

## 2021 Benchmarking + Legal Information Services Survey Key Takeaways

HBR Consulting is proud to present the results of 2021's Benchmarking + Legal Information Services Survey (BLISS). Now in its fifth year, the survey has grown exponentially. The 2021 survey was open during May and June and received responses from 92 law firms (a 40%+ increase since 2020). This year's survey "hot topic" questions focused on succession planning and professional development.

HBR Manager Theresa Greco recently observed, "While 2020 was a year of 'reacting' to change, 2021 needs to be a year of 'rethinking' change." As the key takeaways from this year's BLISS results demonstrate, this shift in perspective is taking place among information professionals across law firms of all sizes.



### Staffing

Hiring patterns reflect growing and diversifying demands for department services.

- 72% of participating firms are performing research for at least five internal departments, up from 24% in 2020.
- To meet this increased demand, on average, there has been a 43% increase in the number of researchers and a 65% increase in the number of electronic services librarians at participating firms.
- Nevertheless, 2/3 of respondents anticipate little to no change in staffing levels over the next 12 months.

Leadership changes are on the horizon, albeit at a distance.

- Of the 1/3 expecting departures/retirements, close to 50% believe these will occur in 3+ years.
- Succession planning efforts rely slightly more on promoting from within (33%) versus recruiting externally (22%).
- Preparation for these and other contingencies, e.g., leaves of absence, focuses more on short-term operations and less on long-term strategy: >90% report centralizing key information and cross-training on specific processes, while only 40% are including prospective leaders in key conversations with firm management.



### Budgets

Firms expect minimal increases for resources and personnel.

- Collections budgets have grown by only 17% over the past five years; considering the cost increases typically charged in vendor contracts, this rate is essentially flat.
- 36% of participating firms anticipate budget increases in next 12 months.

Funding for professional development remains steady.

- Of the ~1/3 of firms whose budgets were decreased, the majority anticipate full reinstatement.

#### HBR INSIGHTS

The changes in how we work, whether hybrid or work-from-home, will impact future staffing size, location, and composition. However, the long-term impact of these changes is still unknown, especially as the legal industry navigates the effects of the "Great Resignation."

#### HBR INSIGHTS

While budgets have slowly increased over the last five years, HBR anticipates a greater increase in 2022. This may be caused by one or more of the following: remote work highlighting unfulfilled needs in firms' collections and services, increased profitability pressures on vendors, and investments in staff driven by market forces.



## Print + Digital Resources

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact format preferences.

- Past plans to eliminate physical collections and reduce desk book purchases are paying off in the present, literally: on average, print budgets have decreased by 25% since last year, with Am Law 50 firms reducing this spending by closer to 50%.
- As an outcome, the ratio of print to digital spending shifted from \$1: \$5 in 2020 to \$1: \$8 in 2021.

Selection of either Lexis or Westlaw as a sole provider, despite its cost-savings potential, is not a current priority.

- The majority of responding firms are not considering any changes to their current environments (80% of firms using both providers, 83% of sole Lexis firms, and 75% of sole Westlaw firms).



## Technology

Integrated library systems (ILS) and resource metering tools remain popular, especially within the Am Law 100.

- Firms reported that they utilized the data recorded by their systems to promote library services, develop targeted training materials, and create reports to share with firm leadership.
- Internal usage metrics benefit firms when negotiating contract renewals with vendors and when proposing the purchase of new resources. This is especially true as some vendors have [embraced content bundling models](#).

Application programming interfaces (APIs) are emerging as a critical opportunity.

- ~40% are leading or supporting projects that utilize APIs.
- The most common types of projects utilizing APIs relate to improvements benefitting libraries' services and initiatives: 70% involve integrated searches, while 30% focus on intake workflows.

## Connect With Our Experts

Registration to participate in BLISS 2022 is open now. [Click here for more information](#).

For more information about BLISS, please contact:



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### HBR INSIGHTS

The pandemic was the catalyst to finally drive home permanent changes in print collections at firms of all sizes. This will affect future product offerings, as well as how vendors price and sell content.

### HBR INSIGHTS

Librarians should leverage their experience with information technologies like APIs to support cross-department firm projects that bring value to existing offerings and services by enhancing internal information and streamlining workflows (e.g., experience databases and current awareness).