA Standards first recognized the growing importance of online collections with Interpretation 606(a)-1 stating, “The word ‘collection’ includes printed sources, microforms, audiovisual works, and access to electronic formats.” In 2005, Interpretation 601-1 cautioned libraries that “providing electronic access to materials alone would not satisfy the Standard.” The current Interpretation 604-1 no longer requires physical books. In light of these drastic changes to the Standards, what do academic law library collections look like now and what will they look like in the future?

1. What are the characteristics of a library collection that is “complete, current, and with sufficient continuing access for the law school to operate in compliance with the Standards” as required by ABA Standard 604(a)?
 - a. Would subscribing to Lexis and/or Westlaw meet that description?
 - b. If not, what other materials or types of materials would be required to meet this Standard?
 - c. Does the AALS Bylaw 6-8 statement that a collection “facilitates the training of its students in various research methodologies” require more than one format? If not, how should that bylaw be interpreted?
2. Standard 604(c) requires a written plan for the development of the collection. How are the changes in the standards influencing collection development policies and decisions?
 - a. Have law libraries updated their written collection development plans to reflect the recent changes in the ABA Standards both with respect to acquisitions and weeding?
 - b. In drafting a collection development policy, how are libraries balancing a historic print collection with a largely electronic collection of current materials?

- c. Is your library prioritizing maintaining specific print collections due to historic significance or local interest? Does maintaining mean continuing to grow those collections in print or just not deaccessioning those collections?
3. For academic law libraries that serve members of the public, how does that mission impact collection development policies and practices?
 - a. How has moving to electronic resources impacted members of the public's access to legal information?
 - b. Is there pressure to spend less on print materials or online access for members of the public?
4. In light of the changes to the ABA Standards, particularly Interpretation 604-1's statement that a collection "need not entail a mixture that includes physical books," some academic law libraries have faced or will face reductions in library space.
 - a. Has your library experienced any pressure to reduce the physical space of the library or planned renovations that will downsize the library's physical space?
 - b. How has your institution managed to balance downsizing, the needs of your patrons, and preservation of historic legal materials?
 - c. How can collaboration between libraries help maintain access to historic legal materials when libraries downsize collections?
 - d. Is your library making greater use of off-site storage to preserve collections? If so, what is your library's criteria for sending materials to off-site storage?
5. With both the AALS Bylaws and the ABA Standards allowing purely virtual collections, how can academic law libraries help ensure that publicly available databases are authenticated and credible? How can academic law library to help to ensure that existing electronic legal materials are available and accessible in the future?
6. With both the AALS Bylaws and the ABA Standards allowing purely virtual collections, what skill sets will become more important for maintaining a primarily electronic collection? How are they different or similar to the skill sets needed for a traditional academic law library? How will these changes impact staffing at your library?