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AALL 2010 Exhibit Hall Review

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AALL Report

AALL 2010 Exhibit Hall Review

by Marcia L. Dority Baker and Matthew S. Novak

The 2010 AALL Annual Conference was held in Denver this summer. With its many exciting sights and sounds, the Mile High City was an impressive host for the conference. While the city offered a number of fun and interesting diversions that could have tempted even the most dedicated conference attendees to sneak away, this year's exhibit hall was full of enough shiny gadgets and new technologies to warrant an extended visit. Among the many interesting products and services on display, a few common themes stood out; yet some technology was surprisingly absent.

Mobile Devices and Apps

Mobile devices are a hot topic in the library world. With the widespread and ever expanding use of smartphones, netbooks, and other portable communication and computing devices, the need for libraries and other information providers to operate effectively in this realm is obvious. Although the library community's interest in mobile devices has been steadily growing over the last few years, Apple's release of the iPad earlier this year has seemingly accelerated the interest in these tools. Vendors of legal research tools are fully aware of the expanding mobile device market. Therefore, it was not surprising that mobile devices and apps had a strong presence in the exhibit hall.

Even before the conference, it was clear that there would be a significant focus on mobile device technology this year. The annual pre-conference mailing blitz revealed that some vendors would be giving away a variety of mobile devices at the conference. **Westlaw** even advertised and, did in fact at one point give away one iPad an hour. **AALL** also got in on the mobile device excitement by giving away an iPad, an Amazon Kindle, and a netbook computer.

Of all the vendors at the conference, Westlaw seemed to be the biggest adopter (and promoter) of mobile device technologies. Within its usual multi-station exhibit, two stations were dedicated to mobile devices and e-readers. The Westlaw representatives' normal exhibit hall enthusiasm seemed cranked up several notches during their demonstration of the various Westlaw mobile applications. During one visit to the

"WestlawNext Mobile" station, the representative started in on a fast-paced, 15-minute demonstration, during which she enthused nonstop about the new offerings. She demonstrated the new WestlawNext interface on a variety of mobile devices including the iPhone, the iPad, and the Kindle. The rep at the "West E-Books and Mobile Apps" station was just as enthusiastic. She showed off the latest mobile device apps including the *Black's Law Dictionary* app, the *Norton Bankruptcy Dictionary* app, and the *Sum and Substance* series app.

In general, the various apps were relatively easy and intuitive, and the displays on the various portable devices were clear and easy to read. According to the rep, West will continue to explore ways to enhance its mobile device and e-reader offerings, and she suggested that e-textbooks are in the works. She was especially interested in receiving feedback from a current law student who was in attendance, regarding his opinion of e-textbooks. If the exhibit hall reps' enthusiasm is an accurate indication, West is clearly excited about the possibilities of mobile devices and seems fully committed to them.

Of course, West wasn't the only vendor showing off mobile applications. The folks at the **Fastcase** exhibit were demonstrating their iPhone app, which won this year's AALL new product of the year award. Next year will likely bring even more mobile apps by more vendors.

In the Cloud

Another hot topic in the tech world, and thus of great interest to libraries, is cloud computing and especially web-based collaborative functions. Here at the University of Nebraska College of Law, we are particularly interested in cloud-based services as we are heavy Mac users both at work and at home. Cloud computing is especially Mac-friendly and easier to update than software that must be installed or downloaded. Furthermore, while we may skew the statistics by being especially Mac-friendly, it seems apparent that Apple products are more than just a niche market. Therefore, apps and software that are compatible both for PCs and Macs and are available in the cloud makes economic sense.

Given our interest in the cloud, it was exciting to see cloud-computing features incorporated into some of the products on display. OCLC was on hand to demonstrate its **Web-scale Management Services (WSMS)**. WSMS was available as of July 1st to early adopters. Circulation and Acquisitions are the first functions available to libraries. The acquisitions function also allows for copy cataloging, which is good for libraries as most records are already in OCLC. The circulation function looks nice; unfortunately the demo was not working properly when the representative previewed the product. WSMS seems like a cool option but most libraries have more than circulation and acquisitions. What happened to the technical services function?

Multimedia and Webinars

The influx of multimedia features into various products was another trend we observed. A number of vendors were promoting their latest multimedia offerings. One such vendor, the **Courtroom View Network**, promoted its expanded multimedia service CVN Law School, which consists of three main offerings: Audio CaseFiles, CVN, and a new video training library. The video training library includes a number of video clips from actual courtroom proceedings. The clips are accompanied by assorted analyses and commentaries. CVN is marketing the training library for use in trial advocacy classes, clinics, and moot court programs. The CVN rep indicated that law firms are also a target market for the video training library.

Webinar services were another feature that several vendors were emphasizing. **Practising Law Institute (PLI)**, a sponsor of numerous CLE programs, offers a variety of webinar services through its website. PLI even offers “scholarships” for law students and faculty (including librarians) to attend the webinars. A **BNA** representative showed us BNA’s webinar offerings and indicated that the company was interested in expanding this feature by adding more content aimed at law students. *Ed. Note: For more information on webinars for lawyers, see “The Changing Face of Remote Learning.” (Issue 2010-4)*

What Was Missing?

While this year’s exhibit hall was full of vendors and products, we were surprised by what was missing. Like most librarians, we try to keep up on library and academic trends, technologies and current events, so we were disappointed not to find the following things.

E-textbooks

Like mobile devices, e-textbooks are a hot information technology topic. Seemingly every major LIS publication or blog has published multiple articles covering this topic. E-textbooks are therefore, becoming big business in academia. Many major textbook vendors now offer e-textbooks. Therefore, we were surprised that neither Westlaw nor LexisNexis, the leaders in legal textbook publishing, offered e-textbooks for purchase. We did see that West is offering casebook rentals to students but titles are only available on a computer or laptop, not viewable on an e-book reader such as a Kindle, Nook or iPad. While West has apps available, e-textbooks tend to include a more extensive array of features.

Integrated Library Systems (ILS)

There was only one “traditional” Integrated Library System (ILS) vendor in the Exhibit Hall. **Innovative Interfaces** had a nice booth by the front doors. We have already highlighted the new circulation and acquisitions service offered by OCLC, but expected to see other library interface vendors, such as **SkyRiver** at AALL. It would be interesting to talk to a representative about SkyRiver’s services and to see more ILS options in the law library world. This is a bit timely too, as SkyRiver is challenging OCLC’s domination in the library world.

Conclusion

Hot technology trends were evident throughout the exhibit hall at this year’s conference. A number of vendors had mobile devices and services on display. Cloud computing was seen in several vendors’ offerings. Vendors also featured the latest multimedia tools and enhancements. Based on what was on display, it is clear that the vendors of legal information products are keeping up with many of the newest technology trends. We look forward to seeing what new and exciting products will appear next year. What will be the new iPad?

Philadelphia here we come!

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